
THE

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HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Thursday, June 1, 2017

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: Good morning, Honourable Members, this House is now in Session. Honourable Members, when the Suspension was taken last evening we were on Government Business, Order No. 19, and with that we shall continue.

ORDER NO. 19 (resumed)

Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, 2017.
Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. George South.

Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND: Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, 2017, presented to this Honourable House by the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs and at the outset let me again thank the good people of St. George South for giving me, a son of the soil, the opportunity once again to represent them in this Honourable Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, I grew up in a country where it was possible to see dreams come to light. My brothers and I, sons of an artisan and a School Meals Server, grew up in Barbados where education, affordable housing, and a stable society were pillars indeed of a Barbadian society, supported by the Church and elders in the community which played a major role in shaping our value system. Mr. Speaker, over the last 48 years I have been part of this said St. George South community and now in this honoured role as a representative, I have been pained to witness over the past five years how these pillars that gave myself and others in St. George South, those persons in Todds, Greens, Windsor, Campaign Castle, Bydes Mill and the other areas of St. George South the opportunity to achieve something

in life, those pillars are now being destroyed at the altar of craft electioneering and political slide of hand by the Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, I listened on Tuesday afternoon with baited breath during the presentation given by the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs and Honourable Member for St. Michael North West with the hope that the Honourable Member would have offered some solution to the crisis that this crisis is faced with, but rather than solutions, Mr. Speaker, what we got was a continuation of the legacy of dream killing and hope shattering that has come to character this Democratic Labour Party. We were treated with excuses on top of excuses for lack of implementation, for failure by Ministers, for lack of governance. Mr. Speaker, we were given many excuses in this Lower Chamber, Mr. Speaker, but Mr. Speaker, what differentiates or distinguishes the Barbados Labour Party from that of the Democratic Labour Party is that in times of crisis in this country we have come to the rescue of the citizens of this country with a team and a Leader with vision and a team of well-crafted men and women and with a track record of implementation that would have seen us delivered more than once this country from the hands of the Democratic Labour Party and the uncaring and insensitive governance and leadership that so characterizes this Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, the most disappointing element of the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, 2017, in my view, is not just the unprecedented level of taxation, but the lack of solutions from the Democratic Labour Party. What they did was that they kicked the bucket down the road and said that they would come with some consultation that is geared to produce solutions at the end of their tenure. But I say, Mr. Speaker, too late, too late shall be your cry to the Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, you have muddled over the last nine years and you expect that with nine months to go before an election that you will come with strategies that you think in

nine months, strategies which you have not executed within the last nine years, to save this country. I say you cannot save the country at this stage, what those austerity measures that you have given to the country on Tuesday afternoon, all it does is that they balance our books. Mr. Speaker, as our Leader the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East who demonstrated an exercise yesterday in political mastery, who showed that this Barbados Labour Party is ready to take on the mantle of leadership and governance and Government in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I say to you that what was presented here on Tuesday, I will attempt in my next 25 or 26 minutes to enlighten the public why this Democratic Labour Party is an uncaring and insensitive Government and why their hopes and dreams continue to be shattered. Mr. Speaker, I will begin with this National Social Responsibility Levy and what it means to the people. Mr. Speaker, this National Social Responsibility Levy is aimed at generating \$280 million from July 1, 2017, to the end of the financial year. Mr. Speaker, this National Social Responsibility Levy is another tax and as Churchill would have us know, there is nothing called a good tax.

Mr. Speaker, this National Social Responsibility Levy has a cascading effect on businesses, on middle-class people, on poor people and on people from all walks and demographics in this country, this National Social Responsibility Levy of 10 per cent will impact the citizens of this country negatively. Mr. Speaker, let me explain the cascade effect because the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East in her presentation mentioned it but I would wish to go a bit further and seek to explain for the average man in the street this whole cascading effect as it relates to the National Social Responsibility Levy. Mr. Speaker, let us assume a man from Workman's, Todds, Drax Hall, South District or wherever in St. George South, and there are many small businessmen, who is producing a product that requires a label. This label, even if produced locally, is an input to his production and is subject to the National Social Responsibility Levy and also VAT, so that that businessman buys that label and uses that label in his production process. When he completes his package, whether it is a mint or whatever, he then seeks to sell this label to a retailer, but before he sells it his product has to be subject to that National Social Responsibility Levy and VAT as well.

Mr. Speaker, as the Honourable Member for St. Joseph has put it astutely yesterday, it is indeed a cascading effect because what you have is a compounded National Social Responsibility Levy and VAT from an input product that this manufacturer would have purchased and an output product which he will sell. Mr. Speaker, that is not all, throughout this country, as a result of Tuesday afternoon, what I will call massacre of the citizens of this country, we would have seen a number of businesses

sending to us asking and also advising us that the impact on their goods and services is as high as 23 per cent.

9.52 a.m.

What does that mean to the people of St. George South and of this country as a whole? Mr. Speaker, local production is also subjected to this National Social Responsibility Levy, so it is not just the imports where we can talk about import substitution and the need to maintain foreign exchange in the country. You have moved from the whole import substitution strategy of taxing the imports to now taxing the local manufacturers. As we see it, let us talk about those small businesses in St. George South; those persons who are the hairdressers and the nail technicians. They have to buy products that are subjected to the National Social Responsibility Levy and also the Value-Added Tax (VAT). When I look at 'Angie' and 'Dianne' and those ladies from in Ellerton, who do hair, these ladies will have a tremendous challenge in maintaining their businesses.

I am one who usually calls for the Minister to relook these taxes. I often ask the Minister to go back to the drawing board on behalf of the people of this country. The middle class people have had to bear the brunt of Government's taxation over the years. The poor people cannot go to the supermarket, cannot buy toilet paper. Let us talk about those pensioners who you would have given that increase to, but yet we see our cost of living now has skyrocketed so that increase in the pension has been neutralised. We are back to Square 1; pure "sufferation" from our pensioners. They have been added to the whole ambit of sufferers in this country. Mr. Speaker, on average households spend at least 38 per cent of their budgets on food when we look at the Basket of Goods; so pray tell me how those single parents who have three and four children will send them to school. Do not talk about 'back-to-school'. On the eve of back-to-school we have just finished our Common Entrance, so parents are now thinking about going into the secondary schools, Mr. Speaker. They are focusing on acquiring all the necessary clothing and supplies and whatever for their children to enter secondary schools. This is a fiasco. This is what I call damage to a society; this National Social Responsibility Levy.

Mr. Speaker, I will go on further. Let us look at the impact of the National Social Responsibility Levy on the healthcare sector. This Government in the 2015 Budgetary Proposals allocated funds from the transfer of the fuel Cess to cater to addressing the costs at the hospital. According to some Members in this Chamber on our side, we have no update from the Minister of Finance on how successful this implementation was. In 2016 again, this said Government introduced the two per cent National Social Responsibility Levy on all imports including medication, but this levy was supposed to reduce the cost of health care at the hospital,

Mr. Speaker. That was articulated by the Minister of Finance, and it was also geared towards purchasing trucks, Mr. Speaker. It was geared towards reducing the costs at the QEH (Queen Elizabeth Hospital) and also to purchase trucks; that two per cent levy, Mr. Speaker. After Tuesday's Budget, we have moved from a two per cent levy to a ten per cent levy. What is the impact of this on medication? Let me give you two examples. Let us look at the Ventolin inhaler for asthmatics, which costs \$10 presently. With a ten per cent National Social Responsibility Levy or tax -- let me call it a tax -- a Ventolin inhaler will now move to \$12.75. That is the impact on medication. Let us look at the cost of diabetic strips, which cost \$60 presently. They will now move to \$76.50. Mr. Speaker, how will the poor people and the middle class afford to buy these health care medications in this country? How will these pensioners who are diabetic afford to purchase these diabetic strips? How will the young man or older person who is suffering from asthma and those who are unemployed afford these medications?

Mr. Speaker, what is amazing to me is that we are in a desert but yet we still have Members on the other side, Ministers, who can find water. They can find water in a desert. I am asking, why is it that these Ministers and the Members on the other side can find water in a desert but you cannot find any water for the citizens of this country? The poor people and the middle class cannot get water. I do not mind the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central. He can prance up and say what he likes, because he too is from humble origins and he should understand more than anybody else what some of the issues and the impact upon poor people this tax, which has been imposed by the Minister of Finance, will have. As Churchill would say, there is nothing good in a tax. Poor people and middle class people in this country have to suffer as a result of the Democratic Labour Party's taxation policy. It is tax grab. An uncaring and insensitive Government, and we have seen it through their tenure over the past nine years. They cared nothing about the poor people in this country. They have kicked down and destroyed their legacy which was built on looking out for the masses and the poor people in this country. Errol Barrow, if he is in his grave, probably must be rolling.

Asides.

Mr. D.G. SUTHERLAND: I am sure, as the Member for St. Michael North East said, if he was present here today, he would be ashamed of the Ministers of Cabinet and of the Democratic Labour Party's leadership. He would be ashamed. I spoke earlier of the pillars of this society. Education was one. Affordable housing was another. I heard the Member for St. Michael North West say Tuesday in his presentation that he does not know what low-income housing is. Mr. Speaker, pray tell me. This is a man who said he was the advisor to a former Prime Minister in this

country, and he has it written in his Budgetary Proposals. Mr. Speaker, he said he does not know what low-income housing is now. Go to the Hansard. Mr. Speaker, that is what he said. He was the personal assistant, and that makes it even worse. These Ministers are people from humble origins, Mr. Speaker. Most of the Ministers on the other side are just like myself and the Ministers on this side. We are from humble origins. We were poor people in this country whose fathers were fishermen, whose fathers and grandfathers were well-diggers, whose mothers were maids, but yet the Members of the Democratic Labour Party have failed to demonstrate that they care and have any sensitivity whatsoever as it relates to the middle class and the poor people in this country.

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Mr. Speaker, that is not all, I will move to the National Insurance Scheme. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West in his presentation on Tuesday afternoon highlighted some of the expenditure measures that he intends to employ within the next nine months and one of the relate to interest rate savings on domestic debt held by statutory corporation. Sir, page 52 of the Budgetary Proposals says that as is well known a significant portion of Government securities is held by the Central Bank of Barbados and the National Insurance Scheme. We have surmised that if such an intervention were to be initiated on a voluntary basis, the Government would invite these two entities to engage in discussion for a possible SWAT programme where they and the Government can re-issue some existing securities in their portfolios and critical, the last four words, at low interest rates.

Mr. Speaker, the background of the National Insurance Scheme. This Government, the Democratic Labour Party continues to use the National Insurance Fund to pay public servants, finance projects and support statutory departments. Sir, Government owes the National Insurance Scheme to the tune of \$239 million in debt. Sir, I am just giving you the background. Sir, most of this debt is associated with arrears from statutory corporations, arrears from central Government, for rent from central Government, Tower II, and the Baobab Towers and arrears payable from agencies who rent building owned by the National Insurance Scheme. Sir, in these Budgetary Proposals bear in mind that this Government owes the National Insurance Scheme \$293 million and it is looking to re-profile its debt so it can pay at a lower interest rate. You are proposing a debt re-profiling strategy where Government can reissue securities to the National Insurance Scheme at this low interest rate and realise savings of \$70 million. Sir, you already owe the National Insurance Scheme \$293 million, you are not paying them properly and now you are going to re-profile debt to reduce the interest payment you pay to National Insurance Scheme.

Mr. Speaker, this smells fishy. Sir, this is a funny strategy as it relates to the National Insurance Scheme. We know that this has implementation for the cash flow and for the National Insurance Fund that is already struggling. If Government continues this practice of settling of arrears by issuing Government paper to the Scheme, this Fund can go bust before 2062, which the 14th Actuarial Report predicted that the Fund is safe up until 2062.

Mr. Speaker, I am being told that there is a 15th Actuarial Review that is sitting on the Minister of Labour's desk and I am being told that this 15th Actuarial Review shows that by 2032, if the Government continues on this trajectory, this Fund will go bust. Sir, we have reduced within three years, because the 14th Actuarial Review was three years ago and we are now hearing that this Fund is in more critical state as we speak to you today. Sir, what does this mean to the average person? This will impact poor people in the country. This Fund is geared towards supporting pensioners when we reach our twilight years, having contributed to the National Insurance Scheme, we sit and wait for our pension and with an aging population and the challenges with our birth rate like the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central would have said to this country last year, this Fund seems to be in crisis, so old age pensioners, maternity benefit, unemployed persons, and I will speak to that at length, sickness benefits with a Fund based on what on what we are being told and based on this 15th Actuarial Review that is sitting on the Minister of Labour's desk, that by 2032, this Fund is in trouble.

Mr. Speaker, I continue to say that this Government has not allowed thing National Insurance Scheme to invest outside of Government paper. Sir, the portfolio is extremely localized and susceptible to high risk. We have had so many downgrades within the last six years so this Fund is susceptible to very high risks.

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

Mr. D. SUTHERLAND: The National Insurance Scheme needs to be allowed more flexibility at managing its portfolio and freeing up some of Government's debt. The biggest issue facing the National Insurance Scheme is that the Unemployment Fund has no reserves. Sir, recently, we have heard the Ministry of Labour, the embattled and struggling Ministry of Labour seeking to deny unemployed persons in this country who were sent home by this Government, unceremoniously, accept to the Unemployment Fund. The Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Human Resource Development is on record having said to the people of this country that if the unemployed persons do not go to counselling by the National Employment Bureau, they will not be eligible for Unemployment Fund. Sir, we are talking about persons that have been disadvantaged and were sent home. The

maximum unemployment amount you can have monthly is \$2 400, if you work out 60 per cent of the \$4 000 maximum. We have persons who have been sent home who were working for more than \$2 400 a month and pray tell me, Mr. Speaker.... Sir, this is why I am saying this is an uncaring and insensitive Government and it is pervasive throughout every single one of the Ministries. You are telling that unemployed person to go and take a job, and there are very few jobs offered by the National Employment Bureau. When people go there, they are being told to go back that there are no employment. If you are lucky to get three days at \$900 or \$1 000, you want to tell me that those unemployed persons who are accustomed to \$3 000 should go and work for three days for \$1 000. Sir, that is a difference of \$2 000 and you are telling me they are wrong to want to maximise the earnings from unemployment benefits. If you pay your contribution, then you should be eligible for unemployment albeit, do not break the law.

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If it requires you to go to the National Employment Bureau then you go but do not tell me that you can come and make such bold statements when you yourself have taken back your 10 per cent. You fought for your 10 per cent at a time when you have introduced austerity measures in this country and you fought for your 10 per cent but you do not want to give those unemployed persons their unemployment benefits for the maximum of 26 weeks. You are telling this country that they are not entitled to unemployment benefits for 26 weeks. That is uncaring, insensitive and inhumane by the Minister of Labour. She ought to know better when she herself was privileged to be defeated at the polls but yet she is privileged to sit in a Cabinet to earn money that she, is not in my view, should be earning. She should not be earning that money but you want to deny people who have paid their contributions in this country. You want to deny those persons the right to earn. That is not Government's money. The National Insurance Scheme money is not Government's money. It is held in trust by you and the Government is supposed to pay the people what is due to them. If it is 26 weeks, pay the people their moneys for the 26 weeks but I urge the people of this country not to break the law. Go to the National Employment Bureau and get your forms stamped but you are entitled to your unemployment benefits whether you take a job for three or four days maximise your \$2 400 a month earning from the unemployment. I say that to the people without any remorse. We need to institute it because they need it in these time when you can institute a National Responsibility Levy and VAT prices have gone up by 23 per cent but you do not want to pay these people unemployment. How will they live? How will the people in St. George live? Then you want to go to the people in St. George to ask them for a vote. How can you do that, Mr. Speaker? It is inhumane. I say to you, Mr. Speaker, this

Government needs to relook some of these ill-advised taxation policies that they have instituted on this country.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I take it you are winding up. Your time has expired.

Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that time is drawing near and the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) as you heard yesterday by our leader, political mastery. She has what it takes, a dynamite team of men and women with a proven track record who has a vision and who understand governance in this country to bring back some respectability to the citizens of this country.

With those words, Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. John.

Her Hon. Mrs. M-J. M. THOMPSON: Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to the good people of St. John who I would like to thank for their support for me as their Member of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, today's Budget represents a watershed period in the political economic and social life of Barbados. My comment is made within the context of a period where much is expected from little. This period will be remembered as a time when the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) fought to save the idea of Barbados. This will be remembered as a period where all people were still able to access healthcare, education and welfare, a period where the fabric of the country was protected thereby ensuring that our nation did not fall prey to the dictates of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), a period where there was not auction signs on the highways of Barbados. All of this will be recorded and the question will be asked: how was this possible? How could a country with reduced revenues and minimal growth maintain the fabric of a mineral-less society?

Mr. Speaker, I believe that over 50 years ago the same question was asked of our national hero, the late Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, when sought to posit the idea of free education. The pundits then as there are pundits now were silenced because the idea was not really an idea. Free education was born and matured. The maturity of which I speak is the modernisation of our small island State and 50 years ago for Barbados the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) did the right thing. It transformed this colony into a nation by investing in people. The Democratic Labour Party (DLP) made education a national project.

I have had to endure the comparison of Barbados to our neighbours, how Guyana is growing, and Jamaica is

experiencing growth, but for the last two periods we have experienced some growth, Mr. Speaker. The Central Bank of Barbados reported that there was modest growth of 1.6 per cent and 2 per cent at the end of 2016 and the first quarter of 2017 respectively. Despite this very modest growth, our fiscal debt remained a high national priority. I have heard the Prime Minister say on many occasions that we have to arrest the deficit. I have heard Members of Cabinet lament the need to deal with the deficit through policy adjustments where necessary as difficult as that is. The idea of the deficit was never a discovery by this Parliament. This country has always been made aware of the issue of the deficit, the foreign exchange issues and the need to protect the dollar were always championed by this Administration.

The simple point that I am making, Mr. Speaker, is that this Government was extremely forthcoming in sharing information on the state of the economy. The entire world has had to face off with the perils of the worst recession known to man and yet our country Barbados has been prepped by the Opposition Barbados Labour Party (BLP) that they can get water from rock. I say to this Honourable Chamber this morning that the next election is about doing the right thing.

Mr. Speaker, the Opposition walks this country everyday contributing to the idea of reduced investor confidence. They sit in the quiet of the night and determine what noise they should keep in the morning. They have taken on the task of destroying the fabric of our beloved country. Do you know I often ask myself: how can an Opposition party in the quest for national power seek to betray the idea of truth?

I remember the campaign that was led by Alexander Bustamante in Jamaica where the message was created at the time for Jamaicans where the campaign was taken to the people to undermine the essence of a regional project called The Federation. The truth is Bustamante was victorious and Michael Manley suffered a loss as the polls. Mr. Speaker, the story of Jamaica is very relevant as political opportunism can guide some not to do the right thing.

Mr. Speaker, the idea of delivering more has been placed on the table as an option that the Opposition has touted as an ideal alternative. They tell Barbadians they have a menu of solutions which will rid the country of all its problems yet they cannot solve problems among themselves. Every day the Opposition comes to the public with a big production and a script with a theme of 'Let's Pretend'.

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Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the public of Barbados today that the next election is not about whether the Barbados Labour Party takes office and the Democratic Labour Party retains office. I believe that the next election is about doing the right things. This represents for me the theme of my presentation today and thus my contribution to the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals 2017.

I want to say that I believe that the Democratic Labour Party is doing the right thing. There can be no doubt that the measures as announced will have an impact on the cost of living and while we are desirous as a party of lowering the cost of living the times that prevail make it very difficult. My own assessment of the Budget then boils down to financial responsibility or being financially responsible. I believe the Budget as presented by the Honourable Minister of Finance was a financial responsible Budget as it sets about the task of curbing consumer spending and dampening the demand for imported goods. We have reached a crossroad in our development policy which Barrow jumpstart back then. The party has now to reorder our priorities as a nation.

Mr. Speaker, today we are celebrating the 30th Anniversary of the passing of the late National Hero and party leader the Errol Walton Barrow and there really can be no separation of a modern Barbados from the efforts of the Democratic Labour Party under the leadership of Errol Walton Barrow. From time immemorial the Democratic Labour Party Governments made expenditure on social services a high priority. At the top of the list was education followed by healthcare, public transportation, sanitation and welfare. These comforts funded by taxpayers have delivered a nation to the world. Modern Barbados under the Democratic Labour Party 50 years later is now asked to reorder a Barbados by seeking to strike a balance between maintaining the social and economic fabric of society and observing fiscal prudence.

Mr. Speaker, I want to submit that the efforts of the Democratic Labour Party must be viewed as part of a larger nation-building project. I have often heard commentary on the difference or similarities between the Barbados Labour Party and the Democratic Labour Party, and I am satisfied that this period represents the sharp difference between how we manage affairs and how they do during harsh economic times. We have not heard one single policy idea to increase revenues. The call from the Opposition in their efforts to woo voters is: Call elections.

Mr. Speaker, if I were to look through a crystal ball now and look at the Barbados Labour Party in office, let me tell you what I would see. I would see the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East sitting in the Chair as speaker and doing your job. I would see the Honourable Member for St. Joseph as Prime Minister and I would see

the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East as a Senator. I have to admit, Sir, that I can see nothing else.

Mr. Speaker, I do know that the Honourable Member for St. Joseph is on record as saying that the Barbados Labour Party raises money from car washes and cake sales, so we have an early glimpse of the new Barbados Labour Party's approach to solving the revenue problems in our economy: Car washes and cake sales. However, Mr. Speaker, on the hand, we have the Democratic Labour Party doing the right things while we have the Barbados Labour Party Opposition doing all sorts of things.

Let us develop our political ledger and see what the two parties are doing different. On leadership, on this side we have tried, proven and tested leadership while on the other side we have a group of people where if the current leader relinquishes office the entire Barbados Labour Party collapses. The policies, let us start with education. Under the Barbados Labour Party after three terms of office a Minister of Education's number one priority was to rewire every school building in Barbados. The Barbados Labour Party also started a primary school and demitted office with it never completed. That is not a crime, the crime is that the education sector was not built out or redesigned to meet the evolving needs of a society on the verge of a take-off, while on this side the Democratic Labour Party is doing the right things. Let me commend our Minister of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation for building nursery schools and primary schools, expanding secondary schools - oh, my goodness, Mr. Speaker, have you seen the Lodge School? Take a trip to St. John - expanding the school curriculum, pushing the sixth forms schools, expanding the Barbados Community College and the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic and attracting four more medical schools.

Mr. Speaker, in healthcare under the Barbados Labour Party side, you had a blatant policy by the Barbados Labour Party which states that rural people are of no value so the instruction was that the St. John Polyclinic was not to be touched, that indicates the spite with which the Barbados Labour Party is led, while on this side under the capable hands of the Honourable Member for Christ Church South and the Honourable Member for St. James South before that we are doing the right thing, creating a better healthcare system by reorganising the Drug Service, securing backup power at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, expanding the hours of healthcare to patients at the polyclinics, reorganising the Ambulance Service, improving the Ambulance Service and completing the ultramodern polyclinic in St. John.

Under the Minister of Labour, Social Security and Human Resource Development we have done the right things. This party has sought to improve and protect the rights of workers with a suite of labour legislation. We

believe that the rights of workers are important and so we brought to reality our Holiday With Pay Act, Minimum Wage Act, Employment Rights Act and a Safety, Health and Wellness Act, but Mr. Speaker, I am unable to offer anything in that column for the Opposition as it is a difficult task researching the success of labour under the Barbados Labour Party.

As a party we have sought to do the right things despite the challenges facing the country of the fiscal deficit and the low foreign exchange reserves. Our focus as outlined in the Budget continues to show a responsible action by constantly petitioning the need to protect the level of foreign reserves and completing the fiscal consolidation process placing Barbados on a path to regaining a healthy credit rating as well as strengthening investor confidence. That, Mr. Speaker, is what a Government is required to do.

Mr. Speaker, with these few words, I will take my seat. I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown.

Lt. Col. J. D. BOSTIC: Mr. Speaker, the more I listen to comments with regards to the Opposition coming from the other side the more I am inclined to remind the Honourable Members on that side that they once sat on this side in Opposition and by this time next year they will return to this side in Opposition so be careful what they say about the Opposition. Just remember that.

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9.57 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, I am thankful to Almighty God and to the constituents of the City of Bridgetown for the opportunity to once again be able to lend my voice to this most important Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, 2017, debate. I do so being cognizant of the fact that the voice of the representative for the City of Bridgetown is the voice of the constituents of the City of Bridgetown. Mr. Speaker, I anticipated this Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, 2017, in a big way. I did so because honestly our country, our economy and our society are precariously placed at this point in time and it is very important what happens during these proceedings. I was looking forward to see exactly what the Government and the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs was going to come with in order to advance the cause of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I see it as an important Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, 2017, and perhaps the most significant debate during this current Parliamentary

term, but it is a budget that cannot and must not be viewed in isolation because this Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, 2017, in my view, represents the failure of a number of initiatives presented in previous budgets.

Mr. Speaker, let me begin my speech by congratulating the Honourable Leader of the Opposition on her comprehensive and enlightening response yesterday, as well as my colleague the Honourable Member for St. George South and others on this side who spoke last night and was ably supporting the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Mr. Speaker, I was a little disappointed in the presentation by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, because yes, I knew and all of us should have anticipated that some serious decisions would have had to be made with regard to our economy and the direction in which it is going and more importantly the direction that it needs to go, but I was expecting also that there would have been some sort of a growth strategy or plan, because nothing that we do is going to work in isolation of the fact that growth is vitally important to this economy, and that was lacking in the presentation by the Honourable Member as I will outline during my 30 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I will demonstrate beyond a shadow of a doubt, not because I am a Member of the Opposition, not through any sort of hyped up emotions, but by the measuring pole used by the Government both in and outside this Honourable Chamber to determine whether or not this Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, 2017, is worthy of its salt. The policy statements that came from previous budgets, the 19-months' adjustment programme with its extensions, The Medium-term Fiscal Strategy and others are the things that we would look at when looking at this budget in order for us to determine whether or not it is a good one the people of Barbados. Mr. Speaker, for example, during the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, 2015, and this was stated by the Opposition Leader, the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs said in this Honourable Chamber and I quote:

"Today, I am able to report to you, to this Honourable Chamber and to the whole of Barbados that the homegrown economic stabilisation recovery plan which we devised right here in Barbados is working."

Mr. Speaker, I say that if that plan is working then I would have to agree with my colleague who spoke previous to the speaker, the Honourable Member for St. John, that the Government would have to be uncaring to have unleashed those draconian taxes that were unleashed on this country on Tuesday if indeed this programme is really working. The Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs also spoke about the injection of \$1.2 billion in foreign investment, something that the Honourable Member has been speaking about for the last three or four years like a recurring decimal, and the jury is out as to

whether or not those investments are really coming into this country and whether or not they are having the desired impact and the desired that the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs speaks about every single year in this Honourable Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member also said in 2016 that we have halted the dangerous slide in our foreign reserves experienced in 2013 and contrary to the attempts to create panic among our citizens we know and expect further foreign exchange gains in the coming months. Mr. Speaker, well, if that budget delivered by the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs has not created panic in this country with regards to our foreign exchange and foreign reserves, then I do not know what else will. Mr. Speaker, I say so because apart from the 2 per cent tax that has been imposed on credit card foreign exchange transactions, if you really examine the \$450 million-plus new taxes on the backs of poor and ordinary Barbadians, middle class and all Barbadians, then you must come to the conclusion, Mr. Speaker, that those measures could only be intended to dampen the importation of goods into this country because those measures will severely reduce the capacity of the average Barbadian to be able to feed himself or herself. Mr. Speaker, that is what it is about and that is the panic that I believe the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs was speaking about.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member spoke about duty-free zones in Special Development Areas to be supervised by a Special Committee during the last budget. The Honourable Member came back in this budget and repeated the same thing, said that these things will happen in the coming months and went as far as to even give the month of August as the time when these things were supposed to be happening. Mr. Speaker, can we believe the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs that these duty-free zones will happen? The jury is out on that. Mr. Speaker, I have no issues with the duty-free zones per se' but I would like to see the time comes when we would start to think about the creation of some hassle-free zones for vendors to ply their trade in this country, especially at a time when people are doing all kinds of vending to either subsidise what they are earning and in other cases, to generate income because they are unemployed. This is something I believe that a caring Government ought to be looking at. Mr. Speaker, when I speak about vending I would like to see more done in terms of community vending, this is an intervention that the Government can make at a time like this in highly densely populated communities where we have overgrown or uninhabited lots, lots that have been in such a state for a long time where some of the young men and women who reside in the areas could be given the opportunity to be able to put some sort of temporary structures on those lots within those densely populated communities to be able to ply some sort of a trade, to give themselves some sort of income.

10.11 a.m.

This is an intervention that the Government can make at a time like this in densely populated communities, where we have overgrown or uninhabited lots which have been in such a state for a long time, and where some of the young men and women who reside in the area can be given the opportunity to put some sort of temporary structure on those lots in order to be able to ply some kind of trade and give themselves some kind of income. These are things which we need to be looking at because we have to start thinking outside of the box.

The 19-month adjustment programme had as its primary objective to restore and stabilise foreign exchange reserves, to reduce the fiscal deficit and to lay the foundation for a return to a sustainable economic growth path. As I said before, in terms of restoring and stabilising foreign exchange reserves, if that was happening then there would not have been a need to do what was done on Tuesday in terms of the two per cent tax on credit card transactions, Mr. Speaker. As I said, the entire Budget exercise really is aimed at curbing foreign exchange spending. In terms of the reduction of the fiscal deficit, the Budget on its own with the imposition of the \$450 million-plus in taxes cannot do what is required. The fiscal deficit of this country, as high as it is, cannot be reduced without a serious economic growth plan, and the Minister of Finance himself....

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, just a minute please. Sorry to break your stride. You are going very well but just a minute. This is necessary.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member for the City.

Lt. Col. J.D. BOSTIC: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. As I was saying, we cannot reduce the national debt without having a serious growth plan, and this Budget gave no indication of any type of growth plan. That is a serious matter, because in order for this economy to grow then, we have to open up new economic frontiers. The Government did that to some extent with the creation of the Cultural Industries Development Act and the whole quest towards alternative energy. Mr. Speaker, the disappointment, however, is that this cannot be done on a one-off basis in terms of policy decisions. You spoke to it in the Budget last year and you come here now in 2017 and just give a passing message with regards to these, when we ought to have been seeing a sustained effort where the resources are being pumped into these two new areas that are supposed to generate economic growth because this country requires economic growth. Above all else, it requires economic growth.

If you want to speak about economic growth, there are growth areas that could be pursued and need to be pursued by any Government that is looking to advance the cause of the common folks of the country. We have people with high levels of literacy when it comes to computer programming. We need to build out the cultural industries to the extent where it is effective and where we can export our cultural assets. We need greater diversification in our tourism product; a diversification that will see us doing some other things in a greater way. If we continue to do the old things all the time, we are not going to be cutting it internationally. I am speaking and I have said this in this Honourable Chamber before: We need to do more in terms of heritage tourism, cultural tourism and sports tourism. With Barbados at the moment being in the top tier of countries with elderly and ageing populations, we need to look in the direction of creating a special industry, a special part of the tourism product to cater to the elderly and the disabled members of the international community, because this is one new area where we can generate some income. Not only can we generate income, but by doing so we then create the avenues and the facilities to expand what is required for our senior citizens before it reaches crisis proportion and then we do not have the money to do it. This is forward thinking, this is thinking out of the box, this is what is required in a time such as this.

Lay the foundation for a return to a sustainable economic growth path. This has failed, which is obvious, because growth has been lethargic at best, and when we have the final Budget by the Minister of Finance in his final term as Minister of Finance and we have not heard anything much with regard to growth and economic growth strategies, then we have some serious issues. I know that it was coined in this Chamber, the new term of 'Kellmanomics'. Well, I want to coin a new one, Mr. Speaker. It is called "taxyounomics" because that is what is going on. Taxyounomics. Yes. Let us come to an 800 per cent increase in the National Social Responsibility Levy, for example.

Aside.

Lt. Col. J.D. BOSTIC: If we agree, and this is fact, that 73 per cent of our economy is dependent on trading by ordinary Barbadians, by the middle class and by the working class, and above all other things you come now and put that imposition on the people who are supposed to be providing or contributing 73 per cent of this economy, that alone tells you that you have a serious problem.

I remember the Honourable Minister of Finance saying in this Honourable Chamber on a previous occasion that the Government is constrained by the fact that it has no fiscal space in order to promote economic growth; no fiscal space. What the Honourable Minister of Finance does not understand is that the 73 per cent has no fiscal space

because you have removed the elbow room; you have taken money and disposable income out of the pockets, and if they do not have the money to spend, it means that the 73 per cent of your economy is under threat. That is what is happening. Therefore, these new tax measures will not do what is anticipated by the Honourable Minister of Finance. Taxyounomics, remember that.

Aside.

Lt. Col. J.D. BOSTIC: Listen, the Government came into office under the mantra -- nothing wrong with that -- that they were trying to create a society of Barbados that is socially balanced, a Barbados that is economically viable, a Barbados that is environmentally sound, and a Barbados that is characterised by good governance. No problem with that, but when we now look at this Budget and previous other economic policies within the context of those ideals, what do we get? Let us see what we get. Is this Barbados at the moment socially balanced? No, because the everyday realities that affect the quality of life of Barbadians would suggest that our society is becoming more socially imbalanced. That has been admitted by none other than the Honourable Minister of Finance, because the Honourable Minister has stated on more than occasion that the economic challenges which confront the country are having a negative impact on the delivery of social services. That was said.

10.16 a.m.

Sir, one of the things that puzzle me here is that our social programmes are costly, nobody can say otherwise, that is true and it will always present a challenge, that is also true but my way of thinking is that instead of determining in your mind first that you are going to cut this and cut that with the social programmes, I think the emphasis and focus ought to be on creating growth in the country that would allow you to pay for the social programmes. Sir, that must be the emphasis. The reason why we have been able to do so in the past is because we were able to create the growth. If we country on that trajectory of trying to create the growth then the challenges emanating from the high cost of social care services, I believe we would be able to find a balance and to deal with the problem. Our society is at the moment under some serious social tensions. We see it playing out every day in a lot of different ways and I am saying that this is one area because we can do everything else that we say we are going to do in terms of the economy and everything else but we have to tackle some of the social issues especially those with regards to our young people.

Mr. Speaker, the solutions cannot be one-dimensional because the problem is a very serious multi-dimensional problem. It is a problem that requires a comprehensive and a sustainable and a sustained effort in

order for us to make the difference in another five years or ten years because if we think it is bad now, if we do not arrest this situation right now, it is going to get significantly worse.

Mr. Speaker, the other pillar. When I spoke to the economic pillar that the Government speaks about, the mere fact that the Government had to come with this Budget of \$400 and something million in new taxes would suggest that none of the other things that have been done have worked, or have worked effectively and efficiently because if that were the case, we would not be where we are today. One of the casualties of the economic downturn and the challenges our great country is the poor delivery of sanitation services to our communities. We are looking now at the environmental part of it and this is so even despite the best efforts of the management and staff at the Sanitation Service Authority who work very hard, and I would always say that. I see them myself and they work hard but they continue to lack the essential resources that are required to perform the essential tasks of the organisation and, Sir, that is a serious problem. We look at that with the significant increase in the number of bushy and overgrown areas, the problem with sewage, the illegal and indiscriminate dumping or disposal of garbage by our citizens and the large number of uninhabited and dilapidated structures across the length and breadth of this land. We know that we do have issues.

Mr. Speaker, let me say at this point in time. No amount of political posturing by T20 candidates, who would go into New Orleans for one day to do a cleanup, trying to embarrass the Minister responsible for sanitation because what he wants to do in one day, that they were not able to do in two years because the people have been struggling with resources, that is what I call a T20 solution.

Asides.

Lt. Col. J.D. BOSTIC: No, no, I am a test player man. I am here for the long haul. What is required is sustained projects to lift the people not T20 playing because T20 cricketers cannot play test cricket.

Asides.

Lt. Col. J.D. BOSTIC: Mr. Speaker, throughout the life of this parliamentary term they have been repeated calls in this Honourable Chamber for the Honourable Minister of Housing to speak to issues relating to issues in this Chamber relating to housing and land in the country, where they ought to be spoken. I was happy last night, I do not hide these things, to hear the Honourable Minister of Housing last night really addressing some of the issues because this is a problem that I hope we will change going forward in this Honourable Chamber. When I came in here four years ago, I said that I did not come in here just to be

an ordinary Member of Parliament, I wanted to make a difference. Madam Deputy Speaker, Honourable Ministers of Cabinet of a Barbados Government, BB, D, U or Z must not treat to public issues as though they are private or personal. I have a problem with any Honourable Minister who would go on Facebook, social media at branch meetings to discuss policy decisions relating to Ministry that Minister is responsible for and when opportunities are presented within this Honourable Chamber they do not ever do so. There are no answers to parliamentary questions with regards to housing, that is the problem. Sir, I have a problem with that. Sir, the issues for example, in relation to conveyancing and land issues should be discussed in here so that when we see situations developing as happened in 2013 where people were made to wait for about two years before they were given keys to their units.... The Honourable Minister now says that about 50 something people now live in the Grotto which is another two and a half years of waiting, it really comes across as if Barbadians are being given some sort of a gift. Sir, my colleague is saying that maybe it is an election gift. I am not going to say so although it looks that way but the people should not be made to suffer because of political expediency.

Madam Deputy Speaker, , in his presentation the Honourable Minister of Finance said he did not know what low-income housing was and, Madam, that puzzled me. I started to think about it and then I said to myself, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the Honourable Minister might not know what low income housing is because the housing solutions are not coming in at low-income price because he said in one breadth about not knowing about low-income housing and then he said he is bringing a housing amendment to this Parliament that will focus on providing the targeted incentives for the much needed housing solutions for low income earners. Madam, that is what the Honourable Minister said, so he does not know what is low-income housing but this amendment is coming in here. Madam, the question is: Is this amendment really designed to benefit low income earners or the targeted developers? Madam, I hope that when this amendment comes to this House that there would be a clause in that amendment that safeguards and facilitates the small developers that have suffered for the last nine years.

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That is what I am hoping would happen, Madam Deputy Speaker, because they are people too.

I know I only have a few minutes left but let me say this in conclusion. Let me reiterate my position here. This is not a Budget where we come here to simply vote on this Budget and I am not going to say one way or the other whether I support this Budget and I will tell you why, because this is no longer about supporting or not for this

current Budget, this is a deeper situation we are dealing with. The question that you have to ask is whether or not we, the Members of the Opposition, we the members of the public, have the confidence that this Minister of Finance can deliver in one year what he has not been able to deliver during the past several years in order to take this country here the country has to go. That is the question we have to ask.

Finally, I firmly believe that any Government 'B' or 'D' or assuming office, the citizens are expecting that Government would either take the country pass the point where they found it or at worse do not make it any worse than they found it. When we look at 2008 down to 2017 the questions I will ask: Are Barbadians experiencing a better quality of life in 2017 than they did in 2008? Is the fiscal deficit smaller now in 2017 than it was in 2008? Is unemployment now lower than it was in 2008? Is the cost of living lower now than it was in 2008? Are our foreign reserves stronger now than they were in 2008? Do Barbadians have more money in their pockets now than they did in 2008?

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) under the able leadership of the Honourable Miss Mia Amor Mottley stands ready to do it for Barbados. All that is required is for the Right Honourable Prime Minister to dissolve Parliament and set the date for elections and we will tell the good people of Barbados how the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) will do it.

I am obliged to you.

Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair.

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

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise this morning to support the before this Honourable House and also to congratulate the Honourable Minister of Finance and also the public officers located within his ministry for the formulation of the proposals that we are debating before this Honourable House today.

It was a Budget presentation, Mr. Speaker, addressed mainly the two negative fundamentals that are affecting and afflicting this economy: 1) the deficit and 2) our foreign reserves. Now, of course, varying remedies over the last number of weeks and even months were posited from various stakeholders but at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, the Government has to decide the way forward and the methodology by which we will get there. Before I get into my speech today, Mr. Speaker, I just want to touch briefly on what was presented to us as a reply to the Budgetary Proposals by the Honourable Member for St.

Michael North East, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

In today's nation newspaper the headline screamed, "Mia's Hand". If they were describing the Leader of the Opposition's hands certainly we did not see it on This Side because there were still firmly planted in her pants pocket and they were not revealed to us on This Side. To my mind it was rambling incoherent speech laced, of course, Mr. Speaker, with invective, victory all ranker and spite. It was an attempt yesterday, Mr. Speaker, to besmirch the good names of the entire Front Bench of the Government, to sully our reputations, besmirch our names and drag us into the gutter. She highlighted from signing illegal documents and contracts, she even accused us of vote buying and the manipulation of the electoral process, the construction of buildings with steal in there, a subject that is so familiar to the Barbados Labour Party (BLP). Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition even resurrected CAHILL. She went into the morgue, unearthed CAHILL, defrosted it, took it up to Brian Bentham who is now an undertaker of note, dressed it up, put it on a motorcycle and presented it to us as a new brand 'duppy'. That is what she did yesterday. Even CAHILL was not spared from the Honourable Leader of the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) and along with all of the talk yesterday, it was interspersed with a lot of ill-conceived proposals for a future Barbados Labour Party (BLP) regime. I do not know how close or far this future is, but it was a set of proposals that, to my mind, took every single one of the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) members by surprise. I believe those measures were conceptualised 30 minutes before she came into this Honourable House, before she mustered the energy to climb the 22 steps of Parliament, she conceived these wonderful ideas that a Barbados Labour Party (BLP) regime will implement. She did it all without the knowledge of the Members of the Opposition. In my speech I am going to point out further how there are ignorant of all of the measures that she has introduced in this Parliament yesterday.

I always warn my colleagues on This Side, I speak to them one-on-one and in groups to be wary of the Leader of the Opposition. I have no time for the lady. None. I tell you that. I have no time for the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East. A few years ago when she was executed, not only executed, tried, sentenced and executed by some Members of the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) she crawled up under the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) Members in the lunchroom trying to find solace with us, crawling up and speaking as a Stakeswoman and trying to find solace among us when she was rejected by six or seven members in her party. She was tried, sentenced and executed in full public layer by six of her members; Satan's spawn.

Before I get to my main speech, Mr. Speaker, I want to get five minutes in. The Honourable Member for St. George South, this young man, I call him “Little Dwight”, stricken and paralysed with fear every time he sees or hears the honourable lady from the Other Place name. He jumps up in his seat shouting her name.

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I am a constituent of St. George South. I love St. George South and I love the representation that the honourable lady from the Other Place brought. Now, the constituents, including me, have now had four years to compare the stewardship of the sitting Member of Parliament for St. George South with that of the former Member of Parliament. It pales into insignificance when you stack her record up against his, but every time he gets up in here he is speaking disparagingly of her.

This honourable lady from the Other Place has an outstanding and stellar record as a Minister of Labour, Social Security and Human Resource Development. She has introduced a panoply of legislation all for the good of the people and the workers of this country. She has. She has introduced legislation to bring relief and assistance to the people in Greens, Ellerton, Workmans, the Glebe and all of the people at St. Luke’s Church, St. George Parish Church and all of the evangelical churches that are scattered across St. George South and throughout Barbados. When you stack her record up against the sorry record of the Honourable Member for St. George South,... it is a shameful record.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I think that the Honourable Member knows better than to refer to me as...in this Honourable Chamber. Mr. Speaker, I think it is extremely disrespectful.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, yes, the Standing Orders do not permit you to call the Honourable Member’s name and since he is objecting, refrain from it please.

Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the comments.

Mr. Speaker, I think that The City folks now are really getting two Members of Parliament for the price of one. I am encouraging our candidate for the City of

Bridgetown to continue doing what he is doing because he has accomplished in one single week, last week, what the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown did not do in four years. He mobilised his troops in one weekend and had The City looking too beautiful, and this is just a taste of things to come.

Mr. Speaker, I want from the outset to acknowledge every single Barbadian who stood with this Government over the last nine years. It was not a bed of roses for this party and this Government. Like Jesus, Mr. Speaker, and I do not want to appear blasphemous, we had a walk up Golgotha’s hill. We were crucified like Jesus on the Cross of Calvary. We had a crown of thorns placed on our heads but we accepted it because we did not beg for this, we went to the people and said look we are going to present ourselves as candidates individually and the people of Barbados in their wisdom chose 16 of us over the 14 of them now reduced to 12. By their own hands without any help they managed in less than four years to push aside two of the 14 Members that the people in their wisdom gave them and now they are coming to the people of Barbados telling them that they want to form the next Government. The people of Barbados gave them 14 seats and they should have kept them and now they want more to form a Government. Mr. Speaker, we did all of this. We climbed Golgotha’s hill, was crucified on Calvary’s Cross and wore the crown of thorns. It was not made easy by the carping criticism of the Barbados Labour Party but with God’s grace, guidance, will, fervour and sanction we persisted and He has brought us thus far and He will take us further.

Mr. Speaker, this period of stabilisation is a journey that should be devoted and dedicated to the stick-to-itiveness of the people of Barbados for they participated and contributed in no small way to this national project with all of the nationalistic fervour that they could have mustered. They participated, they held our hands, placing their hands on the oars of the good ship Barbados and assisted with the forward propelling of this nation. They made sacrifices with their blood, sweat and tears. They endured wage restraint and wage constraints. They forfeited their jobs and their livelihoods in the national interest. The people of Barbados did that. They displayed the Barbadian brand of resilience and toughness that was spawned from just being different Caribbean people, and I want to congratulate those people, the people of Barbados, for holding the hands of the Government during this period. It was not easy. We were all in it together with the exception of the Barbados Labour Party. Bajans have to be applauded, Mr. Speaker, for we as a Government could not have done it alone.

Mr. Speaker, it is now nine years that this Administration has served since assuming the mantle of the Government of this country, a period that was fraught with economic hurdles and encumbrances never before

experienced by any single regime. During this period the Administration has had to make decisions that took into consideration fixing the economic matters confronting us while simultaneously maintaining a social structure that ensured our citizens still experienced a standard of living not far removed from the ones from which they have grown accustomed. These same decisions have always been thrust on us to make as an Administration because the most adverse worldwide conditions coincide every time with a Democratic Labour Party's tenure in office and our occupation of Government Headquarters, and that is the bare unvarnished truth.

The policy positions that we took over the nine years we always made with the people of this country best interest which was always at the centre of our decision-making. This Administration has grappled with the macroeconomic matters in some measure, and it resulted with some positive outcomes which were detailed over the last few days: Low inflation rate of 1.1 per cent, a 9 per cent unemployment rate down from 11.3 per cent, a 2 per cent growth in the economy, stabilisation of our foreign reserves, and real sector growth over the last year or so.

This Government also maintained a strong relevant, determined and vibrant legislative agenda that transformed several of our economic engines while arranging therein the very axle on which this whole thing spins. We introduced and enacted a panoply of legislative reform in this country ushering in the cultural industries. We revolutionised the alternative energy sector and introduced the ELPA and steadied and emboldened the international business sector. We fortified and enhanced labour legislation, as I said before, and promoted employees' best interest while at the same time ensuring that capital was not disadvantaged.

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We made the legislation against domestic violence more robust, all-encompassing and more protective of the victims, especially our children, with women being the main focus of the legislation. We went further and despite all the economic turbulence in our midst this Government, Mr. Speaker, has dug deep and has maintained over 90 per cent of the social safety net that was in place when we assumed office and what was since implemented and expanded by this Administration over the last nine years.

Our polyclinic services are still free, medication is still free at the point of delivery, wide-scale welfare services are still available to all desirous of accessing it, just about 4 000 persons are on register at the Welfare Department accessing monthly food vouchers rental utility assistance, educational assistance school clothes, books, furnishings, spectacles, prosthesis, funeral assistance,

monetary assistance to the disabled and those afflicted and affected by HIV/AIDS.

Through our family services we give children support because of delinquent fathers, we have formulated a system where we now support children and bring delinquent fathers on board; our Clyde Gollop Centre accommodates 34 homeless men; our Vauxhall Senior Citizens Village accommodates 41 of our elders; ramps are built, assisted devices supplied to the disabled community in Barbados; over 1 100 children benefit every single day from subsidised Government care at \$20 per week; 110 children are residents of our three Children's Homes and our Senior Villages are the most modern and hygienic accommodation found anywhere in the world. Mr. Speaker, I say in the world because if you were to visit the Nightingale Children's Village you would see accommodation there that will of course exceed anything that most children living outside of that village now experience. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank publicly the Barbados Children's Trust for the wonderful work that they have done at the Nightingale Children's Home and of course the Maria Holder Trust who have refurbished and completely rebuilt Farr's Children's Home, St. Peter.

Mr. Speaker, State-paid schooling is still available from nursery to tertiary level; garbage is collected and mail is delivered in Barbados. This is no 'backwater' state, there is still free bus travel for pensioners and school children; home help is available to over 1 000 of our elderly folks in Barbados; despite economic difficulties we are providing housing in all categories to the people of this country. Mr. Speaker, this Government has eclipsed every single previous Administration when it comes to house building in this country, in rental, rent-to-own or outright ownership. This Government has performed and outperformed all previous Administrations.

Mr. Speaker, they talked yesterday about pit toilets. Where were they? In their time there were pit toilets. The Barbados Labour Party introduced into this country a culture called sharing rooms and renting rooms, because there was a lack of accommodation and lack of housing. When the Barbados Labour Party were awashed with money they introduced people building plywood houses in the backyards of their mothers and fathers, but would now want to put on us that we did not replace pit toilets. They were awashed with money, yet people were building in their parent's backyards or were shacking up in rooms while sharing common amenities, something that is strange and uncultured when it comes to Barbados. The Barbados Labour Party did it.

Mr. Speaker, we kept faith with the Trade Union Movement and the Social Partnership. We propped up and supported the private sector with the purchase of all kinds of goods and services from their businesses, small, large

and medium. We maintained the public sector, by and large. We paid increments when due and we also appoint public servants, so that despite our detractors or distractions, on calming economic waves we are ruling the waves of this country, the sociological concerns, its cares, its fears and have not left our citizens unprotected, exposed or unshielded. Despite all that we have been going through, our citizens have not been left unprotected, exposed, or unshielded by this Democratic Labour Party Administration.

Mr. Speaker, this Government, for all of its faults, has influenced a sober, calming atmosphere for all Barbadians to experience, despite all the rabblousing, the rubbing shoulders and all of encouraged cajoling of the people of Barbados, they have remained calmed all during this period because they understand that patriotism counts when it counts. For every case of despair and hopelessness that the Barbados Labour Party can advance, this Government, through its social services, can compare hundreds of cases where solutions were found, uneasiness dissipated, fears were allayed, hope was ignited, and joy brought back to the faces of the despondent in this country, so they can itemise and can select all of the worse-case scenarios in Barbados but for every one they select, as the Minister of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Community Development I can present cases where we have brought solutions, where we have dissipated uneasiness, where we have allayed fears, where we have ignited hope and where we have brought joy back to the faces of our people in Barbados, so let them get out there and talk about people eating ramen, people with their bellies to the backs.

I have never yet heard an Opposition who wants to represent the good of the people of Barbados ever describing them in such disparaging ways. Mr. Speaker, in the most prerogative of language that they could muster from deep in their empty bellies, they have described Barbadians as people with their bellies to the back and people eating ramen. Can you imagine that, a party who want to represent the good people of Barbados?

Mr. Speaker, we still have a vibrant, effective and functioning society that can be felt, smelt and spoken be spoken to, a living animate society.

Mr. Speaker, time in flying, in this debate I want to focus a little more on the Department of Family. Yesterday the Barbados Labour Party declared their policy on homosexuality. Mr. Speaker, when the Honourable Leader of the Opposition declared the policy, it was policy on the flight, it was never discussed by the Parliamentary Group of the Barbados Labour Party.

Asides.

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: I looked across at them and saw faces of surprise, the Honourable Member for St. Joseph could not conceal his surprise.

Asides.

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Joseph is my friend and I have grown to detect how the Honourable Member reveals his emotions. Mr. Speaker, I looked at the Honourable Member for St. Joseph because I wanted to use the Honourable Member as the litmus test to see if this thing was really... Mr. Speaker, this policy came from 'here', it did not come from 'here', it was a policy on the flight, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition made it up while climbing up the 22 steps coming into Parliament. Mr. Speaker, none of them knew of this policy. If that was a policy of the Barbados Labour Party it would have found its way into the pages of the "Covenant of Hope" but it was policy on the flight.

Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago my colleague, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East, pronounced that the Honourable Member was not in favour of same-sex marriages. The Honourable Member stated that he bases his principle stand upon his principles. The Honourable Member was pilloried by some pro-gay commentators, moderators even weighted in and Members of the Barbados Labour Party also weighed in. Mr. Speaker, as Minister with responsibility for Family, Gender, and Ecclesiastical Affairs, I wish to weigh in on this subject and to state my position from where I sit as Minister with the closest connection to this particular subject area. Mr. Speaker, my opinion will not be stifled in any way, Mr. Speaker, or trampled upon by any group, local or overseas, because I believe that the overseas groups are out of place, they set their own agendas and we in Barbados set our own

11.07 a.m.

The last time I checked, we were a sovereign nation deciding on our own policy agenda. Barbados has always been tolerant of homosexuals among us. Always. Anybody who grew up in Barbados knows exactly that homosexuals have lived among us.

MR. SPEAKER: You have five minutes, Honourable Member.

Hon. S.D. BLACKETT: Five minutes? Oh dear. They are our family, our relatives, our friends, our kith and kin. They were our hairdressers, our tailors, our dressmakers. They made our pudding-and-souse. They cooked our rice-and-stew. They turned out our brides, they baked our cakes, and there were even same-sex relationships in our very neighbourhoods. I grew up in a neighbourhood in Bank Hall, in Waterhall Land, where

there was Frank and there was Timmy. They were all same-sex relationships, so the presence of the gay population in Barbados is nothing new, Mr. Speaker. What is new, though, is the attempt to transport or transplant an alien culture in Barbados called same-sex marriages. That is what is new; and attempting to pass it off as if it is a new normal or as the new standard.

Aside.

Hon. S.D. BLACKETT: It is not the new normal, neither is it the new standard as far as this Minister is concerned. I believe if such an occurrence were to find acceptance by the majority of the population in Barbados, and it finds its way into this Chamber either by way of Amendment or by completely new legislation, that the legislative process would have to be piloted and championed by yours truly. Mr. Speaker, if that is so, then we have a problem; a big problem too. I would have to respectfully ask to let this cup pass from me. I want to repeat that. I would have to respectfully ask that this cup pass from me. Mr. Speaker, I am by no means a paragon of virtue, but I espouse some Christian principles and direction and I do not want that achievement or accomplishment of promoting or piloting anything in this Honourable House to mire my political legacy for all time. I say that upfront. Buggery is illegal in Barbados. Homosexuality is not. For buggery to become a charge against anyone, there must be a complainant. If no-one complains, no-one is charged. What two or three or four consenting adults, whether a couple or a ménage à trois, do within the confines of their bedrooms, however configured, that is their business; but the legal conjoining of two members of the same sex in marriage will not find favour with me now or at any time in my political life or normal regular life, Mr. Speaker.

I know that I have just a short time so I am going to come down the road, Mr. Speaker. This Budget presentation has all the ingredients that will address most of the problems that we have identified in the economy. This Administration must make the decisions we feel will address the ills without adversely hurting our constituents. As I said at the beginning, Barbadians have shown unprecedented charm and patriotism in living through this period of recession and it is a tribute to them that they have, Mr. Speaker. Barbadians can be proud that Barbados is still a good place to live. It is the best place to live in the Hemisphere. To do business, it is safe and has low crime. To recreate and play, it is a good place. It is rated highly. Over 600 000 people came to Barbados as visitors and an almost equal amount came via cruise ship. All of our amenities work with varying efficiencies. Our utilities are sound and reliable. Our social safety net is impregnable. Our society sometimes lacks thought but it is resilient and will rebound. We have nothing to be ashamed of in this country, Mr. Speaker. People who have never faced the

polls or asked anyone for a vote can proffer or suggest any solution they want, without turning the leaf over and examining what would be the consequences or effects on those exposed families. In the final analysis, Mr. Speaker, we in this Democratic Labour Party Administration have a responsibility to the people who elected us, and if we make decisions that do not sit well with them, then there is a mechanism called General Elections that will take care of that. In the meantime, all that is required of us is to do our very best under the circumstances and let the chips fall where they may. If we do our best, angels cannot do better. Barbadians can be assured that this Democratic Labour Party Administration has the best interest of the people of Barbados at heart and, with God's continued guidance and direction, they can be assured that we will strive at all times to do what is just and what is right for them at every single turn. Mr. Speaker, this Resolution has my unfailing support and I am obliged to you.

MR. SPEAKER: I am obliged. Yes, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to join this debate of the 2017 Budgetary Proposals presented on Tuesday afternoon by the Honourable Minister of Finance, Member for the constituency of St. Michael North West. Sir, I want to start by congratulating him and indeed his team and our colleagues here on this side who would have worked together to try to put together a slew of measures that would help to address some of the issues which are presently confronting our nation. Mr. Speaker, I want to also congratulate those Members who have already spoken in this debate, and as Leader of the House I would like to indicate my pleasure so far at the level of contributions and the standard which has been set, and I trust that we will maintain this seriousness of analysis and appropriateness of comment, with the obvious reflection and humour from time to time, to make the debate interesting and lively, Sir.

Sir, I think it is important that we put into context what this Budgetary Statement is about. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West did so very clearly on Tuesday afternoon, but it bears repetition, Sir. It seems to have been lost on some Members of the other side who have spoken, especially the two Members from the Opposition who spoke this morning so far. Sir, the Minister of Finance made the point that the measures which he was putting forward were designed to protect and enhance the level of foreign reserves in the country. This has been a debate which has engaged this country for some time now -- the level of our foreign reserves -- and it has become a very important consideration to protect the currency of Barbados and to maintain that confidence, not only to potential investors but to people who live and work and do business in our country. We need to do those things. We need to complete the process of fiscal consolidation by achieving a balanced budget on the current account with at

least a primary surplus for the next three fiscal periods. These are specific objectives. They are gradual objectives.

Sir, we need to reduce the net financing requirement for Government, and through this reduce the need for Central Bank financing of Government. Again, this has been something which has been debated in Barbados, especially over the last two years. This is not new, because it happened in the 1970s, and I recall it happening in '90s. Whenever there is pressure, whenever there are these unique pressures on our economy, these discussions arise because that is when these measures have to kick in.

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Sir, as we thrive to develop our programmes, we have to recognise, yes, it has to change but it has to be a stage progress, to slow the growth of the national debt in the first instance and over time reduce it to 100 of GDP, which is the figure quoted, place Barbados on a path of regaining a healthy credit rating sufficient to permit the country to retain the option of tapping the international capital markets for reasonable financing in the near future. Sir, these are noble objectives, worldly objectives, objectives that Barbadians can buy into and share with us as we lead this process. Sir, strengthen investor confidence in the Barbados economy and this is almost like the final comment if all of these objectives are taken in consideration will fall into place almost automatically, strengthening of investor confidence in the Barbados economy.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I listen very carefully to the presentation of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East yesterday, here advertisement for filling the position, should any vacancy arise for prime ministership of this country and I trust that Barbadians listened very carefully too because the presentation did not say anything different to the objectives that I have just outlined. All that the presentation said was that we should do nothing about it. All the presentation was that we need to realise these objectives but in the meantime we as Barbadians were to do nothing about it, so we were not to touch taxes, we were not to touch fees for certain activities. We were just to leave everything as it is and allow the slide, allow the slip, allow all those things that need correcting, that we all agree need correcting and this debate has been full. I have also to the debate that is raging around the world because unlike the Honourable Member for St. George South or the Honourable Member for City, who spoke earlier, I do not believe that Barbados' economy exist on its own. Our economic activity is as a result of interaction of a Small Islands Developing States, a community of \$250 000 and a little 166 square miles set as a dot in the Caribbean sea and blessed by a weather pattern, summer and fall, because I have heard this reference that we do not use seasons in Barbados because the Minister of Finance referred to fall. I

heard members on the other side refer to summer frequently yesterday and I do not know if that is not a season too. Sir, we can pull these little words off a page and try to make merry of them, that is the style of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East but, Sir, Barbadians are listening. I know they are listening because I answer my telephone calls and I return them so I can share some of the views that have been expressed to me since this budgetary presentation with the people of Barbados and with this Honourable Chamber. I think the general position is one in which we have taken steps in the correct direction. It is not going to be an entirely painless situation but we have to manage how these processes are put in place. Sir, every time taxation is introduced in Barbados, we have the obvious recognition there will be a movement in the prices. The Honourable Minister of Finance was very careful in pointing out how that price movement should occur in the case of fuel, and he has put in his presentation in writing the example of how the imposition will not significantly move the price of fuel because of the management of the CESS Programme and the cessation of the CESS Programme, so there should be a five cent movement in the case of gasoline and probably about a fifteen cents in the case of diesel. I speak under correction but that is the point. Sir, these 23 per cent and the percentages that the Honourable Member for St. George North referred to last night, these percentages are figments of some of the Honourable members' imaginations.

Mr. Speaker, we do not do price controls per se but he started programme and I commend it for him where he used to empower the operatives of the Ministry (6:17) of Trade to go into our retail sector and try to publish for Barbadians some idea of what the prices are like and, indeed, offer comment as to what is going on. This is not price control per se but it helps to contain the appetite of some of our retail players in respect of price. The truth is that Barbadians have become so vigilante and the use of technology is so pervasive that people hardly shop now without their cellphones taking photographs of prices and products et cetera and making decisions based on that but not everybody is privilege to necessarily operate on that basis.

Mr. Speaker, wherever possible I think that Government can lead the process of helping to share with Barbadians what kinds of prices they should expect and how we should respond to persons who seek to take advantage of these rights. You have to be vigilant, Mr. Speaker. I call on Barbadians to be vigilant and to share with this administration where instances can be observed of less than satisfactory management of any increases that will incur, I am not saying they are not going to be any.

Mr. Speaker, discussions are in place and I want to say this especially because I have heard the Honourable Member for St. George South saying....

Asides.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Sir, discussions are taking place in the Ministry of Finance with respect to health care and relooking the whole question of how the national social responsibility levy (NSRL) will apply to health care. Sir, health care products have been exempted of this imposition in the past and the discussion taking place is one in which that situation will be considered and be returned to as soon as possible. Sir, this will mean that there should therefore then be no increases in the cost of drugs and related services in the country. I hope that can serve to allay some of the fears.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing about the Budget and revenue is that revenue is required to run our operations, revenue is required to run our health care system, revenue is required to generate the monies from which our education system can benefit and revenue is required, as the Honourable Member who just spoke made the point, to run our social care programme, so that there is no point saying do not raise the revenue. If the hospital is short of funds or has to worse than banding their bellies as they say.

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If the Ministry of Education is short of funds, the Ministry of Housing and Lands and Ministry of Transport and Works, then, Sir, we owe it to the people of Barbados to present a programme which will allow these agencies to return where there are shortages, where there are weaknesses, return to effective and meaningful carrying out of their mandate and I will pause on Housing for a little bit because this is one of my favourites. The Members on the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) side before that this is the first time that we see them. This is the first time I have seen the Honourable Member for St. Joseph, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew, or his spin twin, the Honourable Member for St. George North. Mr. Speaker, these are the same Members who ordained the corridors of Government from 1994 to 2008, so they people of Barbados ... and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East was in charge then too. When I hear the Honourable Member say: "if she had \$50 million to put in housing I would build so many small houses it is not funny." She had \$50 million in 1999, Sir, and do you know what she or they built? They built the catastrophe as Warrens that did not cost \$50 million but in the end it is about \$130 million and rising, and I think the man that built it owns it so I do not understand. What is the magic about what the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is going to do with the new \$50 million, if she gets her hands on it, that she was unable to do in 1999 and following? Sir, Barbadians were

alive then. There was a Barbados before today and yes, if you go to Haggatt Hill is not out of bounds to the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) as far as I know so we have all the checks and balances.

The Honourable Members over there need not get nervous, the Honourable Member for St. George South has a little connection with m-a-n but that is his business and he would have to work that out with the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East. He has to work out that between him and hard rock. He is between a rock and a hard place it looks like, Sir, so we got to be very careful. The kinds of things this country went through ... There was a Housing Workers' Credit Fund that was bastardised, Sir. There are reports about the way the Honourable Member for St. Andrew handled that fund that would cause you to buckle in that chair. I know from time-to-time I see things drop from your grasp but if I start to tell you what happened to that credit fund around 1999, Sir, everything would fall out of your lap. All of those notebooks would fall out of your lap. The kind of wanton giveaway of money and the non-collection because it was a loan fund but it was turned into an election grant facility under the Honourable Member for St. Andrew and the Honourable Member for St. George North. The Honourable Member for St. Joseph was not in it so I do not know why he is trying to get in it now for except he was Chairman of the National Housing Corporation. If he wants to get in it I will include him. I will include you in it, Sir, as part of those who wittered away and gave away the funds of this country to your friends. That is what I would include you.

Sir, the point must be made that Barbados did not start yesterday or Tuesday evening. We got to this position as successive administrations trying to run this country and provide the services that we need as a country and the high standard of living that we enjoy. Do you know that they said the angel has fallen? I heard that was the refrain a couple of weeks ago in this Honourable Chamber that the angel has fallen. Barbados the angel in the Caribbean. As Minister of Health we meet together and I tell you, the way that my colleagues in the region look up to Barbados for leadership and I mean I want to congratulate my team at the Ministry of Health for the way that they have really held together this process in Barbados. There are weaknesses, of course, there are weaknesses and failures and we empathise with those who may suffer from time-to-time as a result of our failures but the point is that overall the world recognises how well Barbados is doing in healthcare and in many other regards that is why whenever you travel from London trying to get back home that aircraft is normally filled with about 10 or 20 Barbadians but all other 190 to 200 are visitors who are coming to this blessed island that we share to enjoy not only the sun and the sea but to enjoy the hospitality of our mature people and to share in a safe environment which we must treasure and which we must not allow to be destroyed by anyone no

matter what their colours be it red, yellow or blue. You may take a red dress and clothe it in blue to create some mischief, some stupidity, to create division among our people. This is a fundamental policy of the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) today that we have red and we have blue and when we are ready we take red and put blue on it to confuse blue to make blue think you are red. This is the kind of childish, puerile approach to political messaging, Sir, we need to make sure comes to an immediate end.

Sir, I hope that Barbados begins to appreciate, first of all, the measures that are being implemented are for the good of the country, they are necessary to help us to answer some of the financial situations which we are in, they are as a result of consultation and a sharing of information. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West went through a list of proposals and ideas which were submitted, reduce VAT, increase VAT, this and that. He went through them, he looked at the pros and the cons and he shared it with Barbadians. We need to do implementation. We need to get growth, yes, the Honourable Member for The City of Bridgetown is correct. We need to get growth growing, we need to get the Hyatt built. We must not break the law. Nobody is subscribing to breaking of the law. All the laws of the country should be obeyed but we need to accelerate the processes of implementation so that we can feel the impacts of this growth and people can be employed so that like the Sandals in Maxwell which they hate but love ... Do you know what I mean by that, Mr. Speaker? They hate the Sandals idea but they love the benefits of being able to visit and probably share but you know, that is how we are. I cannot say it is dishonest because you would not allow me to say that, Sir, but that is how the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) operates so they are not going to pour coals on Sam Lord's. They are going to talk about the Hilton Hotel and how we are now contemplating selling a Hilton Hotel that was built by the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) and more directly would have been the brainchild of a couple of members of the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) in the 1961 era when the Right Excellent Errol Barrow and people like Ms. Crawford and that kind of esteem members would have conceived the idea as we built out our tourism product but the truth is that the Hilton Hotel of 1966 is no longer there. The hotel that we see there now is an architectural misrepresentation of everything that the original Hilton Hotel stood for so I do not know what the quarrel is.

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If you look back at a photograph of the old Hilton Hotel there is nothing about the new Hilton Hotel that would give you any idea that it was the original Hilton Hotel, so if today the Government decides to divest its interest in the Hilton Hotel for the benefit of \$100 million... Again, this here was thrown about and tried to be bandied about very smartly by the Honourable Member for St.

Michael North East, very deliberately not smartly, because Barbadians can understand. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West made the point that the selling price is around US\$100 million. Outturn income to the Government as a result of the sale is expected to be around \$100 million, so those are the facts. It is because we are moving to this solid framework in terms of balancing our Budget and having revenues available to make living comfortable to deal with those who are less fortunate and to deal with our healthcare needs.

Again, I thank the Honourable Member who has referred to the cost of healthcare. The Honourable Minister referred to the fact that we should be working towards the production of no charge invoices for the healthcare system especially at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and this is the direction in which we are heading, but the point is before you get there you got to be able to produce the firm and clear analysis and the accounting numbers to be able to generate these invoices in a proper and correct way. It is a good idea in that it begins to share with the public and it helps us with our almost automatic publicity in terms of the kind of level of intervention which we do in Barbados in respect to healthcare which is free to Barbadians and emergency healthcare which is free to all persons in Barbados even visitors, a primary healthcare system which is now augmented by a fully operational David Thompson Health and Social Centre at St. John which sticks in the craws of the Barbados Labour Party because they would have that facility laid fallowed as they left it for 14 years besides a little trick move in 2007 pretending that they were going to provide some kind of funding for it. The numbers in terms of the utilisation of that Centre are there for the public.

We now benefit from an electronic recording of visits to our polyclinics and indeed our hospital, and I regret that I am not going to have the time to spend on that area.

Mr. SPEAKER: You have five minutes.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: I have five minutes but I will get back there if possible. The St. John Polyclinic has now been able to see so far something like 19 000 patients over the year it has been operating. It opened in November 2015, you understand.

Asides.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Those 19 000 were not before it was opened, this is since it was opened, and then of course these are divided predominantly in general practice, which is a characteristic of all of our polyclinics, some 15 000 general practice and then antenatal, family planning and postnatal clinics were something like 1 108 and 1 745 children under five years old accessed child healthcare

services, so I do not know if that helps to present to Barbadians the fact that yes the David Thompson Healthcare Centre may have been long in coming and may indeed have costed more than we had originally budgeted it for but at least the Ministry of Health have been able to put in place a programme which sees it up until this point, this is actually April 2017 so there has been more since then, some 60 000 patient visits occurring at the St. John Polyclinic therefore creating capacity at the Glebe Polyclinic and the St. Philip Polyclinic but providing that very essential need as expressed by the Honourable Member for St. John, so I have no qualms about what direction we are going in healthcare.

Generally, I know that the battle in Barbados is the non-communicable diseases scourge which is present in almost 70 per cent of our adult population. Reference was made to things like human dialysis and the extreme cost it is to our country that we insist on providing. Besides the 247 patients at the hospital itself there are private patients in Barbados and we have now placed four stations, I think it is, at the St. John Polyclinic seeing some 25 patients who have been selected because of their uniqueness in terms of their catchment areas and the ease at which they can get to this polyclinic for service.

Of course, there would have been a level of disappointment that the Budget did not directly address this whole question of taxes on sweetened beverages, cigarettes, et cetera. I am on the side of civil society in this regard because I have said in here already and I am going to say again that we benefit now from a programme in Barbados which although led by the Ministry of Health and our Promotion Unit is orchestrated almost on a daily basis by civil society's participation and generation of a message which is so important: Healthy eating, avoiding sugary and high risks diets, looking at healthy diets, a fair share of fruit and vegetables in our diets daily and exercise, which is extremely important, so that we reduce the risk factors associated with non-communicable diseases and all of the attending threats.

Sir, we are just back from the World Health Organisation's sessions at Geneva. Barbados had the opportunity to participate in the election of the first African Director-General of the World Health Organisation Dr. Tedros. He has become a friend of Barbados. We also congratulate the other two candidates who would have contested: Dr. Nabarro and Dr. Sania Nishtar, but the point is we intend in the region to continue to maintain, augment and build on that strong relationship between Barbados and the World Health Organisation so as to guarantee that holding hand to guarantee that direction in rolling out our healthcare programme in Barbados so that Barbados can be seen as practising the best world standards in healthcare and leading the region and leading indeed the world in

many respects in this regard and give our people that confidence about the work that we are doing in Barbados.

The improvements at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital will be for another time, Sir. I know I am now mashing the crease as they say, but I look forward for the opportunity to come and outline some of the really great improvements that have occurred in the hospital to address some of the backlog of patients that we need to see and to alleviate some of the discomfort that too often attends those persons who have to access healthcare at our hospital or indeed at our polyclinics. You can be assured, Sir, that during my term of office I will work assiduously to make sure that there is improvement in this regard. Customer service must be part of our mantra. It must be on the front-burner of the service we provide so that persons can feel satisfied and comfortable not only cured in body but cured in mind and spirit too.

Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you and may God bless Barbados.

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

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, in a way I am very happy that the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs has decided to do this Budgetary Proposal and Debate so soon after the last Estimates.

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Mr. Speaker, this country was led by the Honourable Member and Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs to believe that sober reflection and consideration of our financial state went into the Estimates document, yet less than two months after those Estimates were laid in Parliament the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs has visited upon the people of Barbados through these proposals a huge tax grab. Mr. Speaker, I do not have very much in common with the Right Honourable Prime Minister, I do not know if that is a good thing or a bad thing but I suspect that if there is one thing that we do have in common is perhaps a love of reading. Mr. Speaker, as I put my few thoughts together for the purpose of contributing to this debate, I was reminded of the famous opening sentences of a book written by Charles Dickens in 1859 called "A Tale of Two Cities." Those opening lines, Sir, read as follows:

"It was the best of times, It was the worst of times, It was the age of wisdom, It was the age of foolishness, It was the epoch of belief, It was the epoch of incredulity, It was the season of light, It was the season of darkness, It was the spring of hope, It was the winter of despair, We had everything before us, We had nothing before us, We were all going direct to heaven,

We were all going direct the other way.”

Perhaps, Sir, what caused me to reflect on this statement was the reference to the seasons in the presentation of the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs when, I think it is at page 31, the Honourable Member said these words:

“Our hope, Sir, is that before fall this year this Parliament and the country as a whole will have a comprehensive, well-thought out and extensively consulted national plan...”

Mr. Speaker, I think it is that reference to season that is unknown to Barbados that I think piqued the interest of many in this Honourable Chamber and beyond. It is normal to use the language when you are using the norms that you are accustomed to and I believe that this little slip in this debate has led us to consider that perhaps this Estimates document was not written in Bay Street. Mr. Speaker, having mentioned fall, it then made it sensible for me to reflect on these opening lines, the “spring of hope and the winter in despair” because as far as I can recollect, winter comes after fall. Mr. Speaker, all of that, though, has to be taken in the context of what we live in today.

I am attracted to this particular sentence because while we know that we are in the age of wisdom, from the measures in and outside of this Parliament and from the actions of this Government, it is easy to see why someone would say that we are in the age of foolishness. Mr. Speaker, while we consider that we are an enlightened people and that this is the season of light, it is easy to see why, when one considers recent statements from Members of this Honourable Chamber about blood running in the gutters and about complaining to the Child Care Board about this and that, it is easy to see why a person could argue that this is the season of darkness.

Mr. Speaker, for my constituents I would very much loved if it were a spring of hope, but they are feeling, especially more so after Tuesday, a winter of despair. We used to have everything before us but now we have nothing before us. Sir, Barbados did not accidentally come to be in this place, we came to be in the place we are where our people are despairing, where we see darkness, where our young people are losing hope as a direct result of a misadministration and a maladministration of this country’s affairs by the Democratic Labour Party since 2008. They were full of fancy promises that they made in their Manifesto, all of which were immediately broken. They tried to charm the electorate and they did so successfully for two terms, but the electorate has nothing to show for it.

Mr. Speaker, on the eve of an election the Members of this Administration come into this Honourable Chamber

and so far they have recited all of the information that they have so carefully put together in their fat document, almost as if this debate is a dress rehearsal for a soon coming election. Mr. Speaker, not one man who has spoken so far has even drummed up the slightest bit of courage to say one word about the negative impact of \$485 million in new taxation on the taxpayers of this country. Mr. Speaker, it is almost as if they do not see a connection between increase taxation and hardship. But why would they? Mr. Speaker, the Members of both the Front Bench and the Back Bench all subscribe to the mantra of their now deceased immediate past leader who talked about families first and distributing the wealth of the people. Do you remember the terms he used, dividing up the fatted calf between the Members of the Democratic Labour Party, so they do not have to condescend to the notion that people are the ones who pay taxes, that does not even cross their minds, not one of reflects on the hardship that will now befall the people of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, we on this side consider ourselves to be more than just an Opposition, we have had the good fortune and the honour to have been elected to Parliament to serve, among other things, as guardians of the futures of Barbadians who increasingly feel that they do not have a voice. Mr. Speaker, there is a temptation of course to pick up the Estimates document, you would have noticed that it has gotten smaller and smaller every years. I do not know if they are conserving people but I just believe that the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs is beginning to run out of things to say. The Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs first budget was long, it had in a lot of words and a lot of fancy things and now what is happening is that the Honourable Member is so beaten, buffeted and frustrated that I would not be surprised that if the Honourable Member were to give another budget before the elections if that budget could reach 12 pages.

Mr. Speaker, there is the temptation to pick up the budget, go through all of the pages and to debunk all of the promises that the Honourable Member has made and all that kind of stuff, but that perhaps is unnecessary for this. Mr. Speaker, we could, however, look at how we characterise this budget and there are only three little things which I consider to be characteristics of this document that I have chosen to focus on. Mr. Speaker, the first one which will be no surprise is that it is burdensome.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Members of this Democratic Labour Party Administration do not get tired of trying to find ways of pummeling the people of Barbados deeper and deeper into the ground. Do you all not get tired? Mr. Speaker, over \$480 million, almost half billion dollars in new taxes the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs felt it was appropriate to come into this Honourable Chamber and dumped on the already weakened resolve and on the already strained backs and sinews of Barbadians.

H:D12C(16)

Mr. Speaker, former Prime Minister David Thompson, now of blessed memory, in his first Budget Speech as Prime Minister and Minister of Finance in July 2008, imposed \$108 million in new taxes on Barbadians. Every year after that, a Minister of Finance has come in and piled on more and more, and when you thought that in his creativity he could not possibly come up with another tax to visit on Barbadians, do you know what he did? He could not come up with any new tax, so he decides to increase the burden of the one that he had imposed already. Sir, \$485 million or so -- half a billion in new taxes -- and not a man over there is able to stand up in this Chamber and announce to the country that these taxes constitute a burden. They will come in and they will recite fact after fact after fact, fake fact after fake fact, but not one of them has the courage to speak a single word on behalf of anybody who has elected them. That is what differentiates this side of this Chamber from the Government benches, Sir. We recognise every day who we have come here to represent. It was not big business that put the Member for the City into Parliament. It was not any select few who put the Member for St. Thomas in. It was not any special interest group in St. Joseph that put me into this Chamber. It is the ordinary people and those are the people on whose behalf we are expected to speak, but somehow the Members of the Government benches do not even consider it appropriate to say that a single one of their constituents has to bear some of this tax. That should tell you something about their focus as representatives.

Sir, this Budget is also inconsistent in approach, because on the one hand the Minister says that the National Social Responsibility Levy is to dampen imports, but on the other hand he says that he is opening these new duty-free zones which he announced, I think, in last year's Budget in August. I do not know what he thinks Barbadians are going to buy in these duty-free zones, because he said they are for Barbadians.

Aside.

Hon. D.D. MARSHALL: Even if they had money, I do not know what he thought they would buy in the duty-free zones. They do not sell jams and jellies in duty-free zones, Sir. They sell Louis Vuitton. They sell Rolex watches. They do not sell furniture that is locally made. Everything that you will buy in a duty-free zone, if the Member for St. Lucy had thought about it, would be things on which you would normally pay duties. What do you normally pay duties on, Sir? Imports. On the one hand you want to dampen imports, but you are going to establish an initiative which will cause Bajans to go and buy more of what? The very imports, Sir. It is shortsighted in its vision. There is no focus on growth, and in fact this Budget denies any possibility of growth.

Sir, I would like to spend a few minutes on the National Social Responsibility Levy. It is ironic that I should speak after the Minister of Health. Apart from the fact that he treated us to some innuendo about how the Housing Credit Fund was spent and who gave what to friends, he could not point to a single instance. Typical innuendo. I could point in this Chamber to a \$27 million unlawful dividend that his Administration declared and used two years ago to pay for the Grotto, out of the same Housing Credit Fund. I could point to that, but the Minister cannot point to a single infelicity in relation to the Housing Credit Fund when we were in Government.

Asides.

Hon. D.D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, I would have liked, but you do not always get what you want or expect, that the Minister of Health should recollect that the National Social Responsibility Levy, when it was put in place in the 2016 Budget, was put in place for the purpose of financing public health care in Barbados. It was not put in place to build roads or to provide water. It was put in place to finance public health care in Barbados, and it would have been desirable -- in fact, it would have been important -- for the Minister of Health as part of the Government's justification for increasing it from two to ten per cent to be able to come to this Chamber and demonstrate the positive effects which the millions of funds raised by this National Social Responsibility Levy had on the health care sector. Not a word. Not a word of how that health care money derived from the National Social Responsibility Levy was spent, but they come here and increase it by ten per cent.

Sir, I think there is a story about the people who had the talents. One person buried his and another person used his, but the whole idea is one of accountability, Sir. You have to account to the people for the money you have taken from them, but that is not important here. All that is important is that the Minister of Finance needs to find more money to spend and he increased this tax to ten per cent, Sir. I have a clinic in Horse Hill that is in the worst condition. You can never find a doctor. You can hardly find a nurse. You can hardly find a maid. The people go there and are turned away on a daily basis. That is what the National Social Responsibility Levy was to do, but not a word from the Minister of Health. Do you know what else they were supposed to do, Sir? Let me read from last year's Budget. The Minister of Finance said:

"It is intentioned that part of the proceeds of this Levy will go towards servicing of the loan which the Government of Barbados has agreed to borrow to provide the Sanitation Service Authority with a fleet of new trucks in the coming months."

Not in the coming year but in the coming months; a fleet of new trucks. That is where the National Social Responsibility Levy was to go, Sir. It is about shouldering the social responsibility. The people of this country were told, "You have to help to shoulder some of the responsibility", as if they thought we were not shouldering enough. It was earmarked, never mind it had to go in the Consolidated Fund; the Minister dealt with that in the Estimates. He said it was to go into the Consolidated Fund but it would be allocated. A fleet of new trucks, and Sanitation Service Authority today does not have a new truck; not one. None ordered, none in possession, none on the way, but yet still you are going to increase it, Sir? How is it that you were not a good steward of the \$100 million-plus that you got when you had it at two per cent, but you have the gall to come into this Chamber and increase it now to ten per cent? What did you do with it when you collected it at two per cent? Why should we feel that you would be a better steward of it when you increase it to ten per cent?

The Minister of Social Care had the gall to talk. I have known him for a long time. He had the gall to come in here and talk. I was worried about his blood pressure because he was very animated and hollering hard. Sir, last year the Minister of Finance said because the National Social Responsibility Levy will be a burden on poor people, I am going to give the Welfare Department an extra \$2 million to help ease the burden. Not a penny they got. Do you doubt me? I love it, you know. Sir, let us look at the Estimates for 2017-2018 under the heading of Welfare. The approved Estimates for the Welfare Department were \$23 449 878.

11.54 a.m.

Sir, these are the Estimates that would have been approved at the end of March 2016, and the Minister in August said he would give an additional \$2 million. Sir, the good thing about these Estimates is that they give you the before and after figure. The revised Estimates for the same period was not increased by \$2 million, it was decreased, so \$2 million should have been added. It was \$23 424 000, so instead of getting \$2 million, they took off \$20 000.

Mr. Speaker, either you are going to account for the people resources of which you are the steward of you are not. The Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Community Development did not consider it import to come in here and speak about whether he got the extra \$2 million that was promised or what it was used for but he comes in here and grandstands.

Mr. Speaker, it offends the Ministry of Social Care, and the Minister of Health that we could talk about Cahill. The Ministry of Social Care, says that we carry it to Bentham's and bring out a brand new 'duppy'. Sir, it suits

the Government for the people of this country to forget. It suits the Government that for the people of this country to forget that David Thompson, while he was still Prime Minister generate an invoice to CLICO for \$3.3 million and drew in a prominent former Attorney-General's name as saying some of the money going to him but the people of this country are supposed to forget that a Prime Minister did that to us.

Asides.

Mr. D. MARSHALL: It was not the people's money but it was CLICO's monies that should have been there for insurers. It was the single largest act of dishonesty by a public figure but it suits this Government to ask the people to forget, so it suits this Government to ask people to forget about Cahill, to forget that contracts were signed when members of Cabinet did not even know. Sir, members of the Cabinet did not even know that the Government was going to embark on a multi-billion project but, Mr. Speaker, it is a brand new 'duppy', according to the Honourable Member.

Sir, do you know what is a also a brand new 'duppy': the Grotto. The Grotto is another inconvenient truth. The same Grotto that the \$27 million from Housing Credit Trust Fund was used to pay off. There was no tender, the Permanent Secretary asked why has this project been increased by \$10 million, what is the justification. National Housing Corporation went along and signed the contract, the Cabinet approved it, and not a justification given to the Permanent Secretary.

Mr. Speaker, these are inconvenient truths we know, so it bothers this administration when we put things like this on the front burner. Sir, do you know that the Minister of Finance said that these Estimates are intended to achieve certain directives, one of them is strengthening investor confidence in the Barbados' economy. Sir, you strengthen investor confidence in all kinds of ways but the one thing that investors always look for is whether your country is well run. Investor, true, will be concerned about your credit rating and all those kinds of things. They will be concerned about your deficit but investors I would bet are more concerned about the way a Government makes decisions. Sir, do you know why because decision-making by public authorities is supposed to be transparent, it is supposed to be predictable and it is supposed to follow rules. Sir, nobody comes into a country to invest if they are not sure that Governmental decisions are going to be made on the basis of predictable policies and rules to be follow yet at every single step, this Government has shown that it does not care about the rules, does not care about tenders, does not care about the administrative process that is put in place where a Permanent Secretary is put there to advise a Minister, does not care about any of those things. Sir, try strengthening investor confidence through good

governance but this administration does not understand what good governance is, it does not understand the importance of accountability, it does not even understand its obligations to the people that put them there.

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

Mr. D. MARSHALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what we are faced with is a virtual wild wild west as far as the Democratic Labour Party is concerned. Nobody knows what is going to happen from one day to the next, not even the members of Cabinet. Sir, policies come and go, they change back and nobody knows. Sir, we are at a very delicate stage. There are two things that divide people, one is religion and the other is politics and they have divided the world over perhaps from time immemorial but whatever the divisions that may exist, we need to recognise that there is going to be a Barbados long after the Democratic Labour Party and even after the Barbados Labour Party have moved off the scene.

Asides.

Mr. D. MARSHALL: there was one before but when we talk about the one going forward, we have to recognise that decisions have been made by this Democratic Labour Party that not only taint the institutions they are there to protect but also will have a negative long-term impact on generations to come. Sir, I will say this. I believe that rules are there to be followed by both sides but I believe more importantly in the responsibility for accounting for the people and throughout our administration we, at every term, accounted to the people for our decisions. They did not always agree but we accepted and we were accountable to them but we have here, Sir, and this perhaps is a fine example on which to finish is a Public Accounts Committee which is a Subcommittee of this Parliament that summons Ministers to appear it to talk about the same Grotto but because they are not accountable they decide they are not coming any where and there is nothing that can be done about it. Sir, that is the attitude...

Asides.

Mr. D. MARSHALL: Yes, disrespect is the right word, disrespect for this institution.

Hon. S.A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading this Chamber when he says that the Opposition in Government accounted for all of their contractual and other matters. I have in my hands, Mr. Speaker, the 2006 Auditor-General Report that speaks...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you will get a chance to speak and to dispute what he says because there

is no way that I can allow Honourable Members to dispute what another member has said just like that there.

Hon. S.A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I am guided by your ruling, Sir.

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Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please conclude your speech.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, the one thing that we do not have control over is time. Time passes and there are constitutional deadlines for the calling of an election and we know that today is just another dress rehearsal for the Democratic Labour Party (DLP). The problem is, Sir, that you cannot take eight years of rehearsals and want to convince the people of Barbados that you at the end of eight years are now ready to save the people. Nobody will give the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) credit, Sir, for now trying to appear to rescue us from a dilemma and a predicament that they have put us in because that would be the equivalent of a man lighting a house and then upfront holding the hose saying, "do you see what a good job I am doing?" That is what it would be equivalent of so you are not going to get any brownie points having brought us here. Even Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford asked, "How did we get here?" You have dragged us from the pinnacle of success and good fortune in the Caribbean and now we are at the bottom of the heap and the Minister of Finance wants to say to us, "I am now ready to save you". I want the Minister of Finance to try to save himself because for eight years he could not save anybody in body and to try to fool us now, Sir, it would be the greatest, greatest punishment of all.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Philip North.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to enter this debate and I personally want to thank the people of St. Philip North for giving me this opportunity again to speak in a Budget debate. Of course, I also want in my introduction, Mr. Speaker, to congratulate the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, the Minister of Finance. Indeed in these challenging economic times and circumstances outside of our control, the Minister of Finance has ensured that the economy remained as stable, that, of course, our social programmes remained intact and to use his words, he said, "it demonstrated steely resolve, clarity of purpose and indeed visionary leadership." I want to congratulate the Honourable Member once again for ensuring that we as a Government has placed Barbados first above party and indeed that we did not come into this Honourable Chamber with an election Budget. It shows

maturity and it shows that we have the interest of all Barbadians at heart.

Mr. Speaker, I happened to come across the Opposition's response and indeed the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central aptly put it in his response yesterday when he said he was looking for solutions from the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) as to how we are going to confront this challenging economic time and he aptly put it. He said that the solution was we are going to get rid of Styrofoam, we are going to change the public service commission, we are going to do this and do that but nothing concrete or fundamental in terms of economic solutions but indeed that is not surprising at all. I always say that there is a new concept called fake news and, of course, when the Honourable Member for St. Michael Central referred to the Opposition position, what we called same sex union or same sex marriage and it recognise that they have a position on it, I liken it into the same category of fake news so I do not pay that any mind at all but indeed that is the difference between the two parties in that we said that Barbados was more than an economy, it is a society. That is why we embarked on a legislative agenda that touched and concerned and, of course, made an impact on the ills in this society and the Honourable Member for St. Michael Central was in the forefront. He brought a new piece of domestic violence legislation that broaden the law in terms of beatings among men on women, men on men or women on women, and I want to congratulate him for that because he is on an agenda and I know that he must be encouraged. Indeed, what struck me yesterday, Mr. Speaker, again brought out the philosophical divide between the two parties. I was surprised that mention was made of people in Wellington Street, in the City area, people off St. Michael, all of a sudden they recognised that there is suffering, that there are pit toilets, that people need housing, all of a sudden. Mr. Speaker, there is document laid in this House years ago, in fact, a study done by the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) and it spoke to the housing conditions, the quality of the housing stock, the existence of pit toilets, and the existence of subhuman conditions in the urban corridor. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I would like to refer to these documents because the White Paper on Housing, Ministry of Housing and Lands, Bonnetts Unit in 1997 or there about at Chapter 2, Mr. Speaker, if I could crave your indulgence says, the study of the main slum districts in and around Bridgetown was undertaken some time in 1944/1945 and it spoke to the conditions, how many houses did not have water and those without access. Only Suttle Street, Lightfoot Lane, Phillips Tenantry, Ellis Village, all of the information is in this document, Mr. Speaker, but they did the study and at the point of time they had all the milk and honey to address these social problems and issues of housing. They had the empirical evidence, Mr. Speaker, but what happened. We talk about two "Barbadoses". During that time the philosophy was let us sell the land to the foreigners on the west coast, let us

tinker with the Property Transfer Tax Act to make land more accessible to foreigners but at the same time, the other Barbados was existing and no help was given to them. At the same time the state agencies that had and were set up and established to ensure that there is some quality of the housing stock and conditions, what happened? Do you know what happened? An amendment was brought to the Housing Act to give the National Housing Corporation (NHC) power to enter into commercial business and to facilitate buildings like the Barrack Building. That is what happened. It is in this House that we have a document here stating housing conditions bad. We had the Minister of Housing at the time with money in the Treasurer but yet \$100 million was put in a dump at Greenland.

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I heard the Leader of the Opposition said that if she had \$52 million how many pit toilets and how many this she would have done. Could you imagine how many houses could have been built with that \$100 million and also the \$90 million at the Barrack building as a result of an act of Parliament that changed the purpose and focus of the National Housing Corporation.

I want to share this document with the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown because if he wants to play politics we could play politics and if he wants to be real we can say look we as a Parliament have to really look at this information very seriously because reports from 1944 and 1945 mentioned the same conditions that we are speaking about today, so we must get serious and not come with elections gimmicks that if I had \$52 million and that if I had money and if they had a school to be painted that the fellows "on the block" would have to paint it. Well, you could only paint a school once so when the fellows done paint the school what other school they are going to paint, they got to wait now until the next five or six years to paint the same said school, so Mr. Speaker, again we cannot buy that.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Well, the Honourable Member for St. Joseph needs to be very careful, but I will get there soon.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Opposition and the unofficial Opposition like to spread a lot of fake news because there is this myth that the Democratic Labour Party never employed any small contractors, that the contracts were given to only big contractors and that is not true because this Parliament debated a \$40 million Resolution which was geared towards small contractors and those contractors built houses at Lancaster 1 and 2, Parish Land, Marchfield, Workhall and all over the place, and at the same time the small contractors were building houses for the Rural

Development Commission and also the Urban Development Commission, so this myth that small contractors received no work under the Democratic Labour Party again is a lie, I will say that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I heard the Leader of the Opposition said yesterday that they had 800 people on remand and that the court system is clogged up and that this Democratic Labour Party Government is doing nothing. The learned Attorney-General came to Parliament about two months ago and amended the Magistrate's Courts Act so that indictable matters can leapfrog the Magistrate's Courts system and go straight to the High Court, and later tonight he will be bringing a further amendment so that statements taken by constables could still go up to the High Court because the law states at this time that only a sergeant or an officer above that rank can sign the statements and it would go up to the High Court, so I am saying that he is making it easier. We had a Government that had 14 years to address the problem when they knew full well that there was a backlog in the Court system which they did not do, but the Honourable Member for St. Philip South has the guts to bring the Amendments so that we could have now an ease in the backlog, and I congratulate the Honourable Member for St. Philip South. The Honourable Member for St. Philip South was not an Attorney-General sitting down and lapping his feet. No. This is an historic event, so to say that nothing is happening, that we are sitting back on a court system and it is clogged up when the learned Attorney-General is bringing pieces of legislation in here to make it easier, again is wrong.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I said that they are now really in bed with fake news because one man said that when he becomes President that he was going to build a wall, so I do not take this thing that they have a blind eye to same-sex marriages and same-sex unions, I know where they are going with that.

Mr. Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party is again with their agenda. The problem in this country is because a working-class boy from St. Michael North West is controlling the purse strings of this country. It is etched in classicism and snobbery, that is what it is. They called him a boy and a lot of nonsense, foolishness, like if the Honourable Leader of the Opposition understands the rhythm of working-class people and poor people, I do not understand it.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, again the official Opposition and the unofficial Opposition would like to give the impression, to use the young people language, that Barbados is a popped down country, but there have been growth. We have done projects like Sam Lord's Castle creating jobs. I remember that at the time the Honourable Member for St. Philip North was then a man named Rudolph "Cappy"

Greenidge who was the Minister of Labour, I am not going to speak about him, but let me say that I recall when Sam Lord's Castle was again facing the issues that they had up there and the number of people that were employed from St. Philip at Sam Lord's Castle. I recall the meetings all of the workers had out there under the tamarind tree in Long Bay. Of course, they were concerned about their future, about their just due, about jobs and how they were going to get a job because Sam Lord's Castle made an important contribution to that area of St. Philip. Families upon families worked at Sam Lord's Castle. It closed down and then the Minister of Labour at the time did not care anything about the people up there in St. Philip and persons who were outside of St. Philip were at Sam Lord's Castle.

Could you imagine they asking yesterday if this Government is a caring Government? In stepped the caring Minister of Tourism who is now constructing the same Sam Lord's Castle that could have been built and reconstructed and put back into operation by the said Government when they had all of the milk and honey, but this is a Government that is doing nothing.

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Mr. Speaker, the same workers had to fight for their severance and the then Minister of Labour did not even lift one finger to help them and we had to go out there and assist them, but yet this Government is not a caring Government but a Government now that is seeking to amend the Housing Incentive Act to ensure that developers can now build more low-income housing and to grant them concessions, but a Government of the day between 1994 and 2008 were more interested in Special Development legislation and really creating Special Development Areas really for the wealthy. Mr. Speaker, in contrast, a Government that is now seeking to utilise Parliament to amend the Housing Incentives Act so that people who are house hungry and land hungry can have access to housing and shelter, but in contrast at the time people were marching up to the National Housing Corporation and getting turned back. The people in the city were going up there looking for a piece of land, a unit or whatever and the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown knows this full-well, that is why the Ministry of Housing, Lands and Rural Development at the time acquired the land at White Park Road, in Catts Castle and in Mason Hall Street where there is now Crown property in Mason Hall Street because we understood, recognised and have the empirical evidence that the housing stock in that area, not only that you had persons who owned land, but persons who only had a house spot, people who were occupying illegally. Mr. Speaker, those parcels of lands are there to ensure that a housing policy is further developed and that we could utilise those areas to build new duplexes or high-rises so that we can bring a quality of life and a standard of living to those people there who need housing.

Mr. Speaker, I want to associate myself with the Honourable Member for Christ Church South who said that it is the same Barbados Labour Party... Mr. Speaker, there is nothing new about it, the same actions and inactions will happen, the same philosophy will go on, where the poor will be in the background and the rich will be on top, where there will be access to housing and lands.

Mr. Speaker, I always say to the Honourable Member for St. Michael East that I do recall while I was in Opposition, and the Honourable Member for St. George South at the time and the learned Queen Council both made remarks, in fact, the Honourable Member for St. George South made strong statements in here that the poor people of St. George South and St. Michael east were being treated like outside children, that none of the social services, that none of the land or houses as a result of the housing policy of the Barbados Labour Party touched those people in St. George South and in St. Michael East. Mr. Speaker, therein actually described and puts in a nutshell the philosophy of the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that not only have we made sure that the vulnerable and the weak are taken care of, but we also made serious impact on workers in this country not only through the passage of legislation... Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Minister of Labour because when you compare the present Minister of Labour with the other Ministers of Labour and the pieces of legislation that have been passed, for example, the Employment Rights Act, the Health and Safety at Work Act, the soon to come Minimum Wages Act, all of those pieces of legislation connect to the poor working-class of this country, again a manifestation of the philosophy of the Democratic Labour Party and it also shows the philosophical divide between the two parties.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Honourable Member for St. Philip South. Again through his Citizens Security programme the Honourable Member has now embarked and engaged in building out police stations and civic station because at the time we know full-well that police officers were crying out for better working conditions, the police stations were in a dilapidated state, Black Rock, Hastings, et cetera. In fact, what happened was that the State had to compensate some police officers as a result of injury on the job. Mr. Speaker, we as a Government decided to bring about better accommodation for workers in this country. We built the two buildings in Warrens to give public officers better working conditions. We are now constructing further police stations to ensure that police officers can have better working conditions.

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

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I want to say that indeed I have responsibility for public transport in this country. Mr. Speaker, Sir, there has been calls from the Opposition and from the unofficial opposition to privatise the public transport system in this country. Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are not going there because we know what happened years ago. Sir, the history of public transportation, of course...

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading this House. Mr. Speaker, I normally shadow the Ministry of Transport and Works and at no time did I make a statement about the Barbados Labour Party privitising the Transport Board.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I am not going to entertain that as a point of order, when you get up to speak you can make your point. There is no point of order found. Please continue, Honourable Member.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I said “unofficial Opposition” so that if the Honourable Member has placed himself in that category then I understand why because of course the Honourable Member is from the same class origin as I am, so of course the Honourable Member will be treated as the “unofficial Opposition”. Mr. Speaker, again a manifestation of the philosophy of the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that due to the age of the fleet at the Transport Board... In fact, there are 275 buses in the fleet at the Barbados Transport Board. The last buses were purchased in 2006. In 1997 there were buses bought, in 2000 and in 2006, so that we have buses that are 18 and 20 years old and there will be issues with those buses and what we are doing is putting systems in place to ensure that there is some proper fleet management and that we have a system of preventative maintenance, Sir.

12.38 p.m.

Of course, there is an independent report into the Transport Board, and that independent report has suggested that as a result of the systems we have put in place, there is a reduction in maintenance and we must further modernise. Of course, the issue with Transport Board is also the availability and sometimes the extensive nature of some parts. Mr. Speaker, I must say that the management of the Transport Board has embarked on some policies in terms of even sourcing parts directly, and that has resulted in tremendous savings to the Transport Board. Indeed, what we have to do in the interim, and what we are doing now, is to further integrate the public transport system.

I want to say that only recently about 15 to 20 private operators have shown an interest in further integrating into the public transport system and getting

involved in the taxi project which we have launched. Indeed, there are some challenges in the taxi project, and we are trying to iron them out. Indeed, it is not that the Government or the Ministry have decided to play dead. We have put systems in place, we have asked the private sector to come on board, we have had meetings with the stakeholders, and we have been looking at the best way possible to ensure that there is a smooth integration process of the private sector into the public transport system. Mr. Speaker, my position is this: The Democratic Labour Party, we have done extremely well in challenging economic times. Our public transport system is still intact. Sanitation is intact, the social programmes are intact. This talk about people being hungry and not having any clothes is amazing. It is amazing that you can get this kind of attitude from the Barbados Labour Party; a party that had all the money, Mr. Speaker. One hundred million dollars in Greenland, money at Barrack, all the money, the CarMax building up there, millions of dollars that could have touched the poor people of this country, and now they want to come back to manage this country, Mr. Speaker. No. This country is in good hands, in good, stable leadership, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to fight, Mr. Speaker.

The Member for the City is nodding his head because he knows full well that the poor people in Nelson Street and Wellington Street and in St Philip were neglected by the Barbados Labour Party, Mr. Speaker. They like to sling mud and talk about people's character, but I like that kind of thing too, Mr. Speaker. I like that, but we will get there, Mr. Speaker. Again, I want to associated myself with this Resolution, and I wholeheartedly support this, Sir. I will say again we are not going with the Barbados Labour Party, so the Government will continue to reign, Sir. We will ensure that the poor and the vulnerable and the weak are protected and that our social programmes continue, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

SUSPENSION

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

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

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

12.38 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed. When the suspension was taken, we were on Order No. 14, and with that we shall continue. The Honourable Member for St. Michael East

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed. When the suspension was taken, we were on Order No. 19, and with that we shall continue.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael St, Thomas.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Thank you, Sir. I bring the concerns of the people of Barbados but more particularly those St. Thomas to this Honourable Chamber in the light of this new Budget of what I perceive and most Barbadians do as some very draconian measures. The constant heavy burden of taxes on the backs of Barbadians over the last nine years is a real great cause for concern. We in that wonderful parish in the centre of the island has been able to withhold our emotions and hurt when we see what has happened to areas in St. Thomas, especially the areas closest to the Scotland District. Mr. Speaker, there were no road repairs over the years, mass unemployment because a lot of the Beautify Barbados would have been a part of those persons who would have been sent home under this Government that said it cares between late 2013 and 2014 and many of them are still on the unemployment list meaning they are still at home grappling because of how the economy has contracted and few people are being hired as maids and gardeners and in areas where these people have their skills, so unemployment is still very ripe in that area, and some of them are very young people who were in MTW, National Conservation Commission and so on, they are still at home, so they are feeling the squeeze for the last couple of years, but this Budget would not add fire to an already terrible situation.

Mr. Speaker, I have the poorest bus service in Barbados in St. Thomas in that Sturges route. I know the Honourable Minister would have spoken about TASI Project but I stand here to give the evidence that the Transport Authority Service Integration (TASI) project that I supported and considered to be a novel idea is not working on the Sturges route and we are suffering. I take it as an insult when I have called, laid complaints, I have written and sent message to the authorities about the TASI Project and I have read in the newspapers about one of the members of staff who says it is not true, so I have started now to record and I will do further recording because the TASI project is only causing a lot of people in St. Thomas to lose their work because the buses are not reliable, some of them are unroadworthy and they are running to time and a lot of us are suffering as a result. Sir, as a matter of fact, I did not speak to the Honourable Member on this one but I can say on the very last day of April when those poor

pensioners were leaving Holy Innocent Church from the concert, bus fare was demanded from that load of people saying that is not the bus for the route and it is one that is in the TASI Project. Sir, it is that bad. I know that tickets would have been torn off because pensioners do not pay but there is a ticketing system and it would have been torn off and given in to the Ministry of Transport to pay for those seniors who should have had a free ride and it hurts me to see how we are suffering and the more we complain, the more we draw it to attention without complaining, we are not getting any ease in there. I would like no more of the people of Barbados to be unemployed and I would like no poor person from St. Thomas to be suffering in the way they do.

Mr. Speaker, the illegal dumping is impacting on us. I know that a lot of it is said to be as a result of the tipping fee to be paid but within the last week, it is worse. I want to know how this Budget will help me because I am not seeing any funds coming in here or any effort as was said in the Budget last year for us to get more sanitation trucks to be able to clean community so that when persons are ready to dispose of their refuse, it is impacting on gullies and watercourses, not only in St. Thomas but across a number of parishes we are seeing it even at location in this area of St. Micheal.

Mr. Speaker, that has me concern and I have a bigger Concern for where Bee Bottles is and the kinds of challenges emanating from the dump there. I call it a dump because when you look at it the conditions are so poor. There are rats, vermin and so on. It really is a terrible travesty and I would like the Government the General Manager to move it from there to the Vaucluse location where we voted for it to be relocated. Sir, I hear on the radio somebody who says every week that I am responsible for Bees Bottle closing down but that is so far from the truth. It is not the truth and therefore, I would not want to deal with that anymore except to say that it is a terrible eyesore and is creating tremendous challenges in that area where it is located that it should not have been because those are 16 acres of good agriculture land that would have been taken up and the Town and Country Planning did not give permission. Sir, I want that out of the air because I am talking about the illegal dumping and how distasteful it is to the eye and the smell is hurtful when one has to smell the odour in that area.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing is the drainage problems I have. We were told that drainage would have been a thing of the past and St. Thomas is now flooding even when you are coming down hill. I am not going to go any further than that than to say that we are suffering. Sir, Bridgfield floods, Cane Gardens floods, that main road by the Bridgefield pavilion. It should not be happening when we know so many millions of dollars were invested, they were voted

for, they were expended and we have not been able to get the benefit from such a situation.

Mr. Speaker, the recreational parks are in a mess. Sir, signage is now in a state where the termites are eating out those that are wood and the ones made of metal they are falling down, particularly by the Post Office in Welchman Hall. Sir, the road signs have fallen apart and at the bottom of Ashford Hill, the sign has fallen down and calling at the depot makes no difference because you always hear that we do not have materials.

Mr. Speaker, the limited spending power of Barbados causes tremendous challenges as well on our people, on my people the folks of St. Thomas. The water situation impacted on us in a way and I felt that this particular Budget would have even given me an opportunity where St. Thomas has so many large acres of arable land, where bush is growing blocking up the place and creating all kinds of challenges and I would have hoped that this Government would have had the vision that at least speak to land for the landless and helping to empower a lot of people. There are scores of people who want to do agriculture but they do not have the land and I felt this was a good opportunity. We are talking about our foreign reserves, we are talking about expenditure of large amounts, \$800 million approximately on our food bill going overseas and I felt this would have been a good idea for some kind of action to have taken place to be able to lease land through the Government doing a kind of lease arrangement to help Barbadians both men, women, the young and the old to be able to earn an honest dollar to help to feed themselves and I am sure they would be able to generate some employment and change around that whole circumstance of having to rely on food coming in, carrots, beans and other food items coming from overseas to feed us in Barbados when we were into feeding ourselves for so many years. Sir, agriculture is now worse than ever before in the country. I felt it was a good idea that we would continue to pursue the land for the landless project to be able to make the difference. Therefore, I have some challenges with what has been offered in this Budget and as I go ahead I will speak on them. I close on this one to say that Barbadians generally do not want handouts. They do not like to be pitied, certainly not my people. They do not want to be mendicant, they like their dignity and the majority of them want to work hard and to work honestly in order for them to gain.

Mr. Speaker, I can testify to the fact that when we left office in 2008, a good platform was laid for Barbados.

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We heard of the United Nations Kofi Annan who said that Barbados would have been punching above its weight when we were in office and when we demitted, yes

we had the 15 per cent VAT and that was a collapsing of a number of other taxes to let people pay a one off amount of taxes.

We had the Reverse Tax Credit that helped persons who were working below the threshold that did not contribute to the paying of National Insurance, those persons were able to apply and around this every year Common Entrance Examination is finished, children are getting ready to go to school, August is coming up and they were able to get that \$750 to be able to go towards the purchase of school clothing, books and so on. That is no longer in existence. Another pillar has been removed from under the poor, ordinary people of Barbados. Pensioners got their annual increase, yes, they have been able to receive a \$5 last year and I believe the year before but sad to say, some pensioners who were getting two cheques now only get one cheque and it has put them in a further depressing situation and it really has created a lot of fall out in their lifestyle and so on. What they were used to and now what they are experiencing in this situation. Civil servants have been faithful, they have been patient. They have not had an increase in eight or nine years almost. They too are feeling it. Some of their allowances were taken away. I was listening to hear that at least some allowances would have been given back to them and we know that there are some allowances otherwise from the credit union and from paying our mortgages and so, we are no longer able to claim them when we are doing our P.A.Y.E. on an annual basis.

I also want to talk about education and to talk about how our young people have not been given the opportunity to be able to further their studies in some instances. I was most alarmed last year when I learnt of 98 persons coming in from Africa to do hospitality at the Barbados Community College and we have 900 young people who would have probably applied and could not get in. We could understand that but how do you take in strangers ahead of those Barbadians who meet the criteria and whose parents would have worked hard and been paying taxes to be able to get their children an opportunity to study to fulfil some of the same roles that the Honourable Minister of Tourism would have spoken about when they were doing the hospitality. I have a difficulty with that. Every year 3 500 children go into secondary school and 3 500 come out but where are they going to go? What are they going to do? We are not a set of persons who are accustomed going on any block. We would go by the street corner as a people in the past and we would be able to talk and adults would be with us and would guide us along a path. Nowadays our young people are going on the block where most of them are of the same age, one or two of them would have nefarious options and the influences are on these 3 500 young people. Many of them have had their hopes, dreams and aspirations dashed when it came to going the University of the West Indies (UWI). Two weeks ago we

are hearing they are to pay an additional amount toward tuition. What are we doing with our young? When we are not planning purposefully for them and we expect them to do the things that are right. We expect them to come out to be the best citizens that they can be. That is a fallacy, Mr. Speaker.

The health service, yes, we are having challenges and we know there has been a worldwide recession but a lot of the other regional islands have come out of their recession and are going forward. Why are we in a situation now where the kind of recommendations that have been put before us this week by the Honourable Minister of Finance, why have they come to us at this time when we know that Barbados was punching above its weight and we were firing on all of the cylinders, manufacturing, do not talk about construction at all. Construction was ahead in a way that made a difference. I talked about agriculture a little bit. The international business sector is still growing but there are so many hiccups and it is having an impact on that particular industry as well. Small businesses, when you go through Swan Street now stores are shut off. Persons who normally would have rented a store are now on the street trying to ply their trade and every trade and every minute they have to be running helter skelter pulling racks and so to be able to survive in a country that they knew they had the autonomy to have some money in their pockets, to go at a lime, to go on a cruise to buy church clothes, to send their children to university, to do so many things, they are now living one day at a time, sweet Jesus. That is where they are at now with this Government and the draconian measures, this austere moment that is impacting on them and it has gone on. I know there are going to be criticism, why did you not do it in the 14 years? I am asking why in these nine years have we not had better opportunities because there was money coming in through taxation when we know in 2008 the then Honourable Member for St. John would have put a tax on us for bicycles, road tax, and so many other taxes and Barbadians abided by it because they wanted for us to get a better life. Something is definitely wrong with what is happening in this country at this time.

Mr. Speaker, law and order. That is another one that has me dumbfounded. I knew that before we demitted office that in 2006/2007, the Royal Barbados Police Force was equipped and outfitted with new trucks and other vehicles and the fleet would need maintenance and they would need a new fleet because those are vehicles that would have been used over and over again. One officer parks it, other one has to pick it up and move with it. Similarly the bus and I have a problem with what I am seeing with our young people again. Every day, every week our young people are out there faced with tremendous dangers. Many of them are loitering. The devil finds work for idle hands to do and you hear this body got shot, the next body got murdered, the next person got stabbed, the next person robbed somebody and it goes on and on. We

are afraid, Mr. Speaker, in our own homes because we never know when the danger will come our way. It is not the Barbados we knew before and it seems to be getting worst by the day. While I would agree that it may be other extenuating sources that maybe impacting on them, at the end of the day they are somebody's children. They are lawless and I have heard the Honourable Minister of Youth and Sports spoke yesterday and the Honourable Member still cannot give us a definitive number as to how many young people are in the Endless Possibility Project. I know that many young people from St. Thomas have applied to the Youth Affairs Department to pursue what the Honourable Minister calls the Youth Mainstreaming Project that is still the same old, same old project OASIS and they cannot get in for any training despite however hard they try. I am not going to be being. Another in the way that I have been begging indifferent institutions for young people to get a chance to improve their quality of life. The Honourable Minister should have told us yesterday how many young people attend the Youth Service and how many graduated because I know that the Youth Service was scheduled to accommodate 100 recruits and I can tell that the numbers are so far from that when it comes to them passing out and so on. That Youth Service used to be a vibrant institution and I want to laud the efforts of those workers in the Youth Department, not only in the Youth Service, but in the Youth Affairs Department, generally, especially the Youth Commissioners whom I know go out and do excellent work. Nothing that the Constituency Councils does can be compared with what the Youth Affairs Department does particularly the Youth Commissioners and I am hurting for the young people. It is somebody's child, somebody's daughter, somebody's nephew, somebody's uncle and what is happening to our young people, both male and female and this Government had nine years to carry on the excellent programme that was started by the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) to help to engage the youth and to help to empower them because a lot of us in here, I cannot say all of us, but a lot of us in here came through environs that were ... We were impoverished, but because we had caring parents, we were able to seize opportunities through our parents' guidance and we are now here as colleagues and so, rubbing shoulders together. Some of our children are not getting that opportunity and it speaks a lot as well, Mr. Speaker, to what is happening in education.

The Minister of Education has been a unionist for many years, as president at that, and when we hear all the madness on the radio, the unions are at loggerhead with the Ministry and so on, not having dialogue, this Government has got to find a way of having dialogue with individuals and it hurts when I see our children going through the cracks.

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Some of our children are going into school like they are going through a conduit, they go through one way, they come out the same way. It is not the Barbados we are accustomed to that we boasted and prided ourselves of as a country of high literacy.

I believe that more of our children can be saved once we put policies and programmes in place and we have dialogue, but you know what, that calls for vision. Unless there is vision carrying on from the curriculum reform that was started by the Barbados Labour Party in 1995 and doing the necessary evaluation and coming up with the other creative aspects of policy we will lose more of our children because our children are living in households where there is fighting sometimes day and night, where a parent might have been killed and there is nobody to counsel it, where a parent may have to work and there is a latchkey child and the child is in there on its own, it could do whatever it feels like, and any adult could go in there and molest it and so on and so forth so. We need to be able to put some programmes in place to be able to stymie that process and that decay in the educational sector.

We as a people have got to do things in our communities as well to be able to save more of our children and more of our adults who sometime only want to be able to say what the challenge is and get that little listening ear and that guiding hand to uplift them out of the particular situation. I am concerned with law and order and I want for the police to continue to do excellent work because without them we can do nothing. I want for that to happen.

Mr. Speaker, I know that in 2008 we had a situation where we had some non-nationals among us especially the Guyanese. We have a lot of St. Lucians and Vincentians as well who ply their trade selling as vendors but our Guyanese were told ever so welcome wait for a call and this country started to fall apart because they were the ones who were helping us with the agriculture on private homes and properties. I am concerned, Mr. Speaker, that many of them wanted to come to Barbados to live before but you know what Guyana is now flourishing in a way that is different and it is good that they perhaps could have gone back home and help themselves but we want Barbadians to get that opportunity to help themselves. I agree with what was said by a Senator in the Other Place many years ago: Grow what you eat and eat what you grow. That is what is going to save Barbados in the long run.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to touch on Families First and the fatted calf and that kind of thing as I had written, but I know that the 19 downgrades are what are impacting on what is happening in Barbados and a lot of wild spending in projects that I consider and most of Barbados consider to be unnecessary, only to give a little fillip to somebody on the Democratic Labour Party side that is a friend or family or whatever, has helped to push

Barbados down the drain and has us in this, what my grandmother would have called a 'pocater' today. It is that kind of spending.

I also want to say, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that we heard about vote buying. I thank God for the parents I had who hardly went to school but wisdom and guidance from others and observing what it would have been like and working hard and honestly say to us as a family and of course that generation: Work for what you want and do it honestly.

I love and respect the Honourable Prime Minister as our Right Honourable Prime Minister but I hurt to see that in 2013 there was not only rumour of vote buying but there was witnessing of vote buying, and the Honourable Prime Minister when he heard of it said that the matter would be investigated. Well, we are almost at the stage of vote buying again and Barbadians would want to take money now and we cannot get vexed with them if they do not have money to buy food or they do not have money to take the bus to go to stamp their NIS card and come back and go back to Warrens and get it stamped up there and then go back to their homes. This for me is a \$12 amount if you live in St. Thomas to come to town, to go up to Collymore Rock, then to catch back a bus and go to Warrens, and then to catch back a bus and go home. It is \$10 to \$12 but if they do not have it and somebody offers them money they will take it, but that is not the culture of Barbados. In all of these years that we have had the franchise Barbadians were never coerced in that way. We heard about corned beef and biscuit. I know about a Democratic Labour Party candidate who went to St. Thomas and offered the people pine, galvanise and so on at election time and when that person did not win, guess what happened, Mr. Speaker? They turned up the next day. Well, Sir, if you saw it, that means it needs to be investigated. It was widespread and it will get worse because it will become the norm, and if you are not careful about the vote-buying it means that sometimes the highest bidder will be the ones to end up in here to form our laws and to set our standards. We need to make sure that we continue to develop that culture of choosing the best quality individuals, those with the best characters and so to be our leaders because for me if votes have to be bought in Barbados to put people in this Honourable Chamber where we have had so many distinguished pioneers who sat in this Honourable Chamber and they came in honestly without having to do what I heard in the last election, then something is wrong with my people, so I abhor the whole notion of anybody buying or selling votes if that is what it is called. I have never seen it before in the area where I live. I have heard about it and it is only something recent and I think it must be stamped out and I want to encourage the Honourable Prime Minister please, please let us have that investigation. For me it is what we call malpractice and it is against the firmness and the

culture of Barbadians for it to happen. I want to see the best happen for my country.

We heard a lot of talk about people like the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East and how the Honourable Member spoke about what is happening in Barbados and it hurts me more than anything else because what Barbadians and other people do, and we are seeing what is happening in the region and in the international world when people are being brought to justice, whether they are found guilty or not, for infelicities that they have been alleged to have committed and I believe that we are at the stage where we need to do proper investigation. I will not allow anybody to put me in any big pot of politicians that the ones out there in this country called getting involved in taking a bribe. I say taking a bribe but I know it is more than that. People call it by so many other different expressions. They are on the tape/take, in some big body pocket and all of that. That is what is being bandied about about politicians in Barbados which is contrary to anything that I know in my more than three score years on this year, and therefore, Mr. Honourable Prime Minister through you the Honourable Speaker I would like us to let us make sure that we stymie that process of criticism and insults and people lumping us in a pot to say all of them are the same because they are buying votes or they are on the take/tape, it is not the culture of what we know, Sir.

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

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I will then just get to the whole issue of the increase in the petroleum products and say that will have a serious impact on what people have to do especially people who are traders and so on and I believe that too will add further hardship on the people of Barbados. I know that the National Social Responsibility Levy will have a more deleterious impact because you are talking, Mr. Speaker, of persons who would have to pay higher taxes from 2 per cent now to 10 per cent added to the 17.5 per cent that we would have been paying before. For me that is 27.5 per cent and that is direct tax but what then are we going to do when we have to import needle, common pin, thread, clothing shoes, food stuffs, ceramic tiles and so. Every sector of our society will now feel the impact and there are so many taxes that were put on our shoulders already, that will have a more deleterious impact.

When I heard of the Barbados Revenue Authority going after small businesses and people in the informal sector I cringed and I stand to be corrected by any Honourable Member on that side who I assume would have been a part of the pulling together of this Budget this time around. If those are the persons we are targeting, we are looking at coconut vendors, cooks, barbers, caterers, tailors, shop owners, carpenters, vendors and persons of

that nature. I said earlier about the Reverse Tax Credit that they to benefit by because at the end of the day they would have been paying VAT upfront whenever they bought their groceries, paid for medication, paid for professional services, et cetera.

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Mr. Speaker, I believe that is going to have a more serious impact upon them, so that the unemployed, the youth, the aged, the homeless, the disabled, those who are welfare recipients, the sick will all have a big problem with this Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, 2017. Mr. Speaker, I also talked about health, education, transport and so on, Mr. Speaker, those areas will also be impacted upon.

Mr. Speaker, I close by saying that I would want to congratulate the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East and Leader for her sterling contribution, her visionary approach and the impactful way that her ideas were expressed. Mr. Speaker, I would want to say that it is a collective set of ideas from the Barbados Labour Party which for me will provide a measure of hope for the people of Barbados once we are given that opportunity. I also want to say that this is now 25th year in our existence between 1991 and 2017 and it is the second time that a Democratic Labour Party would have been the Government that we would have been in this particular position and that this large amount of money that we are expected to pay in these trying times when people are hardly able to eke out enough for food, transportation and so on will even make Barbadians more unhappy, no wonder why people are losing their homes, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, I would also want to say that to hear the new General Manager of the Barbados Water Authority saying that water should be increased to about 25 per cent is even worse because we are suffering too badly and the two-paged bills we are now getting from the Barbados Water Authority while some people were paying \$32, some are now paying \$70, while some are paying \$100 per month which is not what we are accustomed to, and when we suffered for 1½ year in northern Barbados and have not heard the Honourable Member telling us about even sinking a well or a reservoir or a pumping station to look after our needs when we see how the demographic shifts are going, we are really in a sad state today. Mr. Speaker, I cannot give this Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, 2017, my 100 per cent support because I know that Barbadians will now be poorer than ever before in the history of their lives.

Mr. Speaker, I want to encourage Barbadians to get up and look for work, to work honestly, to guide and protect their children the best way they can and I ask this Government to come together as a people and make sure

that they become more visionary because at the end of the day, unless you walk around, talk and communicate with people, then you cannot know their challenges until you get to their homes and they tell you what is happening. I am sure that every last member on that side should be aware of the challenges in Barbados.

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

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, I trust that we will be able to overcome these serious challenges that we are facing now with a Government that I would consider to be clueless and visionless after nine years when better could have been done. Mr. Speaker, I would want to say that better will be done once another opportunity is given to us to be able to save Barbados from this predicament. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Mr. Speaker, I rise to participate in this debate and to indicate from the start that I do congratulate the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West for his presentation and for the fact that the Honourable Member has made a bold contribution in terms of trying to ensure that Barbados continues to progress and that we will set it in train to achieve the level of growth that is necessary in order to ensure that we sustain the standard of living that all Barbadians can enjoy.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps where the last Honourable Member ended is where the Honourable Member should have actually concentrated her speech, in that we have to encourage our people to understand where they are. Mr. Speaker, when I listened to the presentations from the other side, they remind me of someone who has set out on a journey to a particular destination and that when the bus taking them there has delivered them to the particular point they still are not able to recognise where they are. Mr. Speaker, one the critical issues that we need to do is to appreciate where Barbados is today in the context of the reality that we face in the world today.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say that it was very disappointing to hear the Leader of the Opposition and the language used in terms of criticising other Members of Parliament, along with the references made. Mr. Speaker, very often we do not understand that sometimes we have to be careful what we ask for because sometimes in the language that we use we actually beg for certain behaviours which is not what is required to address the very difficult situation that we face in Barbados today.

Mr. Speaker, we talk about the International Monetary Fund. I was on that website just recently and

there was a particular interview done by Christine Lagarde, the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, who was giving a perspective on what she thought was important and what are the issues that young people face today. Mr. Speaker, this is an agency that basically looks around the world to see what is happening. Mr. Speaker, I heard it from the Opposition, very often when things are bad that it is only Barbados, but that when things are good it is the rest of the world. Mr. Speaker, sometimes we would really want to think that somehow we in Barbados are separated from the rest of the world and that in order to prove our point we go to the ridiculous lengths of trying to say that what is happening around the world is only a feature of Barbados, that it is not an aspect of the world and that a lot of other countries are not facing the same issues.

Mr. Speaker, Christine Lagarde said these are the concerns of young people and this is from her surveys - Can I start my own business? If so, how successful can it be? Can I find meaningful work to help my community and support my family? Is there a place for me in my society? These are the three top concerns that she identified and if we look at them we would want to think that that is Barbados but it is a challenge all around the world and youth unemployment in itself is something that we cannot ignore.

Mr. Speaker, in giving advice to those young people, these are the two pieces of advice which we I think we need to start to talk to our young people, not in a manner that makes them feel they are powerless to do something about the circumstances in which they are in, but we need to give them tools through which they can remedy the situation. Mr. Speaker, I will focus on two things, she said, first, a willingness to learn throughout your life. There is no end to education, they are simply milestones of progress. Mr. Speaker, this is very important at a time when we seem to belittle the importance of education in terms of helping us through the particular difficulties that we face today.

Mr. Speaker, the second and most important one - we should maintain an openness to changing course. You do not have the luxury of being trained in one field or one profession only.

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In other words, again you do not have to think that you have to be a carpenter for the rest of the days of your life, or a lawyer. We have to recognise where we are, where the skills are and move to change. In this regard, even if you were to go by the comments of Ms. Lagarde, the Democratic Labour Party would have instituted programmes in the last five to eight years that would have recognised this. I want to go to the vocational qualification programme which we have instituted in partnership with other institutions, which seeks to provide vocational

qualification in different skills to try to enhance the abilities of people in communities to learn skills. This therefore demonstrates that the Government is acutely aware of what is required in order to deal with the challenges being faced in the current economic environment.

I also want to say this: Even in terms of the continued investment in education at a significant cost to the Government, it demonstrates that the Government, again, appreciates and understands what is required in order for us to be able to meet the challenges that we face today in terms of the current economic challenges and difficulties. I think really that if we are to be brutally honest, this Government is doing the best that it can with the limited resources which it has. When we listened to the Leader of the Opposition yesterday, it is sad that a Leader of the Opposition could refer to her peers in the disrespectful manner in which she referred to the Member for St. Michael North West. I want to say to us: What example do we set for our young people in terms of debate and discussion when at the same time we cannot, by our own actions inside this House, demonstrate the level of respect that is required to be tolerant of each other's views without going to the point where we denigrate the other person? That is the first point I want to make, Sir. The other point I wish to make is this: In the Budgetary measures themselves, what I anticipate and what I can see arising from them is an opportunity for Barbadians looking inward to solve the problems they are facing today. Again, we look at what is happening around the world, and Barbados is not unique. We are unique in our methodologies and our culture in terms of how we do things, but in our responses as human beings in terms of self-preservation, we are not unique.

Mr. Speaker, if you take, for instance, Russia today. Russia now is faced with all kinds of penalties being imposed upon it by the world for its stance on certain issues, but the Russian economy is thriving. Why is it thriving? It is thriving because what they have done is look inward. It is an amazing thing that despite all of the sanctions that are being placed on the Russian economy, what has happened is that they have recognised that they have inner strength. They have recognised that basically if they look inward, they can discover the ways to beat the system and still survive as a nation. I am saying that the same thing applies to Barbados, Mr. Speaker. I am saying that when I look at the measures which are being put in place by the Minister of Finance, what I see is an opportunity for Barbados to look inward, to look at its strengths and to support its people in terms of their creative endeavours to survive in the current economic environment.

I also want to say this: I listened to a lot of the private sector actors and the social commentators, and I

wish to say one thing. What we really need is to mobilise the efforts of Barbadians, and in terms of our productive sectors, whether they are manufacturing or agriculture, they now can step forward and play a key role in terms of trying to ensure that they can provide some of the answers we are looking for. It cannot happen unless we have the type of attitude change that should happen within the private sector in order to facilitate those changes. I listened very keenly to some of the leaders in the private sector, and all you saw them doing was pointing to what Government can do. Go and borrow more money, so that we can take the money that you bring and buy more goods overseas. Not one idea coming from some of them that says what we will do is that we need to develop strategies which would enable us to support other parts of the private sector and keep at home more of the money which we currently send overseas. What this particular Budget will do, of course, is make imports more expensive; but what it will also do is offer local producers an opportunity to more effectively compete with imports. That is desirable, because for too long we have had a situation where our private sector in this country has, instead of being creative in terms of helping the Government to create job opportunities for Barbadians, many of the leading sectors in which Government has actually invested millions of dollars in -- and the millions of dollars have come either through concessions, rebates, or in some cases the contracts which they get for supplying Government institutions -- they have not at times returned the kind of charity by supporting the local productive sectors in supplying those products. Again, what we need to see is that the agricultural and manufacturing sectors in this current environment take advantage of the opportunities that will be created, therefore, by the Budget. What we will see is that at least, and hopefully with an indication by the private sector, they are prepared to look inward to see what Barbados has. How can we look to develop those resources that, instead of many of the products which we currently import and which we can actually produce locally in this country, we would be producing them locally?

One issue I think maybe that we need -- and I know the Minister of Finance will clarify that -- is in relation to the application of the tax. I am sure that the Minister of Finance, when he spoke to the subject of the National Social Responsibility Levy, indicated that sectors like agriculture and manufacturing would be exempted from that levy. However, we still have a situation where there is not enough clarity given, because in some cases we still have some institutions and some businesses within the agricultural sector that are producers still paying the levy. I think we need to get some clarity here because, certainly -- I believe and I heard the Minister of Finance on this -- the Minister has clearly indicated that those sectors which receive these fiscal incentives such as manufacturing and agriculture would not be subjected to the levy. Yet, we have a situation where it seems as if our bureaucracy is at

odds with our policymakers. I think we need to have that clarified at the earliest opportunity, because I am saying that once that is clarified, what we will see as a result of this particular Budget is an expansion or -- should I put it another way? -- growth in our local productive sectors from which I believe Barbadians will be able to benefit.

H:No.D12C(27)

Mr. Speaker, I went to a session relating to the tourism sector, and I do not know if the Minister of Tourism recognizes the wonderful job that is being done, and he is responsible for doing it in the level of cruise tourism. We have an opportunity in respect of cruise tourism to engage in the export of goods and services in this country and we do not even have to go anywhere to do it, it is right there at the Bridgetown Port. The huge investment that is being made in plant at the Bridgetown Port will redound to the benefit of Barbadians and do not mind what the Opposition is telling you.

Mr. Speaker, I want young people in the country not to succumb to the antics of the Barbados Labour Party, the 'bashment' approach to politics that they are introducing in order to infiltrate young minds in bad behaviours and behaviours that will not carry forward this country in terms of meeting the development objectives that are set out. Sir, this is a serious discussion and we are talking about soul of this country, maintaining the standard of live in which all Barbadians can share equally in it. Sir, not that some who are to the manor born and who feel they can walk in her and insult persons can get the majority of the cake while others are told to go behind the line, to go to the back. I want young people to understand that when they hear these things not mind the sweets offered to look beyond them.

Mr. Speaker, the cruise sector offers us an opportunity to widen our exports and that is what Barbados needs to do. We need to get into activities that provide employment opportunity and in that way, it eases the pressure on Government for finding employment.

Mr. Speaker, when I listen to the Opposition constantly, they are the ones in the initial stages who were talking about innovation and entrepreneurship but they do not mean that, what they wanted is a dependent class, dependent on Government and waiting on Government's handouts but the true spirit of entrepreneurship means being creative and coming up with novel ways of earning income and not having to go and look to a Government Member of Parliament or politician, as the case may be, to make a living. This is the way of the colonial class, the old 'massa', that make you feel dependent and make you feel your job and your children jobs depend on them because that is what the Barbados Labour Party would like. They do not want to encourage an individual who recognizes that they can create a job for themselves. I say to young people

today that agriculture and manufacturing offer you the opportunity to do so.

Mr. Speaker, I was looking at the first quarter results for the cruise ship industry in a document I have from the Caribbean Tourism Organisation. In the first quarter of 2015/2016 January to March, the total expenditure by cruise ship was \$14.3 million and Sir, this is how it was spent:

Meals and Drinks \$2.2 million

Transportation \$3.5 million

Tours \$2.2 million

Duty free purchases \$2.5 million

Sir, look at what it was spent on in a significant way, meals and drinks, \$2.2 million. If we extrapolate it, you can anticipate that at least \$10 million is being spent on foods and drink in this economy by the cruise sector. Sir, the challenge that we have is, how does the private sector in the country today arrange itself to take greater advantage of the opportunities offered by the cruise tourism sector? Sir, I want to say to the young people in the country not to listen to people who have gone through the hammer mills and have themselves developed an approach that say the way to do business is to listen to us first. No, let us be creative. I tell you that there are a lot of young people in the agricultural sector who are doing things. Sir, the challenge we have in respect of the cruise sector is: How do we come up with ideas to take greater advantage of the opportunities that are right there on our door step? How does the private sector in the country facilitate our young people in the country to take greater advantage of those opportunities that are right there on our doorstep. How can we keep moving out of the traditional modes of doing things and let us look to see those things right there in front of us, the low-hanging fruit, how can we pick them. Sir, that is what we should be doing, not coming in here trying to convince our people that they are incapable of doing it.

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

Mr. J.D. PAUL: Thank you Sir. The point is not to come in here and tell our young people that they are incapable of doing it.

Mr. Speaker, I really believe that here within this Budget there is an opportunity to right size Barbados. I have heard the question being asked all the time how did we get here. Sir, the Opposition knows how we get here because an administration between 1994 and 2008 borrowed us out of this country to the hilt and engage in projects that today are not productive and this country has

had to take up the mantle on Kensington Oval for one, and the highways. They are not producing anything on their own, and the Honourable Member for St. Thomas know that, that it is how we got here. Sir, we need to be brutally honest with our population. Sir, \$160 million built a prison that was not necessarily to build, and we need to be brutally honest with our people and stop getting on as if we are not all part of it.

Asides.

Mr. J.D. PAUL: I am being brutally frank but the Honourable Member for St. Thomas sat down and watch farm lands being compromised and not a peep came out of the Honourable Member. Sir, there is a pig farm that is under threat in St. Thomas and the Honourable Member for St. Thomas sat down and there was not a word from her and those people are being compromised daily by developer out there bringing it right up to their doorsteps and yet you tell me you area representing St. Thomas and its people in terms of agriculture?

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please address the chair.

Mr. J.D. PAUL: Sorry, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Sir, the the Honourable Member for St. Thomas needs to speak to the fact. Sir, in 2016, the Bridgetown Port welcomed 725 020 cruise passengers overall. I am saying that we need to give greater importance and place greater stress on our local productive sector. I am saying that we need a private sector that is more supportive. I am also saying that we need a Government bureaucracy that would be more responsive, sensitive and emphatic to the demands of the productive sector. Sir, I raise the point that issue in terms of the levy needs to be clarified because ... I also say that we need Government entities to be acutely aware of their responsibilities in terms of the development of the agriculture sector and that they should themselves as competing with the agricultural sector but assisting in the development of the agricultural sector.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that this set of Budgetary Proposals is seeking to right size Barbados. It is seeking to create the environment on which real, sustained and solid growth can happen. It is not seeking to create the kind of artificial growth that happened under the Barbados Labour Party.

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That was not sustainable in the long term and this was bound to happen and they know that and the Leader of the Opposition needs to stop coming inside here talking about meetings. We have enough meetings in this country. We do not do any work in meetings, we do work outside of meetings. When I hear this talk about this meeting every

week. To do what? Talk some more. We have too much talk. We need to get down to work in this country in doing active things that would make a difference so when you hear the Leader of the Opposition talking about we are going to have this meeting and that meeting that does not produce anything. What produces things are hard solid policies and making them work. The Democratic Labour Party (DLP) has put in place hard solid policies that would redound to the benefit of this country. What we need to do is to make them work to the benefit of the people of this country.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I say thank you very much. Again, I indicate my support on the Resolution.

Mr. Speaker vacated the Chair and Madam Deputy Speaker assumed the Chair.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael East.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I feel a spiritual imperative that right from the inception, I should give thanks not just to my community but to my mother for helping to make me who I am. She is a very small woman, probably not even 100 pounds and it so happened that her maiden name is also Small but married to a Prescod. I want to thank her and like most Barbadian children I grew up calling her Aunt Ruth because my aunt rescued me early because my mother could not afford to maintain me. I feel this is very important to this journey and to those people who I always feel it is most important for me to represent. I am not a minister of commerce, trade, finance or anything but I attribute to myself an interest in representing the poor. I say that because it is not by accident. The only job I could remember my mother doing is working in a grocery shop for a minimum wage and my mother only had a primary school education. I also want to thank, because I do not want to attribute everything to my mother and my family, I also want to thank the people of Licorish Village, the people of The Ivy, St. Barnabas and Haggatt Hall, Martinique, Tichbourne, I cannot list all the names here, for sending me to Parliament as the elected member for three terms. I also want to thank that late Right Excellent Walton Errol Barrow for giving me the first opportunity to service in the Upper House; The Senate. I believe that my conscious would worry me if I do not accept the contribution of the elders in my community who saw me from a babe growing up and at least still felt that I was good enough to represent them.

They've had said everything about me. Some called me a wild boy. Some say I turned over a boat belonging to the same political party that I represent. Other parties also

put me before the law courts so, I am a villain. That is what they like to call me. It is probably because of that ...

Asides.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: The confidence of the people is the size of the vote.

It is the qualitative nature of the contribution from the people that I respect more so that if I won by a bus load or anything like that. I have won by many more than people who did not win at all.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to thank my mother again for carrying me through the struggles which we shared together. I want to explain to you all because my mother lived in a board house in Haggatt Hall after leaving The Ivy and Tichbourne. We moved at one time, back to The Ivy and we moved back to Tichbourne and that old lady is still standing. She can read a newspaper with glasses at 94 years old and I want to thank the Almighty for that. Madam Deputy Speaker, whatever ignorance I exhibit or whatever talents one would honour me with or which the Lord has endowed me with, I want to thank the institutions in my community, Belmont School, St. Giles School, Barbados Academy, the Barbados Community College, University of the West Indies (UWI) and ... I want to thank these people.

Asides.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: No, it is not a farewell speech. It is not even a eulogy. I might get a chance to read your eulogy.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is the common courtesy of the people of African Heritage to be grateful and to be kind to other people in the society and it gives me that legitimacy to say what I have to say on these issues. In that case, I close by saying I thank the ancestors and I thank the elders in the society in general.

Madam Deputy Speaker, not being critical but I heard a lot of what I call "obzockie" unorthodox logic by three specific persons. The Honourable Member for Christ Church Central, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West Central, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, my friend, Minister Blackett the Honourable Member for St. Michael Central who set about to inject some poison into wholesome dialogue in this Honourable Chamber. I am really surprised sometimes -because I happen to know a little -- that these new born moralist can put the concepts of unisex relations, same sex unions, same sex marriages on the table as though there is a principle that say their morality and our morality, an issue that permeated the entire society that most of us with a conscious known that even in the blood relationships of some of the families and

probably even in here and certainly those who are no longer in here have been participating in these same sex marriages for a considerable time.

You may not agree, Madam Deputy Speaker, but the public's view is different to the views of the Members of Parliament because they know that this is just a charade because we have had all different types of characters, not only in the French Parliament or the British Parliament or any of the Parliaments across Europe, but right here in the Caribbean and in particular Barbados.

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All of the discussions about the West Coast over the period of history in the British Parliament, we saw men who were holier than thou, namely a man called Jeremy Todd, who led the British Labour Party, took a young man to his mother's matrimonial bed, most likely on a sheet that was pure and white as snow, gave him a book by the name of "Giovanni's Room" by a man called James Baldwin, one of the greatest black journalists in the history of the western world, an American, to read and guided him through the pages and the lines of that text and stimulated some sexual orgasmic reaction, man to man, and got entangled and eventually, his behaviour in that righteous land of Great Britain was responsible for the total destruction of the political institution that he represented. I am saying that for those with warped minds even in their mother land, not me because I understand myself and Mugabe stand hand in hand on this, that behaviour was held as normal in high office.

They had in the presidency of the United States of America a President talking as though his hands were clean and he was in the Oval wealth sitting down and enjoying or entertaining the pleasures of one of his so-called lovers. In that case we have had rumours in this Chamber here and out in the public and out on facebook of strange acts of individuals who denied and said it was not true and we allowed it to sleep although nobody could find anybody with the same 'physiog' of the individual anywhere in the Eastern Caribbean. The only human being in the Eastern Caribbean that had that kind of structure in his face was the man who we saw munching on facebook, so I do not know why we want to continue this discussion and believe that it is going to help us to score... It has to be discussed, it has to be refuted because I understand the nastiness in it. It has destroyed Jeremy Todd, a brilliant man. The only thing is that what they were saying about him was true.

There is a man named Jimmy Swaggart that was scheduled to come here. Every day Barbadians had on their radio and their television listening to Jimmy Swaggart. When the evidence was produced about him he said that they were lying. I saw him subsequently on our television

in tears saying: I beg your pardon, I am sorry, I have sinned.

This Parliament restricts me from saying what I know that I can say with irrefutable material evidence of a guilty few, but the time will come. No finger pointing or no name calling will occur today but trust me you better put it in your pocket and sew it up or not it is going to bring great embarrassment. You see that book "Giovanni's Room" I want you to give it to the General Secretary of your party to read. The best body to have knowledge about what is documented in that piece of literature by James Baldwin is the General Secretary of your party and others will hear, so I want that to be very clear. It is sickening, Madam Deputy Speaker, for us to sit and listen to that, but that is the nasty part in my view of the discussion today.

The other aspect of it is a perspective and it is not based on indecency or immorality or even criminal behaviour, and that is the effort to say, and this caveat has to go in, that the Barbados Labour Party was pushing a privatisation programme. Even if individuals or an individual said that, it was never the intention to push the privatisation programme. The radical changes probably that occurred since 2008... This Government has always argued that because of the international recession and the input or the impact on this political economy, the Government had no intentions of doing what it did to the workers at the National Conservation Commission or what it has done at the University of the West Indies, is why it went on the course that it went on. I too, like many others, wanted to believe that because these challenges exist, we will hear the partisan game being shared or expressed for political reasons, but genuinely there were individuals in that party who I believe were strongly committed to the democratic socialist agenda because in many cases some of the progressive planks of the development of the economy of this country was introduced and executed by that very party who had to retreat and in some cases turn in the opposite direction, so I brought the argument about the international recession driving this party in a different direction.

I do not know but day before yesterday the Minister of Finance spoke about this great mentor of his. He spoke about Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford and implicit in that was that he had to make tough decisions but they were admirable decisions because they turned out to be contributing to the development of Barbados, so I am assuming that he was talking about the 8 per cent cut so the 30 000 people that marched certainly did not have much sense because Sandiford was doing what he ought to do, cut the public service salaries by 8 per cent exclusively, but where the contradiction lies is in the fact that he was saying that this guidance of Erskine Sandiford was progressive and that he had great admiration for the man with the socialist agenda in the form of Duncan Oneale.

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This is at different stages in history but two different characters altogether, because Duncan O'Neal set about to protect the working-class in his time. He entered this Honourable House at the late stages of his life but he stood up for fundamental changes, one of the changes that he advocated with great determination was to introduce I think it was an Act for the removal of child labour in that precolonial period, people picking pond grass across Barbados. Madam Deputy Speaker, that is the kind of man you are talking about. He was always supportive of labour, he was always supportive of the legal instrument that represents labour interest -- child labour. He was the man in the forefront, along with Grantley Adams but mainly Duncan O'Neal, so I could not understand what I call the alien logic, that you can support a man who speaks more, because he was described as a Fabian socialist, which is a little modification or compromise of Marxist Leninism, but then there is another man to the other extreme where he had these two... Madam Deputy Speaker, so that this is really where confusion lies in the system. If we want to make fundamental changes in this society, and I am in agreement, we are going to have to allow a genuine political scientist or sociologist to make a nonpartisan assessment of this socioeconomic programme at this point in history.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this political economy is begging for radical changes. I have been hearing people talking about little adjustments in reform, in telecommunication and in industry, it is not going to help us by tinkering with the system, you have to have the courage to make those changes and if you have the numbers and you can make them without the constitutional amendments, you have to go ahead and make them. I will hope that if there are fundamental changes and it requires constitutional amendments that you can count on enough to get a two-thirds majority from this side. I cannot give you any assurances but I would hope so because we have to have people that give us a proper report.

Whenever I see these economies moving forward there is always an individual or a collective body of individuals who understand the concerns, the rights and the duties of labour, the masses of people who the major consumers. You cannot make burdensome adjustments trying to rescue an economy and putting a severe imposition in place of over \$480 million in an economy that is contracting more and more every day, you have to understand that by going into the home.

When I go into the homes of many of my friends who have not had the privilege to work for the salary that I work for, I know what they are going through and we must make that reconnection. If we go and impose \$480 million in taxes which I do not believe you will ever receive, the

economy will never, under the present circumstances, allow you to collect the revenue of \$480 million. It is not going to happen, Jesus would have to save you. If you focus or refocus your programme on the eradication of poverty and give the labour class the inspiration to work to achieve something in this society, that class would give you the solution to the problem which you face and that is production. Do you want production? I am saying, if you want production, pay the people some money. There is a lot of money being wasted, some people say as a consequence of corruption, I do not know, I do not have the evidence, my Leader was able to produce it, and I am talking clean from my heart. I do not have it, if I had it I will be able to say it out loud.

Asides.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: You do not even know... You are talking about black hearts in a different way, your interpretation of the word is completely different to mine. I want us to understand that some of the greatest thinkers -- economists, political scientists, Prime Ministers, you watch the focus. In order for us to expand the human capital in this country they put their faith in the ordinary people that drove the expansion of secondary education. They put their faith in the ordinary people and they gave us opportunities at the University of the West Indies. However hard the task is, Madam Deputy Speaker, we have to get back there, we are continuing on a journey that is shaped by the model of what is called the trickled down effect.

Mr. Deputy President, many reports came before us and everybody is studying the World Bank and all of these international institutions but Madam Deputy Speaker, we had reports out of the Commonwealth, out of the Caribbean, out of Barbados at the University of the West Indies all telling us that as a result of what we are doing we are shifting the wealth and concentrating it in the hands of the very people we fought in 1834 and then in 1937 again. We are returning wealth to the same people, do not mind all that talk about small businessmen and contractors getting work, I know you cannot bring any statistics here to show me that the amount of small contractor is anyway close to the small contractors that were getting work prior to 2008 because I know that before 2008 sometimes 20 and 30 contractors would be outside overflowing on the sidewalk at the Urban Development Commission waiting to get work and I know the Government indicated that because of the tight financial constraints that they were unable to sustain that programme at the high level.

3.38 p.m.

I also know, and documentation is here, that the intention was to abandon that unit of the Urban Development Commission (UDC) prior to the Election and in the post-Election period. Subsequently, we were talking

about having an amalgam of three departments of the Government -- Rural, Urban and National Housing Corporation -- because they did not see the need to have all three of them. If the programme was so successful, why would a Government decide to abandon these institutions when all of them were working right? Why would you want to shut the institutions down? The institutions were serving the purpose for which they were intended to serve. When we begin to knot up the logic with a lot of bogus fallacies about, "Oh man, I can tell you that so many small contractors...", it is not true.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have three minutes left.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD: Madam Chair, listen. I just want to put in this. The labour movement is not enjoying the best of relationships with this Government, Madam Chair. I just want to ask the Government to open up and scratch your conscience, because these institutions would not be here -- for anybody who studied scientifically the emergence of the history of the politics of the Caribbean -- without the labour movement. There is something about our educational system, both formal and informal, that makes us put the emphasis on capital over and over again. Even if capital is transformed through science and technology over the years, you cannot exclude labour. Even if you do not now have to depend on the same traditional labour-intensive approach to production, as you used to employ or work with in prior years, you have to face certain realities. Labour, which is the majority class, skilled or unskilled, constitutes the majority of the consumer public, and if they do not work, they have to go on the block, and there are other social ills that will follow. The Attorney General should understand that better than most of us in here, because I said to him before -- and the criminologists is saying it to him over and over again -- that the importance of education, employment and all of these social issues are fundamental.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Sir. Your time is up.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD: Madam Chair, I want to thank you and I really wish that I could have been able to say a couple more things.

Asides.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD: Madam Chair, anyhow, I think it is only decent and polite to thank you very much for the opportunity that you gave me to even say what I had to say without any form of interruption. Thank you very much.

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

Hon. D.O'N. INNIS: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I of course come right after the Honourable Member for St. Michael East, who clearly by his speech just now sounded as though he is at the beginning of the end of his tenure as a parliamentarian. I therefore wish him all the best in his future endeavours. Of course, having not connected at all to the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, I can understand his mind is elsewhere. Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a very serious debate. Barbados is at a crossroad, and we as parliamentarians must wrap our minds, bodies and souls around the state of affairs in this country and be very pellucid about where we are going to go as a nation. The country is asking nothing less of us.

In terms of this Financial Statement and these Budgetary Proposals, what is a financial statement really in our context? It is a synopsis or statement of the affairs of the national economy at a point in time. The Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs has quite rightfully captured in this Document and in his speech the state of the Barbados economy at this point in time, reflecting upon what has transpired in the last year in particular and giving a peep through the Budgetary Proposals at what the immediate future offers, subject to Parliament approving the measures that the Minister of Finance has brought before this House. This is a time when we really and truly must understand what is happening in our national economy, be very clear as to what the options are, understand the consequences of our actions and decisions, and be fully engaged with the public of Barbados as to where we are going as a nation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when I look at the Financial Statement side of the Document, let me remind you and all within earshot that the Minister of Finance would have indicated to us that the Barbados economy continued a slow but resolute growth trajectory in 2016. Real GDP is estimated to have expanded by 1.6 per cent at the end of last year, and this marks three consecutive years of positive growth with improved economic activity in key sectors. The Statement also included, of course, that the traded sector grew by 2.2 per cent on account of the robust performance in the tourism sector, which increased by 4.8 per cent. The average inflation rate stood at 1.1 per cent, which is instructive given the average increase in prices of goods and services in the economy. The unemployment rate fell to nine per cent compared with 11.3 per cent at the end of 2015. I reflect upon these things because we need to understand the state of the national economy at this point in time and the direction in which we are going, Madam Deputy Speaker. Other subsectors slowing the pace of growth in the traded sector were the chemicals and manufacturing industries, recording a fall in output by 3.7 per cent and 1.6 per cent respectively. It reflected upon the international business sector in terms of the new entities licensed in 2016. Those entities rose to 491 compared to

456 in 2015. We also would have continued to look at the current revenue and other economic indices.

My summation, really and truly, is that Barbados at this point in time continues to be challenged with its fiscal deficit; the difference between revenue and expenditure on the current account in Government. Of course, what are some of the underlying issues? They include the sluggish Government revenues, difficulty in curbing expenditure in the public sector, stagnation in foreign exchange earnings, and of course not necessarily a fast enough rate of decline in the use of foreign exchange. The fundamental issue of confidence is also rearing its ugly head again in the national economy, and of course ambiguity with some policies of the State and, needless to say, implementation deficit disorder.

Madam Deputy Speaker, these are very critical. I stand here, yes, as a Cabinet Minister and someone sitting on the Front Bench, but of great importance is that I also stand here as the parliamentary representative for the constituency of St. James South. I draw my strength from that particular constituency, and there are times when I will have to speak in Parliament without fear or favour as the parliamentary representative for the constituency of St. James South. One of the things that trouble me immensely, in arriving at the position of Budgetary Proposals, is the process.

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I am going to run away from that issue because at the end of the day if the process of consultation is not deep and wide enough then we are prone to make mistakes and the views of all will not be considered. I have served as a Cabinet Minister for nine years and I have raised concerns over and over again about the process because at the end of the day, if we are not careful what is presented is really the perspective of one Minister or one Ministry and I hold the view that the consultation must be far and wide.

Mr. Speaker, if we reflect today, June 1 marks 30 years since the passing of the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, a National Hero, founder of the Democratic Labour Party and the first Prime Minister of Barbados. I am sure that during his tenure as Prime Minister similar arguments would have also been made about the need for deep and wide consultations and that is why I believe that when Budgetary Proposals are brought to Parliament that every sitting member of Parliament must be able to speak without fear or favour on those Budgetary Proposals. Sir, not necessarily to criticise them, unless you do it constructively but to ensure that you bring to the debate your perspective and your experience as a parliamentarian, as a citizen of Barbados, as a parent, if you are one,

whatever position you have must be brought to bear because if we do not do that, the debate ends and people go home with trouble souls and an abundance of confusion.

Mr. Speaker, secondly, I am deeply concerned about the implementation of Budgetary Proposals approved in Parliament over the year and I am concerned about a growing divide between what we decide in Parliament, the intent of it and the manner in which it is being interpreted, especially in the public sector of Barbados.

Madam Deputy Speaker, if I speak with passion it is because I am deeply concerned about these issues. I have to live in this society. I had a life before I became a parliamentarian and whenever I leave I must live in this society too, and I will hold my head up high, and that is why when these things occur, I have to speak my mind on them. We have, therefore, to ensure that as we come to Parliament with Budgetary Proposals that they are very much reflective as far as possible of the widest level of consultation and agreement and where it does not occur, let us use this opportunity to bring things in line.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there certain things in this Budgetary Proposals that I will tell you honestly I am concerned about particularly when it comes to the manner in which it can be interpreted and the manner in which it will be applied because we have not yet passed the Budgetary Proposals but there is enough confusion out there in the wider society in the various sectors that tells me we better get it right in the next couple of hours in this Parliament, or this economy will not get going in the direction it ought to be going in, in the direction that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, the Minister of Finance, the Prime Minister and everybody wants it to go in.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would therefore, conscious of the fact that I only have a limited amount of time, address the measures that the Minister of Finance has outlined and speak to them in respect of what I believe to be the likely impact upon the constituency that I represent stretching from Paradise Heights, to Haynesville, to West Terrace, Warrens, Crystal Heights, Husbands Heights, wherever they are, a constituency that is predominately middle income, a grouping that has been under great pressure in recent years and a significant portion of working class Barbadians as well.

Madam, also as the Minister currently responsible for industry, international business, commerce and small business development, sectors that are directly affected by these Budgetary Proposals and it would be remiss of me as a Minister with responsibility for these sectors not to speak candidly about how I see these proposals impacting on the sector, bringing clarity where I think it ought to be brought in terms of the intent of the Government and giving and

indication perhaps, as to what else we should do. Madam, I start with that last point because the Budgetary Proposals of the Government cannot capture everything. I want people to understand that whilst this is a guide and a reflection of the intention of the Government there are many other things that have to be done over the period to get this economy going in the direction it is going in. It cannot be left just up to the Minister of Finance. We have often in our democracy and our system of administration coalesce and centred so much of Government's administration around the Ministry of Finance that I am concerned that it is beginning to cause too much 'rupture' in the country, so every Minister must feel and Understand clearly, as I am sure my colleagues do that we all have a role to play in the sustainable growth and development of the Barbados economy, getting it on the right tracks, staying on the right track and, of course, rebuilding a more resilient society for us.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the national social responsibility levy will come into effect from July 1, 2017. The rate of the national social responsibility levy will move from two per cent to ten per cent. It is anticipated that this will result in increased revenue of \$291 million for a full financial year and \$218 million for the remaining nine months of the current financial year. The expected breakdown in the contribution...(7:15...)(Go to actual Budget and add in here)...

Madam Deputy Speaker, to the average Barbadians what they basically see is an increase or likely increase, and let us face the reality, there will be an increase in the cost of living in Barbados, there will be an increase in the cost of goods and services. Madam, moving this levy from two per cent to ten per cent will naturally result in increase in the cost of living in Barbados. Madam, all I ask is that we insure that the most vulnerable in our society are not place in any more of a disadvantageous and uncomfortable position. It means that each one of us as parliamentarians must be prepared to provide some comfort and a listening ear. It means that we must ensure that those who are tasked with providing some goods and services do not operate like vultures in our society. We must also take the time to remind our constituents and all and sundry where this money is being spent. It is being spent in education, it is being spent in health care services, it is being spent in infrastructure, it is being spent in law and order and the fact remains that we must certainly communicate with the public in terms of the use of these funds. Sir, when we do not communicate effectively we get a very angry constituent base, a very angry consumer base out there who are confused and therefore will not cooperate with us in helping us to achieve our objectives.

Mr. Speaker, this national social responsibility levy I am told is also a source of concern to the manufacturing sector. Sir, let us face reality, wearing my hat as Minister of

Commerce and Industry now. We have obviously introduced this levy as a way of dampening demand and we know it will increase the cost of goods due to WTO arrangements. We also have to ensure that we exhibit that favourable status to our domestic manufacturers vis-a-vis the importers in particular. The manufacturers are exempt from the national social responsibility levy in respect of the input of goods and services for their processes. When they sell to other manufacturers, the national social responsibility levy is not applicable as far as I understand but when the manufactured goods are sold to retailers, the national social responsibility levy is applicable and therefore that naturally leads to an increase in the cost of goods manufactured in Barbados but they also places us somewhat in a position to be less competitive or a can place us in a position to be less competitive on the local market, of course.

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Only on the export market if there is any residual input cost that has not been captured through the levy and that means that the task now is up to people like myself, my ministry and others to ensure that we are able to up our game in terms of the exports of goods and services from Barbados, to ensure that we are able to find other mechanisms to keep the cost of manufacturing down in Barbados so I will speak to these things over the next couple of days as the Barbados Manufacturers' Association Exhibition (BMEX) takes place from this weekend but the reality about it is that is a matter of concern certainly for the sector. The issue of commission on foreign exchange transaction, and by the way, before I move on, Madam Deputy Speaker, from that issue of the Social Responsibility Levy I will say that I would have a chat with the Ministry of Finance and others in this country in respect of the applicability of that Levy to the international business sector which according to legislation, my interpretation ought to exempt them from that Levy to some extent.

The Commission of Foreign Exchange transaction, Madam Deputy Speaker, is a troubling one. The reality is that we have to manage the foreign exchange position in this country. There is no doubt about it and the Minister of Finance has been pellucid in respect of the challenges of foreign exchange earnings in Barbados. We need the foreign exchange because that is how we have to buy our goods and services. It is hardly ever taken beyond Grantley Adams International Airport. I am only concern in respect of its application to the International Business and Financial Service Sector. I want to make it abundantly clear because, as I said earlier, there is too much ambiguity in this society and I have spoken to the Minister of Finance on it because there is a perception that the international business sector is affected inadvertently by this 2 per cent commission and my position quite frankly, as I am sure it

will be with the Minister of Finance clarifies it, is that those entities that have been granted permission, either in law or by the Central Bank of Barbados to hold and operate foreign currency accounts in Barbados and for which their wires or movement of funds is from those said accounts, shall not be subject to the 2 per cent commission on foreign exchange. The international business sector is the one that is earning the foreign exchange in Barbados therefore they cannot and will not be penalised for that. I stressed that because we have to be very careful. We may believe that in here but when it gets to the Central Bank of Barbados or the commercial banks in Barbados, as much as we think it is a very simple matter there will be individuals who either, for their own wicked personal views, or out of an abundance of ignorance may start to do things that then frustrate us. This is a sector that is very sensitive to these matters. I do not wish to hear international business entities leaving Barbados because of this 2 per cent commission being applied to their transactions when in truth and in fact, it should not be applied. Likewise, there issues and clarity must be brought to the matter and when you do inter-account transfers in US dollars to Barbados dollar accounts. My position, according the Minister of Finance's statement, it that it is only applicable if you are purchasing foreign exchange so there is no way that transferring funds from a US dollar account held by a commercial bank in Barbados to a Barbados dollar account to pay expense ??? should be subject to any commission. We have to bring these things, Madam Deputy Speaker, to a clear thing across Barbados. I only hope that Barbadians are prepare to work with the Government on this matter because let us face reality. When these things are announced, people may start to find ways of holding on to the currency or doing other things. There must be a movement and this is why I say communication is key. It is not just a matter of announcing a policy but getting out there even before the policy is announced and engaging with the citizenry about the options available the things we need to look at and why we have to do them and once we make a decision in here, not to creep back in any office but to get out there on the highways and byways and continue to engage with the public. I think that a lot of our problems in this country do not reside necessarily in the economy. That may be a manifestation of some other problems we have in this country and constant and consistent engagement must be the centre of it all. The country must be very clear as to the direction it is going and what it needs to get there so this 2 per cent commission on foreign exchange transaction, I wish, from my end, to give the assurance to the international business sector and those who work there including those regular Barbados companies that have been allowed to hold foreign currency accounts that that commission shall not apply to you.

Asides.

Hon. D. O'N. INNIS: I have to bring clarity to it. That is what I said at the very beginning.

I have spoken to the Minister of Finance on this matter because you are okay. When the Honourable Member for St. Andrew starts to lose his few clients in the sector, they would understand the need that we have to nip these things in the bud and bring clarity to it very early on. The excise on gasoline and diesel fuels is also necessary and a lot of ambiguity out there too as to, people say to me. Oh the price of oil is going down on the world market but in Barbados it is going up. That is now true. I follow these every two weeks. As Minister of Commerce I have to sign off on the adjustments of fuel on the retail end so I get to see what we are bringing it in from the market for and all of the mark-ups going to marketers, dealers and whomever and all of the excise tax, VAT and whatever it is and I am prepared to share that with the public. I do not think these things are national security issues. Let us be frank. John Public has a right to know where their money is going. If you are buying a litre of gasoline what portion of that is VAT, what portion of that is Excise Tax, what goes to the marketers, what go to the dealers and would share that freely with anyone but the simple matter is that this Excise Tax that has been imposed here would be deemed necessary because it is one way of raising some additional revenue that the State needs to get things going and the Minister of Finance has been very clear as to the computation therein. Let us not fool ourselves, this too would add to the increase in the cost of doing business in Barbados and the cost of living in Barbados that is why I think, Madam Deputy Speaker, what we need to hear coming forth and from the Opposition as well, is not condemnation and criticism but a bit more of empathy. To understand and to share with Barbadians the fact that there is some pain but also of great importance is what is it for. Why are we doing this? What would be the gain? At the end of the day, if we cause some pain without bringing clarity as to what the gains will be, then we have amount to naught, therefore the situation in Barbados is that we have been under immense pressure in the national economy over the years. We have been challenged to ensure that all the public servants are paid and paid on time. We have been challenged to ensure that the Central Bank of Barbados in the short run is no longer financing the State apparatus. We have to ensure that when my constituents in St. James South want to go online and shop at Amazon or wherever they may shop that the credit cards are not declined because of foreign exchange issues. For those who wish to go to Miami or wherever and do what they have to do, they want to know that they have the foreign exchange but more importantly, to ensure that they things we need in this society, that we do not produce here, can be bought and are made available to Barbados. We do not want to have shortages like we see in some other islands that may be one hour flight away from us that the Honourable Member for St. Michael East loves to take vacations in. We need to

ensure that this country continues to maintain that fabric in society and in the strength of the society and that Barbadians are able to access the goods and services they need, but we also have to temper it with an understanding that as a society we have to separate our needs from our wants.

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As a Government we also have to do it. That is why I say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that as we look towards the future we must recognise that it cannot just be this Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals that is going to save this economy and put us on the path we want to, but that there are other things we have to do.

What are some of the other things we have to do? On one end, Madam Deputy Speaker, we need to have a serious conversation and action plan in respect to how do we get our public sector to be more efficient. I know that I am oftentimes criticised for criticising the public sector. I am not bothered about public servants, it is the system that I am concerned about. I have been wrapping my mind around and doing my best for the last nine years on it wherever I can as a Minister, but it is still too inefficient, there is still not enough use of technology. Take for example, yesterday I met with the Corporate Affairs and Intellectual Property Office senior staff because I have some concerns about the complaints I get about delays, delays and other frustrations that people face. I understand the pressure that the Registrar and her staff now are going under because you know what, the exogenous factors are there. There are changes in the banking rules, for example, that mean that more and more documents are being demanded, more and more things have to be filed you know, and more and more international bodies are asking for more and more, placing more and more pressures on us as has resulted in some of these departments, but the truth of the matter is that if these things are being demanded we do not have to sit and complain, it is our duty to find solutions, so I said look, let us get to the point where we are able to receive in an electronic format a lot of these documents. Instead of people travelling to the office and standing in line and waiting they can send them in electronically. We passed the Electronic Transactions Act and others that now recognise it in our space and domain. Let us not be lazy, let us get that going.

There are simple things like a customer service officer. We think sometimes that to go into departments like the Corporate Affairs and Intellectual Property Office it is always to see one of the technical staff. Sometimes you are standing in line because you want a simple question answered and if you have a customer service representative who has experience in the industry who can stay one-side and funnel and deal with those issues, it helps to quell a lot of the pressure we are under going forward. Generally

speaking, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think that we must understand from our side in the public sector that our role is to facilitate and not to frustrate.

We also have in terms of helping the Minister of Finance to address the issue of the deficit and expenditure and revenue et cetera to recognise the cost of our public sector especially the cost of State-owned enterprises. I am concerned that as much as the focus has been on the central Government, as the Honourable Minister of Finance keeps saying all of the time, we have some State-owned enterprises in Barbados that have gotten out of hand and need to be reined in. I hear the Honourable Member for St. Michael East spoke about all of these statutory entities: The Urban Development Commission, the Rural Development Commission and whatever. Man, look, let us get real. Some of these agencies need to be merged or close down. That is perhaps one of the realities that we do not want to face up to but they are costing the taxpayers of this country too much and I am concerned that in many instances you are not getting the return on the investment.

I have to look at some of these things through the lens of a business person as well. I appreciate the social good. Do not mind the two terms I got, the reality about it is that we have to do that.

We also, Madam Deputy Speaker, have to recognise in terms of the opportunities... In the manufacturing sector the future lies in value-added manufacturing perhaps more. The information and communication technology sector is one that there is still great potential for growth and my Ministry through the Barbados Investment and Development Corporation and others are making strategic investments in those areas exposing young people to that technology providing the opportunity for them to get to market space but that must now be doubled up or tripled up in terms of our efforts and our financial investment especially in young people.

I want to see more graduates of the University of the West Indies not looking for a job but creating a business opportunity. I want to see more young people in our society not worrying about getting out of bed at 7 o'clock in the morning to bathe to go into an office but sitting down at home at 3 and 4 o'clock in the morning writing an App or providing a solution to a customer who may be located 12 hours away, but that also means that as a society we must start to recognise we have to become a 24/7 society. I am satisfied that the legislation is there to make it happen but what is missing is the will to make it happen especially the perspective of an antiquated trade union movement that would tell you they want more child care facilities, more streetlights, more buses, et cetera. I say that they too need to step into the 21st Century, so, Madam Deputy Speaker, there is much more we have to do.

My Ministry has certainly outlined and laid in Parliament on the 33rd Sitting on the 17th of March 2014, a Strategic Plan for the International Business Sector, 2014-2019 and we are working on that. There continues to be some challenges but we hold steadfast to the view that our vision is for Barbados to become the wealth management centre of choice in the Caribbean and that is why I have to reflect upon any changes in policy that is going to affect that goal and that is why I speak to the 2 per cent commission ensuring that there is clarity to that, that it is not challenging the system, and the National Social Responsibility Levy too, to ensure that we know that it is being applied. We can do our best in here but if our public officers are not in sync or if they are not clear or if they are left to make up the rules then our private sector and ordinary citizens get concerned.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there are also some low-hanging fruit that we also have to address as a nation. I am going to come down now, I sensed your body movement to wrap up. Madam Deputy Speaker, let me tell you something, they are very simple things. The Minister of Transport and Works has heard me bending his ears in the wee hours of the morning as he drops out of bed as well as my colleague Minister Blackett, it is like pulling teeth to do a simple thing like going and paying your annual road tax in Barbados, and my position is very simple, abolish it and perhaps, as Minister Blackett and others have said, institute a small fee at the pump so that everyone who drives a motorcar got to go and put in gas somehow.

Madam Deputy Speaker, all of this money we are losing in the national economy with people having to take a day off from work to go and license a vehicle is wastage and the public sector must start with those kinds of reforms. This thing about the police chasing people down on the highways because they do not have the road tax in place, my man everyone has to go to the pump to buy gasoline, get some money in there through that and eliminate the frustration that people face.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am driving around Barbados now with a driver's licence that expired January 31, 2017, but of course I have a receipt to show that I paid \$200 for five years. I went to do it, paid my money and then I was told oh I have to go elsewhere to get my picture taken. Well, I protested because you should not have taken my money in the first place and if it is illegal the Attorney-General would have to represent me in court. These are the simple little things that frustrate ordinary Barbadians like the amount of time that you have to spend in court for example. I told the Attorney-General this morning that little things like a little traffic infraction, a rolling stock, whatever, man give somebody a ticket. Do you imagine the number of ordinary Barbadians who have to take a day off from work to go and stand up in a court among hardened vagabonds to get a \$50 fine or a CRD with that there. No. I

am saying that we must institute the ticketing system, for example, when it comes to these matters. These things help to bring down the cost in Barbados.

Madam Deputy Speaker, my last point I am going to make is that we talk about changes in action. I made the commitment to Barbadians that the onerous liquor licensing regime must come to an end. We are going to remove it from the court system and we are going to make it easier. Last Monday under the able leadership of the Honourable Attorney-General the Cabinet Committee on Governance met and deliberated on the matter and agreed that we would change the liquor licensing regime in Barbados where the licence will now be administered by the Ministry of Commerce where Barbadians would not have to go to a court system and stand up and wait for hours to be interviewed, remove the police from the matter so that they can get involved if you operate without the appropriate licence and to stagger the licensing system so that nobody has to bunch up at the end of the year.

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We need to start treating our people as though they are true entrepreneurs and not as though they are criminals. These are the things that we have to do. Madam Deputy Speaker, as I close I hope I have given constructive criticism to the budgetary proposal. There are some things therein that trouble my soul and I am not going to run away from that at all. There is never a perfect budget and it would be remiss of me if I stood here and said that I gave it my 100 per cent support when I do not, when there are things in it that are of concern.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I also say that it is not the duty of the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs alone to get it right in this country. The Honourable Member understands that, at least the Honourable Member should understand that by now, this is a national crusade that we are on and I can only hope that we stay focussed, that we recognise that we must be open-minded, that we listen to others who have a different perspective and I sure that Barbados will go on the right track. I am obliged to you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Philip South.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to stand at this time this afternoon on June 1, 2017 in the year of our Lord to begin by giving my support to these budgetary proposals which have been fashioned under very difficult circumstances in the history of our country. Madam Deputy Speaker, I will begin by just saying a few words about the difference between our

Estimates and our Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, because in listening to some of the presentation I hear, even from mature Members of Parliament, some confusion in terms of what exactly is a budgetary process. The Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, in essence, deal with revenue and expenditure, such as how we intend to raise revenue, where we spend that revenue, et cetera. Ma'am, that is why it saddens me every year when we do the Estimates, the Estimates are more programmatic and give you a good chance if you examine the individual Heads properly to see exactly what the Government is doing in terms of programmes under the various ministries.

Madam Deputy Speaker, so that for example, when I hear the Honourable Member for St. Thomas saying that the Honourable Member is disappointed that the budget does not do anything in terms of agriculture, that the Honourable Member is not hearing about agriculture or making land for the landless, et cetera, Madam Deputy Speaker, those are the kinds of issues that one would find under the Heads in the Estimates, that is why I continuously say that if we are serious that we must really do some reflection and have intense Parliamentary reform so that when we do these processes that they mean not only more to us as Parliamentarians but more to the ordinary man and woman in the streets of Barbados for whom we serve.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that is where I would like to begin. Ma'am, Barbados has a history of deficit financing, in other words, we have a long history. I believe that our founding father is quoted as saying that as a country we need not fear having a deficit, that indeed, that is the only way that we would be able to finance the kind of growth that we would require, financing the kind of opportunities in education, health and social services that we would require to be able to develop as a small nation. However, as time goes by, of course, the deficit becomes wider and wider. Ma'am, simply put in the language that the ordinary man and woman or my 89-year-old mother at home can understand, if you are an individual and you are spending more than you earn you would have a deficit and unless you can borrow then you would understand the consequences. If you are a corporation and you are spending more than you earn the same thing applies.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in the case of Government what Government has been able to do is to finance its shortfalls by issuing Bonds, Notes and Treasury Bills, that is why the discussion in terms of the printing of money, but this financing goes alright if you are doing well, if the economy is growing, et cetera, then your creditors do not mind purchasing your Bonds, Treasury Bills, et cetera. Ma'am, that is what Barbados did for several years but we have come to the point where as a Government the signal are clear to us that in fact we can no longer sustain the type of financing that we have over the last few years.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in 2011, in fact, the great United States of America had a downgrade by Standard and Poor's, from AAA, I think, to AA because of the same reason because the rating agency was saying that when they looked at the extent of the debt, when they looked at how you were financing that debt we had, I think, a \$2 trillion shortfall and therefore felt that they should bring that to the attention of creditors and brought a downgrade against the United States of America.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Europe had its crisis. Greece as you know, Italy, Spain, Portugal all of them in 2011-2012 had significant challenges and were only able because of the strength of the European Union who provided billions of dollars in financing were able to bring themselves slowly out of recession. Little Barbados did not have that luxury of having that type of support., The United States of America dollar is the most widely traded dollar in the world, so that even though they had and have had deficit issues continuously they have never had a shortfall in terms of creditors willing to purchase their Bonds, Bills, Notes, et cetera, but we have had that. Therefore I just thought I would begin there to explain where we are as a country and why as a Government nine month or so away from the General Elections that we have taken what I believe is a responsible position that we have to address these issues.

Madam Deputy Speaker, most Governments want to provide their citizens with as many items as possible to which they can respond.

4.35 p.m.

In an election year, we would want to be able to say, "Let us pay for the education of all of our people. Let us give back X and let us give back Y." The reality is, and I have been saying this consistently for many years, Barbados cannot afford its lifestyle. That is why we are here today. In 2008 when we came to office, we knew in fact that the dark clouds were on the horizon, but at that time what was the country firing on in terms of its revenue generation, Madam Deputy Speaker? The international business sector was under stress, and tourism was under stress because of what was happening worldwide and particularly because we depended primarily on two source markets. We relied on the United Kingdom and Canada primarily, and of course CARICOM being the third. You had difficulties in all of these markets, so you had a reduction in the number of tourists coming to our shores. You depended on foreign direct investment up until 2007 when you had lots of buildings being constructed, the refurbishment of the Kensington Oval, et cetera, all in preparation for the 2007 World Cup. That disappeared so construction, which was also a catalyst for our growth at the time, also dried up. You can see that we were faced with some very serious challenges.

We took the decision that whatever measures we took we wanted to be as humane as possible. We wanted as much as possible to ensure that we did not inflict pain on our people. We took some very tough decisions, but in all cases they were decisions which we thought were less invasive to the ordinary man and woman in the street. Madam Deputy Speaker, in other words, when we took the decision that we needed to reduce our expenditure, in particular public expenditure, by addressing the issue of the employment of 2 000 or 3 000 of our public officers, at that point in time we actually had commentators who were saying, "You are doing wrong. If you are going to fix this problem, you actually need to do about 8 000 or 10 000." You actually had commentators who were telling us that that was the number we should have been looking at. Even in the face of trying to reach 3 000, I believe that we ended up with 2 400 or 2 500 individuals -- about 1 800? -- who we released.

Even in our challenges our unemployment figure went to 11.5 per cent. It is down to nine per cent or thereabouts. Even that success becomes an issue in the national discourse, in particular from operators of the Barbados Labour Party who mischievously place in the public domain that our unemployment figure came down because we rehired 2 500 civil servants. That is most untrue. I believe the Member for St. Joseph in his presentation this morning spoke of a tale of two cities. This Budget is a tale of two parties. The Government of Barbados recognised that these are very serious times, and any measures that we take are for the long-term survival not of the Government but of Barbados and its people. We have not shied away from taking the tough decisions at this point in time. The difference between what we have done and what some commentators are saying is this: You heard some members of the private sector saying that in fact you should have cut expenditure and not raise revenue. Madam Deputy Speaker, the difference in that approach, as you very well know and as you heard from the Member for St. Michael North West in his presentation, is that in fact our biggest expenditure is actually salaries. Salaries mean bodies. We took the decision that we do not wish at this point in time of our history to send home any more officers, whether in the Public Service or in statutory corporations; but we also knew that whatever measures we took had to have as No. 1 priority the saving of the Barbados dollar.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you know and I know that the average Barbadian, if nothing else, would not want to live through a time when there is a devaluation of our dollar. With that in mind, notwithstanding all of the things you heard from commentators about us wanting to bring an Election Budget et cetera, we took the decision that any measures which we took must be focused on protecting the Barbados dollar. We make no apologies for that. As I said, some members of the private sector in particular walk around and say, "You need to cut your expenditure," but if

you look across our Ministries and if you had paid attention -- the other side, in particular, as I said -- during the Estimates, you would have seen that there are no big Budget issues. There are no big Government-financed capital projects on the horizon, so the only expenditure which they are talking about is for us to send home more officers. We took the decision, and we will not renege from that, that in fact we are going to have to go the other route, which is to raise revenue so that we can close the deficit.

As I said, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a tale of two parties, because if you contrast the mature approach in the delivery of the Member for St. Michael North West and the approach of the Member for St. Michael North East yesterday afternoon.... I got a WhatsApp message today which said: "I was going to be listening to the Leader of the Opposition, because I like to hear her giving licks to the Government from time to time, but these are serious times, and whereas there is a time for jokes and corned beef discussions and buljol, et cetera, these are serious times. What I did not hear are any serious attempts by the Member for St. Michael North East in terms of addressing our fiscal challenges at this point in time of our history."

What did we hear instead? Let me see if my memory serves me correctly. We heard from the Member for St. Michael North East that "I do not apologise for being one of the best aunts in Barbados. Barbadians know me well. I have been in public life for 23 years. I can stand naked before them; they know everything about me. Uncle Errol wrote a letter for me. I am a qualified lawyer. Uncle Errol wrote a letter for me to be admitted to Middle Temple." I had no Uncle Errol to write a letter for me, but I know that I went to the University of the West Indies and I got my legal education certificate. I am not sure why the Honourable Member felt compelled to raise what I thought was a dead issue, but having raised it let me just say this: The difference between the interpretation of a Legal Profession Act when it was done, and if I was Attorney General, is this. When the Honourable Member was admitted to Middle Temple, I think it was, the Honourable Member could not take on clients on her own because in the United Kingdom system there is a further 12 months, there is a pupillage, et cetera, which the Honourable Member did not do. Instead, the Honourable Member flew back to Barbados; so where I have an issue is that if you could not take on clients where you were trained, explain to me how you could return to our shores and take on clients without doing more. That is where my interpretation of what should have happened and what actually happened differs.

4.31 p.m.

Thursday, June 1, 2017

Hon. A.D. BRATHWAITE: (Seq 38)

Sir, as I have said, if I were Attorney-General at the time, I would have sent the Honourable Member to law school in Trinidad because I felt there was no equality. Sir, as I have said, fundamentally, if you cannot take on clients, as the Honourable Member could not have done when she graduated from Middle Temple, then you should not have been able to come to Barbados and take on clients without more. Sir, that is all I am saying. I am not sure why it was raised but as it was raised by the Honourable Member herself, I just thought I would comment on it. Sir, enough said about that. Sir, instead of serious policies, instead of serious reflections, we heard a political speech. We heard about my Haggatts moment, we heard about corruption, and corruption. If the Grotto goes up by x, there is corruption, if Arch Hall goes up by y, there is corruption, if St. John Polyclinic goes up by x, there is corruption, that is all we hear about, no serious contributions whatsoever and, of course, no information to support any of these allegations because it is entertainment. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East actually forgot where she was and what she was aspiring to be. I did not see or hear someone who is serious about leadership in the country. I did not hear someone who was serious about debating issues in terms of where we go from here.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let me say this. Madam, regardless of who wins the next general elections, these policies will not be reversed because they are the best things at this point in time for Barbados, and they will not be reversed whether Barbados Labour Party, Democratic Labour Party or any of the other Parties that we are hearing about. Madam, in fact, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East by accident, inadvertently agreed with the Budgetary Proposals. The Honourable Member said she would not have brought the deficit to zero, that she would have brought it to one per cent. Madam, in other words, I accept what needs to be done but my difference is I would have brought it down to one per cent, I would not have brought it to zero. Madam, speaking out of both sides of her mouth -- I do not mean that in any derogatory way, I am just saying playing both sides of the fence -- what did she say next. I will bring it down to one per cent but I would make sure and pay all the university fees again, \$40 million or thereabout. I will give a cost of living increase and give civil servants an increase in salary -- another \$140 million, that is no big thing. I will ensure I address the 4 000 individuals with pit toilets -- that is \$60 million, no big thing. Madam, in other words, having accept that we have this fiscal deficit that cannot be sustained, having said that you accept that we cannot and should not be going back to the Central Bank of Barbados to continue the type of funding that we have had to depend on over the last year or so, you then turn around because you want to play to the public gallery because you forgot that you were in Parliament and not rubbing shoulders, and say you want to give them back \$300 000, et cetera. Madam, it is not

sustainable, it is intellectually dishonest and not sustainable at all. Madam, as I have said, it is a tale of two Parties.

We may not always have gotten it right but give us credit for doing the right thing at this point in time for the people of Barbados.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as I have said, we have to accept if nothing else that we are trying here to protect the Barbados dollar, we are trying here to protect the Barbados brand, that is our responsibility as a Government. In fact, that is our responsibility as a Parliament to ensure that we protect the Barbados brand. We need to ensure that we are able to go back on to the foreign market at some point in time in the not too distant future but we accept that taxation alone cannot bring us out of where we are, and that is why I begin my presentation by making the distinction between doing the financial and Budgetary process and what we did in a couple of weeks ago in terms of the Estimates. Madam, there is a relationship between them because we also understand the importance of taking initiatives to bring growth to this country. We are not satisfied with a growth rate of 1.3 per cent. We accept that with the budgetary measures here that our growth rate will be reduced. We estimate that we will probably lose about .6 per cent or .7 per cent in terms of growth but we are willing to sacrifice that again. Madam, I say it for the third time that we are willing to sacrifice that because we want to defend the Barbados dollar. Madam, across the region where they have been devaluation, we have seen, and we can use Jamaica and Guyana as an example and we can see what has happened for years, upon years in terms of them finding it very difficult to recover. We cannot or should not as a country allow ourselves to go down that road.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we accept we need growth and we have been working on various initiatives. My colleague and friend from Christ Church East Central, is going to do in his presentation, I am sure, some analysis in terms of the internationalisation of our educational system. We have five or so medical school and we estimate within the next five years that we should about 12 000 foreign students in Barbados and 12 000 foreign students is going to mean at least 6 000 beds. These are 6 000 beds that will not be provided by guest houses alone, or even by hotels because some of them are presently at Casa Grande in St. Philip, but by ordinary men and women who can convert their homes or rent out their homes, and these individuals are going to spend money on food, on recreation.

Madam, I am excited about my colleague and friend, the Minister of Education is doing, and I am sure he is going to do more, a new growth area.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we spoke about what we are doing in terms of renewal energy. We spoke in terms of where we want to take Barbados by 2027. The Barbados

Labour Party many years ago spoke about a green economy and a green Budget. We did not speak about it, we have been doing it. If you drive around Barbados and go into St. Lucy, you come into St. Philip and ordinary men and women are converting their houses and producing their own electricity. My friend from Christ Church South is very proud of that fact. He checks his production on his Ipad from time to time. He is proud of the fact that he is a net user and is selling electricity into the grid. There are many Barbadians who are doing that and we want to encourage more Barbadians not only to get involved in terms of renewal energy but to encourage more of our young people to seek out the opportunities where they can be creators and provide the technology or improve the technology because technology will be need to be improve continuously. This is a potential growth area for us as a country and we must continue to exploit it and we want our young people to get involved in that area.

Mr. Speaker, we have continued to provide opportunities in the international business sector even in the face of all the challenges from the OECD, from the IMF, from the Global Forum et cetera, even in the face of all those challenges, little Barbados is surely but slowly returning to growth in terms of our international business sector because we did not put our hands up and say that it cannot be done, we went into the market place. This administration has signed more double taxation treaty than any other administration in the history of Barbados, more investment protection treaties than any other administration in the history of Barbados because we understand the link between them and the growth of the international business sector.

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We also understand that notwithstanding the challenges in the consistent attacks that, in fact, there will always be a role for international business. As a matter of fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, we have defined or redefined international business. International business to us as a Government is any business that brings foreign exchange into this country, not just quoting how many IBCs or domestic companies are involved but any initiative that brings in foreign exchange into this country we want to support and will continue to support. The Honourable Member for St. Thomas wants me to speak about law and order, but law and order is very easy. Barbados like the rest of the Caribbean has had these challenges from time-to-time but we are doing much better in terms of our crime situation than many countries if not all of the countries in the region because notwithstanding what I heard about equipment and the innuendo about police not receiving what they need, et cetera, it is untrue. I do not like to speak about our murder rate in comparison with other parts of the region, et cetera, but I will say this. Barbados still remains the number one place in the region to live, work and come

on holiday. Notwithstanding the “mouthings” of some persons on the Other Side. They know that what I am saying is true. It is still the number one place to live and work in this region. It is not perfect. We have some issues in terms of property crime, in particular, not my number one emphasis, property crime, in particular, we have an issue with but there is a link between property crime and other things that are happening; drug use for example, so our response have been, let us do the Drug Treatment Court so we can treat the individuals so hopefully they would not have to break into people’s houses and vehicles, et cetera. Those are the kinds of things that we are doing and were it not for the fact that I am the Attorney General of Barbados I would actually say the Attorney General is doing a good job but I cannot say that. What I will say is that our response to law and order has been bearing fruits. We have actually provided better accommodation for police officers as a Government, even in stringent fiscal times, than they did in 14 years in the time of plenty because they said that they were not special and they meant it. They said it and they meant it and that is one of the things I like about the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) they say what they mean, in particular, when it comes to disadvantaging individuals.

Here is my final comment, because there is one other potential growth area that we have not exploited as a Government and we must address this issue. Just last night I was looking at the Citizens’ Investment programme out of Antigua. Antigua has one, Dominica has one, Grenada has one, St. Kitts and Nevis has one but here is where I am going, in particular, all of those individuals who are citizens of our CARICOM brothers and sisters can come freely into Barbados establish residence in Barbados, establish businesses in Barbados so explain to me if they can do that via those country because of our CARICOM relationship why should we as a country not consider one ourselves. London has encouraged persons to come and reside there for generations, New York, Miami, France, et cetera. What we have allowed some of our international partners to do is criticise what was happening in the OECS but we have addressed that, in particular, from a due diligence perspective so that all new applicants actually have to be vetted by the GRCC and the GRCC which is just up in Wilkey, scrubs all of the names of the applicants against the same international agencies, against Interpol, the Customs and Border Security in the United States of America (USA), in other words, the same vetting process that the US Government itself will do a large extent, we are doing ourselves so to me the criticism of these programmes are a bit of a nonsense. Those of us who had reservations, I am saying, be enlightened. Open your eyes to the fact that we have to exploit all of the opportunities that available to us as a country and, in particular, as I said, the emphasis has to be: how do we continue to growth this economy because taxing will not do it alone? It has to be growth but this Budget did not address the issue of growth because all of the other things that we are doing, that is why I

mentioned that -- and I am going to sit down now, Madam Deputy Speaker -- in terms of during our Estimates, if the Other Side had paid attention during the Estimates instead of making the same speeches that they made for the last couple of years, the same speeches that they have been making for the last day or so, they would see where our growth areas are.

I am obliged.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. James North.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I rise to make my contribution in this debate, of course, with the strength of the Lord, Almighty and with the will of the great people of St. James North. This is, of course, my fourth Budget debate and I wish to start by commending the Honourable Leader of the Opposition for a top grade delivery yesterday as well as all my other colleagues on This Side of the Floor. My constituents have with one accord said that this is the worst Budget in their living memory in terms of its repercussions on their daily lives. This Budget, of course, is subtitled: "Leadership in Times of Crisis: Putting Barbados First" but this Administration will be remembered as the one which exemplified a failure of leadership and which put themselves, their friends and their political financiers first at the expense of the rest of Barbados. After six failed economic pathways to progress in nine years this Cabinet now brings to this Parliament the 37th, the 38th and the 39th new tax or increased in an existing tax on the people of this country. The combined effect of an additional 8 per cent increase in last years' introduce Social Responsibility Levy bringing it now to 10 per cent taxation on all taxable imports and domestic goods and projects with an automatic additional tax on Value Added Tax (VAT) on every good means that the cost of living in this country will increase from next month by about 15 per cent across the board having now being able to reduce the public sector workers salary by 10 per cent as a result of the Barbados Labour Party's last Administration's constitutional amendment. This Administration now imposes a 10 per cent National Social Responsibility Levy on the people. They found a way, Madam Deputy Speaker, to reduce the salary of public sector workers by 10 per cent, by imposing an additional 19 per cent tax on them. The posed increase of Excise Tax from today on gasoline by 25 per cent and on diesel by 225 per cent will astronomically further increase the cost of every facet of doing business in this country. This will take place in a situation where there this country is already at 119 out of 189 countries on the 2016 World Bank Doing Business Report. It was down from 72 in 2012 and 106 in 2015. The 2 per cent commission on the rate of foreign exchange, transactions on credit cards, wire transfers and over the counter sales of foreign exchange currencies effectively means that the Barbados dollar has

been devalued against foreign currencies including the Urban Development Commission dollar that we hold so sacrosanct at two to one. The Barbados dollar because of this excise tax now stands at \$2.04 to US\$1 effectively.

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All renowned economists of modern day and every successful global leader in recent times including President Barack Obama, who said that the last thing you want to do is to raise taxes in the middle of a recession because that would just take more demand out of the economy and put business in a further hole, tell us that this method that this Government continues to pursue is doomed to continue to fail and to place the future socioeconomic well-being of the vast majority of our constituents in jeopardy, yet this Democratic Labour Party Cabinet continues to justify Albert Einstein's theory that insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.

This Government is not proposing to ease, as the Honourable Member for St. James South said, and I listened to him very carefully on this point, the effects of these new financial burdens on the vulnerable householders in my constituency by increasing the Reverse Tax Credit which this Government reduced from \$1 300 where it was to \$650 and which has not been paid to the majority of eligible citizens in this country for the last two years. They are not proposing to increase the old age pensions to buttress this additional 15 per cent increase in the cost of living and the cost of food items so necessary to sustain life that everyone would have to pay especially old people who are earning no income.

These Budgetary Proposals are not proposing to increase unemployment benefits nor are they proposing to increase disabilities benefits. The Financial Statement delivered two days ago are not proposing any system by way of which individuals still owed income tax return and business owed VAT returns or owed money by Government for services rendered or for goods sold to the public will be promptly paid.

This Democratic Labour Party Administration is not proposing to now enact into law the provisions of the 2008 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to legislatively improve the lives of persons with disabilities or to provide equal opportunities for them just as everyone else in this country. We have been hearing about a proposed disabilities legislation since 2009 when the same Honourable Minister of Finance was then Minister of Social Care. For eight years now not one proposal came legislatively to improve the lives of the most vulnerable people in this country, the lives of people with disabilities.

This Democratic Labour Party Administration is not proposing how with an increased tax take of about \$500 million, a half billion dollars, from these three new taxes or an increase in taxes, it will clear off this country's debt of \$200 million to the University of the West Indies after the Honourable Minister of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation said in March 2013 in this same Parliament that \$40 million would have been paid to reduce that debt every four months until all of the arrears were paid in full.

It is not proposing either, Madam Deputy Speaker, to restore the situation which existed for half of a century under both political Administrations before 2014 whereby the State fully paid the tuition fees of every Barbadian at the University of the West Indies at the point of delivery of their education so that poor people children in Weston, Sion Hill, The Whim and Greenwich Village could attend the University of the West Indies again rather than the present situation where there is a continuously decreasing number of Barbadians who manage to attend this institution, something that as I say all of the time 13 of the 16 Democratic Labour Party Members of Parliament may not have been able to go to and may not have been in the position where they are now in except for free tertiary education paid for by the taxpayers of this country. It is a shame. Madam Deputy Speaker, in this coming September they would have to pay even more tuition fees largely because this Democratic Labour Party owes \$200 million to the University of the West Indies and has it in a cash-strapped position.

This Government is not proposing either on how to expand vocational or technical education for our youth since they have close off entrance to the University of the West Indies. You would have thought then that you would have buttressed vocational technical training but they are not proposing that either, Madam Deputy Speaker.

These Budgetary Proposals do not indicate any pathway to progress whereby we can arrest the decline in the quality of our educational system. We are now 22nd in the quality of our educational system according to the 2016 World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Report down from number 6 in 2013/2014. In three short years we have fallen from number 6 in the world in terms of the quality of education to number 22 and continuing to decline.

These Proposals do not pronounce on how Government plans to use the windfall of taxes to be now collected to address the ever-increasing national concern of school children on school children violence, a situation which reflects a complete failure of leadership of the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central, the Minister of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation as well as the Senator in the Other Place, his Parliamentary Secretary. The education Ministers continuing refusal to

personally meet with the teachers union is a national disgrace of the highest order.

This Cabinet is not asking Parliament to approve any salary increase for any public servants for the first time in eight years after the Democratic Labour Party Cabinet Ministers, other Democratic Labour Party parliamentarians and the dozens of consultants throughout its stream of ministries and statutory corporations took back their 10 per cent recently though. They not only took it back but they took it back retroactively from April last year with the Right Honourable Prime Minister therefore getting \$40 000 in back pay and Ministers getting \$35 000 in back pay on the 10 per cent retroactive for a whole year. We the Barbados Labour Party parliamentarians, as the Honourable Leader of the Opposition said and made a document of the House, said we do not want none of that, if you cannot give the people a 10 per cent and you putting an additional 10 per cent tax on them here today, plus excise tax, plus a foreign currency transaction tax of 2 per cent, we are not taking our 10 per cent, we are donating it to the Salvation Army and the Diabetes Association, two of the most credible charitable organisations in this country one of which I had the honour to represent on the Board of Directors before I was elevated to these Chambers.

These Financial Statements are not proposing how we can expand our national service programme so that our young people can become more involved in voluntary character and life and work skills building community service or how we can expand programmes to advance resolution conflict in communities and among people. None of these things these Budgetary Proposals are proposing which will augur to improve the lives of the vast majority of our constituents, the lives of the Barbadian public, whom we have been elected to serve.

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Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs has not proposed how we can use the novelty of this tax take here today, the biggest tax take in the history of Barbados in one fell swoop, revenues which the last Barbados Labour Party Government never had at its disposal. Mr. Speaker, all this talk about how in times of plenty the Barbados Labour Party collected this huge amount of money in VAT, the Barbados Labour Party has never collected in any financial year as much money that is being proposed to be collected by this Democratic Labour Party Administration, yet we are not proposing here to enhance the status of the National Council of Science and Technology which is some poor cousin right now in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and Innovation. We are not proposing how we can use this tax take to enhance the status of this council in order to place our nation in a position where it can become a center of excellence among Small Island Developing States in this

area and in the area of innovation and potentially improve our economic growth in this manner. This Government is not concerned about any of those things.

Mr. Speaker, this Government has presided over an economy which is now the 4th most indebted in the world, where debt to Gross Domestic Product now stands at 145 per cent which is well-over the recommended limit of 60 per cent. Furthermore, our island has now slipped from No. 46 out of 141 countries in 2015 to No. 58 out of 136 countries in the 2017 World Economic Forum Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report. In other words, the flagship of this Government, the only or major industry that they are saying is growing instead is declining, that Barbados is now No.58 out of 136 countries in that index, it is down in a short space of two years after being No. 46 out of 141 countries. Mr. Speaker, Barbados was already among the worse for price competitiveness, at No. 134 out of 141 countries.

Mr. Speaker, this Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, 2017, which of course increases the cost of living by 15 per cent also includes a cost of living in the tourism sector so that it will only make Barbados worse in terms of price competitiveness, but this Government would not understand that increase in taxes every year in very Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals and at every opportunity is not the way to go - stagnating growth, making things more difficult for the people of Barbados, while Cabinet Ministers, their friends and their families become enriched at the expense of the public purse.

The Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs appears to be contented to oversee an economy which only had two months of foreign reserves for import cover in February 2017 at a total of US\$629 million, that is all we had in foreign reserves in February this year, well-below the 19 weeks cover which the country had in the worst days of the Sandiford Administration in 1991-1992. Furthermore, the Right Honourable Prime Minister continues to rubbish the multiple downgrades of the credit rating agencies, 19 successive credit ratings we have had under this Administration.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South like Nehru has fiddled while our previously highly respected country burns to the ground. This Government, simply put, does not care a feather about the plight of the average Barbadian unless they can be used by them for campaign financing purposes. That is the fact of the matter, do not get tied up or fool yourself.

Mr. Speaker, the closure of the Weston Fire Station is just one of many examples of this, it is the latest in a series of examples of Democratic Labour Party callousness towards the people. Can you imagine that you can close a fire station that has become an institution in a community?

It is a Government department, you closed it and not tell the people, you do not hold town hall meetings to tell the people, a shame on the Honourable Attorney-General. You do not tell the Member of Parliament for the area. Well, I ain't nothing, I only keep noise, but at least you should tell the people in a town hall meeting that you are closing a Government department that is of prime importance, one that serves as an emergency operation, but you just closed it down and moved and not anything to the people. Are you now going to come and ask the people for a vote? There is absolutely no way. I know that whoever you send down there, when that person comes the people are going to run them from around there.

Mr. Speaker, this Honourable Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs has always had a beef against lawyers. I mean, the Honourable Member has demonstrated that up to Tuesday gone by talking about the President of the Barbados Bar Association and about lawyers who do not pay taxes. One would therefore have imagined that the Honourable Member would not have allowed a handful of lawyers to continuously charge vastly excessive and unjustifiable legal fees to statutory corporations and not only charge but to also get away with being paid those fees. There is a Cost Committee of the Barbados Bar Association which can tax bills submitted by attorneys-at-law which are unreasonable. The fact that you may be a Chairman of a Tribunal and a close friend and former legal associate of the Right Honourable Prime Minister or the fact that you may be the son of a former Democratic Labour Party Attorney-General, or the fact that you may be cousin of a Cabinet Minister, or the fact that you may be one of the chief canvassers of both the Right Honourable Prime Minister and the de facto Deputy Prime Minister should not allow you to be paid legal fees in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, even \$1.5 million for work where the Scale of Fees typically justifies only one-sixth percentage of legal fees for the work done.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition presented an invoice as a document of this Honourable House from one of these named persons, the Chairman of a tribunal, a close friend and legal associate of the Right Honourable Prime Minister charging \$1.5 million and then another \$150 000 to the Barbados Water Authority, the authority which now wants to raise water rates and that for two years could not properly deliver water to the people in four or five northern parishes, including your parish, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that person has submitted \$1.65 million in total for work that when one reviews the work it does not even worth \$250 000. The Leader of the Opposition spoke about her father doing some of these and charging, I believe, \$250 000. I did one of these, I was attorney-at-law for the Barbados Water Authority at one time and I did one of these transactions and I charged just

over \$100 000, not \$1.65 million. This is highway robbery and thievery of the money of the taxpayers of Barbados in an age when we are being strangled by this Government and a Government, an Honourable Attorney-General and a Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs sit back and let a group of five lawyers tied intricately to the Democratic Labour Party to continuously charge legal fees.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading this House. The Honourable Member knows very well that the only legal fee for which the Honourable Attorney-General is familiar is for persons contracted by the Chambers of the Honourable Attorney-General. The Honourable Member knows that and therefore must stop misleading this Honourable Chamber.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: Madam Deputy Speaker, there is something called collective responsibility of Cabinet.

5.16 p.m.

The Honourable Member knows that and he must stop misleading the Chamber.

Mr. E.G. HINKSON: Madam Deputy Speaker, there is something called collective responsibility of Cabinet, and I stand by what I said. All of this has direct implications, no doubt, for the financing of the Democratic Labour Party's Election campaign.

POINT OF ORDER

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member for St. Philip South.

Hon. A.D. BRATHWAITE: The Member is again, and deliberately this time, misleading the Chamber. The Honourable Member knows that the Barbados Water Authority, for example, is a statutory corporation and it is controlled by the directors and managers. Things like who they retain as attorney-at-law and the fees do not come to Cabinet; it has nothing to do with Cabinet.

Mr. E.G. HINKSON: Madam Deputy Speaker, I have a bit of knowledge of statutory corporations. I have been chairman of two, and I know that these issues go to Cabinet; who is the lawyer for statutory corporations. Ma'am, this has direct implications, no doubt, for the financing of the next Democratic Labour Party's Election campaign. This is one of the reasons why the Democratic Labour Party refuses to proclaim the Prevention of Corruption Act, which speaks out against campaign financing and makes information on who are your campaign financiers subject to a commission. This is one of the reasons why....

Asides.

Mr. E.G. HINKSON: Madam Deputy Speaker, this is not about drinking alcohol. This is a serious debate. This can be the only reason why the Minister of Finance is proposing a housing incentive. This will, no doubt -- this housing incentive he proposed on Tuesday -- will go to the big four as an incentive to help fund the Democratic Labour Party's campaign too. This is a Government that speaks about morality. However, a Cabinet Minister continues to throw up the straw man of same-sex marriage when, as the Honourable Leader of the Opposition said, that has never been, is not and will never be the policy of the Barbados Labour Party to legalise it. He continues to throw up this straw man, but he sees absolutely nothing wrong with driving, in the absence of the Prevention of Corruption Act and integrity in public life legislation, a luxury car, XG10, registered, as was made a Document of the House, at the Licensing Authority in the name of Transtech.

Asides.

Mr. E.G. HINKSON: It is registered in the name of Transtech, a company with which departments under his Ministry do major contractual work. This is wrong, because when those things happen, there is always the possibility that such companies and businesses will inflate the price of their contracts to get back the favours that they give to the Ministers. All of this has to be paid by the taxpayer, so when we see that Grotto and Valery have millions of dollars in cost overruns and then that is normal Government business....

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. A.D. BRATHWAITE: Again, the Member is misleading the Chamber. In both of those projects, there were initial estimates. In fact, the Member for St. Lucy was at pains in his presentation to point out yesterday why there was a change because there were variations. In Valery, for example, we did some units for the disabled community which were not originally scheduled. If the Member would ever go in there, he would see. It is the same thing in terms of the Grotto. There were some changes that were not originally contemplated. The Member knows that.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Mr. E.G. HINKSON: Madam Deputy Speaker, how much time do I get back because of the Attorney General's interventions, Ma'am?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: You have five minutes left.

Mr. E.G. HINKSON: Ma'am, the Minister of Finance is very happy to sit in a parliamentary team with the Honourable Member for St. John. She, that Honourable Member, together with the Honourable Member for Christ Church East, quite frankly, has insulted the memory of Dame Nita Barrow. The first and only female Governor General of this country, selected by a Democratic Labour Party Administration, who had no natural children as well. It is an insult, and quite frankly puts into question the fitness of anyone who speaks about that to be a representative not only of childless mothers but of mothers and of women period. Madam Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member was also an office manager of a law firm that invoiced \$3.3 million in legal fees with \$2.8 million ending up in the hands of a man who breached the instructions of the Supervisor of Insurance by still distributing insurance contracts in this land and who was charged for so doing. There was no VAT charge on those legal fees. I do not know why the Honourable Minister of Finance does not speak about that and look into those fees, but that person of course happens to be a renowned pal of the late and present Prime Ministers of Barbados, so it is all right.

The Democratic Labour Party team, of which the Honourable Minister of Finance is a part, does not like lawyers but he is satisfied with an attorney-at-law, a Queen's Counsel at that, at the rank of Number 9 in order of precedence, presiding over the highest forum in this land despite a court order being made against him for withholding over \$200 000 for over a decade from a physically disabled man in his late 70s. This Government said that its Administration would be characterised by good governance, yet it sees nothing wrong with presiding over a situation where every year the Auditor General highlights millions of dollars missing, unauthorised Government transactions, misplaced funds, flawed contracts between Government and private entities. There has been no attempt in this presentation to address these infelicities, for which the Barbados taxpayer continues to pay dearly. The Auditor General, as all others under this regime, highlights extremely defective public sector administration and/or fraud for which this Cabinet is ultimately responsible.

The present situation whereby three Cabinet Ministers are refusing to appear before the Public Accounts Committee, which is examining infelicities at the National Housing Corporation, is a national scandal.

MADAM DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Honourable Member, your time is up. Will you complete?

Mr. E.G. HINKSON: Ma'am, can I just wind up? This Democratic Labour Party looks to the past for their halcyon days under the Right Excellent Errol Barrow's regime. We believe in the Barbados Labour Party, on the other hand, that Barbados' best days lie ahead of us when,

with the people's will, a Barbados Labour Party Administration headed by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, together with the best quality of candidates ever presented to the voters of Barbados on any one political platform, will be elected to serve as the Government of this nation.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member. Please take your seat.

Mr. E.G. HINKSON: I am obliged to you, Madam.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Christ Church East.

Hon. DENIS S. LOWE: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am very pleased to have the opportunity to make my contribution in this debate.

Asides.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Hon. DENIS S. LOWE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me first thank the good people of Christ Church East for having bestowed the honour on me to represent them in this very hallowed sanctuary.

H:No.D12C(42)

Let me say that I enjoyed representing my constituents and shall continue to do so and I am encouraged, Mr. Speaker, Sir, by their commitment to ensuring that this relationship continues. I do not consider it any small task to be part of a Government having to lead this country at the time recognising that these have been very difficult times not only for us here in Barbados but for the entire region, the hemisphere and, indeed, the globe. What Barbados has gone through for the last several years is really a reflection of what is happening worldwide, a reflection of what other countries have gone through, and are going through but we recognise the resilience of our people and we recognise the enlighten of our people and we recognise that our people do not depend on certain displays to get a sense of where we are and where we need to be and how we must get there. Our people recognise that over the years our society has been built on the backs of persons who endure hardship from time to time, persons who would have gone through the years of plenty and persons who would have gone through the years of famine, and the passage through plenty and the passage through famine is nothing new to the world's community as far back as in the days of Egypt when Joseph was the Prime Minister, the children of Egypt at the time went through a scorching drought that reduced their access to food to all but one single hole and that was the hole where Joseph fed that part of the world at the time. Of course, Joseph

despised by his brethren, despised by his colleagues, was still able to find in his heart a place to extend a hand of mercy and a hand of goodwill to those who were hurting the most. I am proud to be a part of a Government led by the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South. I am proud to be a part of a Government led by members on this side both on the frontbench and on the backbench. Mr. Speaker, it is my highest honour to be here at the time and to watch this country recover from its most horrid time of economic difficulties to a point where the Minister of Finance could have presented this Budget really building blocks for the journey into the future, a Budget that we all acknowledge has its moments, its places where the call for shared sacrifice will be necessary as will be the case of all families all over the country, perhaps all over the region from time to time will have to engage in shared sacrifice for the goodwill of the continuance of the family. Sir, that is nothing new, nothing to be frowned on, nothing to be looked on with scorn. The great thing we should be looking on is that our people have decided through thick and through thin to struggle with us all to make this place the place they want it to be. We are not where we want to be now, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are not even who we want to be in some cases with some people in this Chamber and out of this Chamber but one thing I know is that we all agree that we are moving in the same direction with a resolve that we will not take our hands from the plough but that we will fight on and carry on this good struggle not only for ourselves but for generations to come as we go forward.

Mr. Speaker, I, like anyone else could perhaps say that I have things in the Budget that I hope we will continue to press on but I want to take note that the Honorable Minister of Finance reports in his Budgetary Proposals that it is about the fact that the fiscal deficit has been successfully reduced from 8.2 per cent to 6.3 per cent of GDP. The Honorable Minister says it is about a goal of achieving a zero balance Budget by the end of this fiscal year. He noted it is about the pursuit of measures and policies that would allow for the achieving of a balanced Budget, slow growth and reduction in the national debt, protection of the country's reserves, the stimulation of further growth in the economy and the protection of the social viability of this Small Islands Developing States.

Mr. Speaker, the Budget demonstrates that the measure introduced by the Government are working by virtue of the fact that we are seeing a two per cent growth in the economy for the last quarter and three successive quarters of growth. There have been decreases in unemployment from 11.3 per cent to 9 per cent, decreases in wages and salaries which everybody called upon the Government to do by saying you have to reduce wages and salaries, at page 16 of the text of the Budget you would see that there, a decrease in the current expenditure, expenditures on current transfer have decreased, grants to public institutions and subsidies have decreased. There

have decreases in a number of areas but nobody on that side took the time to recognise that the Government and country and the economy specifically has experiences increases. There has been increases in the areas of the (7:58) value added in the sectors by 2.2 per cent at page 10. The tourism sector, stay over visitors are up by 6.7 per cent; cruise ship visitors are up by 1.2 per cent, an increase from all major source markets. The international reserves increased by \$24.3 million for the first quarter, an increase in the current revenues of 2.1 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, an increase in corporation taxes, an increase in income tax; an increase in taxes on goods and services again at page 16; an increase in excise duties and an increase in special receipts and there are other increases that we could highlight.

Mr. Speaker, in the Budget presentation the Minister of Finance went on to talk about a place at which we must now find ourselves, and upward growth trajectory that the country is on, a clear path of sustained growth has been identified, the need to grow and protect our foreign exchange, a carefully monitored and management of the consumption appetites and pattern, the application of careful thought-out measures that would protect our current growth whilst stimulating deeper growth in the economy. Sir, all of this the Minister of Finance covered but nobody on the other side sees any virtue in the progress of the Government.

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As a matter of fact, if you asked them if the country is doing better, they will say no. If you asked them if the Minister of Finance is doing a damn good job, they would say no. As a matter of fact, they have become the party of no. Not Noah who built the Ark because that Noah carried male and female into the Ark, this is the party of N-O, the party of no. That is what they are becoming. If you asked them if they are Barbadians businesses out there doing well, they would say no. Mr. Speaker, if you asked them if they are Barbadians out there doing well, they will say no. They have become the party of no.

He went on to speak about the national conservation, about where we want to go as a society and as an economy. It must be a shared vision, he said. It must be a shared journey, he said, Mr. Speaker. The State must not go it alone. This is the national conversation that he has asked us to have. There must be a sharing of the sacrifices for when a country goes through its most desperate moments, the country calls upon its citizens to share in the sacrifice and that is all we have done. Mr. Speaker, I join in with the great words, weeping may endure for a night, but I know and Barbadians know, as we have been hearing them on the television and other places, Barbadians know that joy will come in the morning.

Listen, Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time that we have gone this way. This is not the first time that the country has faced challenges. We have faced challenges before but uniquely to the country's journey is that whenever the country is in crisis it seems as though the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) is called upon to move this country out of a position of crisis. It happens almost all the time and then what happens. We sit and work at the wheel, we keep our hands at the plough, we move night and day to get our country moving in the right direction, we are able to reconnect the country with growth and prosperity and then the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) comes and wipes it all out in 10 or 15 years. I wonder aloud, Mr. Speaker, if the country wants the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) to leave office now, one could almost rationalise that it is because of the hardships that many have faced over the years. It is because of the hardships that the country has faced. One may want to believe that it is okay to have an excuse to run the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) out of office. That is not the case. I might hasten to say it but I wonder aloud, Mr. Speaker, why in a time of plenty the people of country ran the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) out of office and they wanted them out since 2003. We recall well, Mr. Speaker, there was plenty going around, people had money in their pockets but there was something very unsettling in the minds of the citizenry about the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) and their governance. We will get to that.

Mr. Speaker, he went on to speak to how we must get there together and what will be required. He said in order for us to get where we need to be, Mr. Speaker, we have to have a heart-to-heart national conversation on what kind of society we want to be. We cannot be the society of the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s or 1990s. We cannot be a society that continues to rely on the Government to carry everybody's weight including the weight of the State. We cannot be the kind of society that do not see ourselves reinvesting in the sacrifices made by the State in those years when the society was still in its growth and its developmental stage at the earlier parts of our independence, for then, Mr. Speaker, it was felt by the founding fathers that the country had to carry the weight. The weight of education, the weight of healthcare, the weight of sanitation, the weight of entrepreneurial development, the country had to carry those weights but now that we have achieved some growth and development and some stamina all the Minister of Finance is saying, it is time that we recalibrate the struggle and decide who must do what for the greater good of the country. Mr. Speaker that is where we are going.

He said there must be a transition in thinking at the way we do business at all levels. We have to move our country's thinking away from where it is. It is alright to get in here and talk about who is corrupt and who is not corrupt and where there is corruption and where there is not

corruption and I am going to get to that in a minute. I know my time is fast going but I believe, Mr. Speaker, that in this national conversation we require voices of reason, we require voices of leadership and I am not talking about the leadership that we saw yesterday. I am talking about leadership that is grounded in values and virtues and leadership that can walk anywhere in this country and not be afraid to go forward because they are no trails of skeletons behind them. There are none behind the Honourable Member for St. Michael South. He walks head and shoulders above all. He stands firm in his position. He is not a rebel-rouser. He is not someone who picks cockfights or hen fights, he is one who stands firm on principle and I will talk about those principles in a minute.

He said that there must be a transition, a move from where we are, a change from where we are, a different view, different lenses through which we look, we must now see a society that shares the burden of development. Mr. Speaker, we must now see a society that is prepared to hold hand with the State and move forward to a higher plain of social economic development. That is what he talked about, shared responsibilities. He said there must be a transaction. In order to move, there must be an agreement between the State and the citizenry. There has to be a transaction where people contemplate what their role must be in the new society and how they must share that responsibility. I believe sincerely, Mr. Speaker, that as we go forward, we have to open the net and the social net can no longer be those as the bottom of the ladder of vulnerability. We have to open the net wide, a wide net of ideas, a wide net of views, a wide net of ambitions, a wide net of visions as to where we need to go and I am convinced that the Right Honourable Member and Prime Minister of this country is someone who is imbued with wisdom, imbued with an understanding of how to lead people, who sees himself not as the focal point of leadership in the sense of the attraction of the leadership, but sees himself as creating a dynamism where people naturally want to buy in to the vision that he sets out for the country. That is what I am talking about, Mr. Speaker. There must be a transaction driven by education, awareness, negotiation and assuring the way to change.

I want to rush on because my time is moving. I want to talk about leadership because he talked about transition, he talked about transaction.

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I am talking about transformational leadership, leadership that transforms at the very core of our being, leadership that when you ask yourself what mirror of myself do I see, I see a mirror image that tells me that I am endowed with the powers and energies of the Almighty led by a man who feels the same way about my God, that is how I see it.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that in looking at transformational leadership, it springs from a shared journey. You have to have walked the walk to be able to talk the talk. There are some in here in this Chamber who have not walked the walk, who are imposters of the journey of the ordinary, who have never, like the Honourable Member for St. Michael East would say, had to pick pond grass, who never had to share a dwelling on the floor, who never had to wait until the boat came in to 'brek' a dollar by scaling the fish or in season 'brekking' the sea eggs or who never had to head a bough of canes through a cane ground to put them on to a truck for haulage. They are imposters of the journey of the ordinary but yet they tell me that they are fit and proper to lead me to a higher plane of self-actualisation and yet they tell me that they are fit and proper to castigate as an ordinary man growing out of ordinary circumstances but where I am because of an imbued anointing of the graces of the Almighty supported by ordinary families... I just lost my dear mother three years ago and I just lost my stepfather three months ago and I am proud of what they taught us. I grew up in Cane Garden and later moved to White Hill or more properly called Mount All. The Honourable Member for St. Andrew is an Honourable Member who has been in and out of my parents humble home, and whenever he came there he was well-fed and well taken care of.

I am surprised that the Honourable Member for St. Michael East could join to call people on this side thieves. It really boggles the mind. If you look at yourself inwardly and outwardly Honourable Member you may find that you are not who you think you are, that is for you.

Mr. Speaker, you must spring from that journey. The only bells that I have heard in my life are the school bells or booties. In the olden days, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North would know, little children boots had bells. As a matter of fact I think the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East's boots still have bells because they have to find out where he is from time to time. We had bells on our shoes as little babies and those were the bells that I am most familiar with because I did not grow up at a time or in a place or in a space when somebody would ring a bell and tell me to come for food. The supper time bell. I did not grow up there, and that is not the journey that the Minister of Finance is talking about.

Leadership that is transformational must spring from a shared journey. It must be grounded in high moral standard for someone has to fight for us and for the high moral ground as it relates to how we live and how we should live.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael East accused the Honourable Member for St. Michael Central of injecting poison into the debate because he chose to rebut the issue of same-sex

legislation. Now, that was not introduced by this side. When the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West introduced his Budgetary measures he did not introduced anything. You know who introduced that, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is the one who introduced it in this debate and that Honourable Member knows why it was introduced, but let me say this and my constituents know where I stand. As a matter of fact, I stand on the same side as the Barbados Labour Party Branch for Christ Church East because when the matter of same-sex legislation came to the parliamentary group of the Barbados Labour Party a resolution was tabled by the Christ Church East Branch at the 76th Annual Conference of the Barbados Labour Party which seeks to place same-sex couples on the same level as heterosexual couples in a new domestic violence legislation. My sources tell me that it aroused the eerie of some Members of the Leader of the Opposition party. The Honourable Member for St. Michael East likes to get around in here and prance around in here like a peacock or a peahen in bloom. The reply does not matter me, I am going to speak the truth, that is what I am going to speak. At that meeting several Opposition parliamentarians including the Honourable Members for St. George South, St. Michael East, St. Michael North and St. James Central came out strongly against the resolution that supports gender-neutral legislation.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Speaker, to make a long story short because I do not have time the issue of same-sex legislation is my issue. Any man who wants to live in another man's house that is his business and any woman who wants to live with another woman, beat her, eat her, drink her, whatever pleasure they want to derive, that is a matter for them

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Mr. Speaker, Sir, all that I am saying is that as far as I am concerned, I am not supporting any call for legislation to legislate same-sex marriage in Barbados, that is all I am saying. Mr. Speaker, I know that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East who brought it up, brought it up because I believe that Honourable Member has a special affinity for dealing with matters related to same-sex issues and that is fine for the Honourable Member, I am not troubling the Honourable Member, it is the Honourable Member's prerogative. I am telling you that I do not want anybody leading me anywhere who is confused about what is a man or anything of that sort, and I am confident that my Honourable Leader and Right Honourable Prime Minister is very clear on those issues.

Mr. Speaker, let me move on because another matter was injected into the debate. I did not bring it up, an issue dealing again with Legal Education Certificate.

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

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Speaker, I did not ask for anything, a document was laid in this Honourable House yesterday supposedly intending to validate the fact that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is legally qualified to practise law in Barbados. Now, this was brought as a document of this Honourable House. I have a copy of a London Educational Certificate, exhibit "A" and exhibit "B" and there is no comparison or alignment between the two instruments. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, Sir, Uncle Errol supposedly who represents a law school gave passage to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East and what according to this -- and we will get the handwriting authenticated -- but what uncle Errol signed was a certificate of character required by consolidated regulations in the Inns of the Court, a police certificate of character, the member would have been about 18 years of age then. I am quite sure if that police certificate of character were to be required today it might be a whole other story.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, these are the things that lend themselves to this perception that there are some people who can be above the law, there are some people who have scaled the classifications of the human strata in an ordinary society puts themselves at the pinnacle, at the apex, at the top and everybody else must straggle along, including good men on that side and good women who should never allow themselves to be led around in that kind of way and believe that because I did not go to Harrison College, I did not go to Combermere, I am an ordinary boy from St. Andrew who did not even go to high school for one day but an ordinary boy who worked through my church, got an opportunity and was able to scale the skies, came out at the top of my profession with a Doctoral Degree. I did not commute to do it, it was not by correspondence, and I matriculated and imagine I now understand and I will close Mr. Speaker, Sir, I do not wish to press your patience, I understand why there is an envy, Sigmund Freud would call it a psychosexual dysfunction. He would say that it was spurred from penis envy, that is what he would say but I understand why there is constant badgering or attempt to badger the Right Honourable Prime Minister. Do you know from the documents presents by the Leader of the Opposition, I noticed in here with some -- I do not know what to call it, I do not know if it is... no this is a genuine certificate of education where the Honourable Member got an "E" for history at the university -- empty. Mr. Speaker, one final point and I will wrap up.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading this House. Mr. Speaker, as I understand the rules of this Parliament every Member of Parliament, whether Cabinet Minister, whether

Member on that side, whether Member on this side has equal time. The Honourable Member has been speaking...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, Honourable Member...

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Member has now been speaking...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member let me stop you there. Honourable Member, please take your seat.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: the Honourable Member has been now speaking for about 35 minutes.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please take your seat.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member has now been speaking for 37 minutes...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please take your seat.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: Mr. Speaker, it is not fair.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please take your seat.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: Mr. Speaker, it is not fair, Mr. Speaker, I know that he has been talking for 7 minutes more than his time.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please take your seat. Honourable Member, I do not have to explain but I will. Honourable Member, I have sat here, I have the right to extend time to Members if I think that they are wrapping up. I noted the time I have him starting and every Honourable Member who has spoken in this debate today has spoken more than half an hour so do not come with any nonsense. Honourable Member, please wrap up.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Thank you, Sir. Mr. Speaker, the Government has been accused of corruption and the bastion of that corruption is...

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, wrap up, please.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Yes, Sir, the bastion of that is Cahill. Let me say in closing that the Government of Barbados has not spent a red cent of the taxpayers money on Cahill, that is the first thing. Secondly, Mr. Speaker, if we want to talk about corruption let us talk about Greenland's where \$100 million of taxpayers' money was

spent; let us talk about the “Golden Shower” in Silver Sands, where over...

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you do not have the Floor.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: Pardon, Sir? The Honourable Member is misleading this House. Greenland did not cost \$100 million, it cost less than as I understand it, \$60 million, sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, no point of order is found. Please wrap up, Honourable Member.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Speaker, I believe that we have come to a place in this country where it is the view of some that if you drive a nice vehicle you are out of league. My vehicle is not a gift, I make monthly payments on it and I believe Mr. Speaker, Sir, that it is my prerogative to own anything that I wish to own in this country and that I do not have to be of any social ilk to qualify to own anything.

Mr. SPEAKER: Very well, Honourable Member.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Speaker, I will drive my vehicle with pride because I work hard and long for it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Okay, Honourable Member, thank you.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much.

6.00 p.m.

Asides.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sir, if you would allow me to begin by citing the words of John Bunyan: “Though with great difficulty I have got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the trouble I have been at to arrive where I am.” Mr. Speaker, I would regard it as a serious failure of my duty not to be part of this debate in this Parliament, which in my judgement will have a considerable bearing on the wellbeing of the people of this country for decades if not for the next generation. I would like to structure my brief presentation to discuss the policies that have been presented to the Parliament against the background of the challenges which face the country on the economic front, and by comparative analysis of the

options which the Government faces and the judgement that the Government exercises and a determination of whether the correct balance has been found, Mr. Speaker. Sir, I make that point early because there is no perfection in economic analysis. Things have to stand the test of reasonableness. These policies, like any other set of policies, must be judged by reference to whether they stand the test of reasonableness.

Sir, the policies in my judgement have to be discussed within the context of the challenges which are facing the country and the problems facing the country, since the measures are intended not to be abstract matters but to be problem-solving. It would seem to me that if we are to specify a context within which these policies are to be evaluated, we must begin with recognising that one of the main challenges facing this country has been no growth or very weak growth since 2007. In point of fact, Mr. Speaker, the level of economic activity until recently was less than it was in 2007, and there have been just modest signs of growth. Growth to the economy is like oxygen to the body, and only policies that should be engaged in at this time at this juncture in Barbados, as we are limping away from a prolonged period of decline, are those that lend themselves to growth. Any policies that do otherwise run the risk of creating irreparable damage on a country that has been in decline for a considerable time.

Secondly, Sir, these policies have to be set against the background of the fact that the Government of Barbados finds itself in an unprecedented and remarkable situation. For the first time in the history of this country, a Government has effectively run out of entities from which to borrow in order to meet the difference between its revenues and its expenditures. It is extraordinary, and perhaps we may at some stage want to discuss why we are here now, but the fact is that we have to play the hand which we have been dealt. The Government has effectively run out of the ability to continue to borrow from the National Insurance Scheme (NIS), it has exhausted its capacity to borrow from banks, and the credit rating that this country has received disables it from being able to borrow from institutional lenders abroad. It can only borrow from certain institutions at the most punitive interest rates. We cannot ignore this.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, the Government has used Central Bank printing of money, in the absence of its ability to borrow from anyone else, as the basis upon which it has been paying its bills. That has been the worst possible thing to do, because as has been consistently pointed out, borrowing from the Central Bank is pumping domestic currency into an economy where transactions effectively have to be made in foreign exchange, and the inevitable result will be the depletion of the reserves. We have reached the stage where the Government cannot borrow from traditional lenders, but it has also reached the

stage where it can no longer continue to print money. It has to stop borrowing from the Central Bank.

Fourthly, this country faces a severe problem with debt. Reputable economists have estimated that once the debt reaches 90 per cent of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product), it is the biggest constraint to growth. Economists looking at the Caribbean have estimated that it reaches that level -- the debt overhang -- as low as 60 per cent of GDP. Sir, Barbados has a debt overhang of 160 per cent of GDP. Not only the debt to GDP; the amount of money that has to be repaid by way of debt service debentures in the next few years will be almost \$400 million a year as compared to \$200 million in 2016. If the debt repayments were a problem in 2016 at \$200 million a year, no Government of Barbados can easily confront the possibility of having that debt repayment doubled; and it will double for the next four years without an understanding that a significant initiative has to be engaged to deal with the debt, Sir.

Fifth, Sir, the country has severe balance of payments problems. The reserves that stood at \$1.5 billion in 2008 at the Central Bank plunged to \$650 million in 2016; and they did not just plunge, Sir, they plunged notwithstanding the effort of the Government of Barbados to stop the haemorrhage. It is as if the country has a wound that cannot heal, Sir. Beyond these macro-economic problems, there are specific issues which have to be confronted if we are to determine if these policies do in fact stand the test of reasonableness. Sir, the Government has built up tremendous arrears to certain institutions of the civil society which, unaddressed, will undermine their standing. The Government owes the University of the West Indies hundreds of millions of dollars, and is putting the future of that institution at peril. The Government of Barbados also has significant arrears to the private sector. It also has significant arrears to households in the form of tax refunds which it needs to pay. Therefore, the policies before the House have to be assessed by reference to what they do in order to enable this country to face these seven-fold problems which the country has to deal with.

Sir, I want to begin by saying that there is no easy solution. I do not envy the Minister of Finance. It is easy to deal with one problem at a time but, as I said, Sir, there are seven balls in the air juggling; seven problems that have to be dealt with simultaneously, and all will involve some level of major adjustment. All will involve some pain. When I take these seven major matters together -- and there is simply no other way by which we should approach this matter than by seeing them as one undertaking -- they have to be dealt with. Some may yield themselves better to short-term, but they all have to be dealt with.

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Some may yield themselves better to short term but they all have to be dealt with. I come immediately to the clear conclusion that while it might be nice to say we want to have a homegrown programme to deal with these problems that the magnitude of the problems are of a nature that it must be clear that Barbados cannot solve problems of this unprecedented magnitude without significant financial support from the international financial community. Sir, I want to say that when I speak in terms of international financial community, I am not only speaking in terms of the International Monetary Fund, there is also cdb1 and there is the Inter-American Development Bank and those institutions exist not just to lend Government money for projects but they are in a position to lend for policy based loans on the condition that to get access the policy based loans the Government must be pursuing policies or have a programme in place that has enjoyed the seal of approval of the International Monetary Fund.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say that I would not come to Parliament in Barbados or even outside of Parliament and suggest that one should easily enter into a programme with the International Monetary Fund because it is not an easy thing. I had to exercise that judgement myself as a Minister of Finance in 1994. Sir, when I became the Minister of Finance and Prime Minister of Barbados, they were IMF people in Barbados who had what is called an Enhanced Surveillance Programme that they wanted to implement but it was a programme without resources and my judgement was that it was not in the best interest of Barbados to do that and I told them no.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I also have to say for the records that I was the public officer in 1992, who wrote the Cabinet paper advising Tom Adams to go to the Fund for support and you may recall that my first public appearance in Barbados was on a call-in programme where I engaged in a debate with Wendel McClean, advising the Government of the day to go to the Fund. I would also say that I recently had the experience of helping Grenada to put together their programme to go the Fund. I think you go to the Fund when the situation is merited. Sir, the Fund has been created to be the lender of last resort. If ever there was a time when we are at the stage of last resort, having exhausted virtually every other source from which we can get resources to support the balance of payments and to support public activity, that point is now. Sir, the only issue to my mind is whether what we could have received by way of a programme with the International Monetary Fund because both would impose pain, whether the programme that we would have imposed that would have come with an IMF programme would impose less pain on the people of Barbados than that introduced by the Minister and whether it had other characteristics about it that would enable us to deal with seven challenges that the country has to deal with.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister has chosen not to utilise the International Monetary Fund but to go the way of a homegrown programme. He has said that under that homegrown fiscal programme, and there has to be one, that he intends to make an adjustment of \$542 million in nine months in order to bring Barbados' fiscal situation under control.

Mr. Speaker, the question is? Would Barbados have received a programme with the International Monetary Fund that would have inflicted less pain by way of taxation and other measures on the public than the \$542 million that the Minister has brought in his Barbados. now, the Minister is having a programme of \$542 million of adjustment in nine months but, Sir, if you go to the International Monetary Fund Article IV Consultation Report on Barbados -- this was recently as last year -- the Fund was prepared to recommend that the Government of Barbados undertake an adjustment programme of equivalent to 3.5 per cent of GDP over the next three years. Sir, I have to repeat that and put it in numbers. Sir, 3.5 per cent of GDP is \$310 million and the Fund was prepared to tell the Government of Barbados, and this is the advice that it rendered, that you have a problem, yes, you have to make an adjustment and the adjustment that you should make is \$310 (5:57) million over three years but the Government has chosen by these measures to make an adjustment of \$542 million over nine months. The adjustment therefore I am saying to Parliament, that the Minister is bringing to the House is going to inflict about \$250 million more pain on this economy than if the Government of Barbados had chosen to enter a programme in the International Monetary Fund, and that is clear by reference to the arithmetic.

Mr. Speaker, the other question is: How does the two programmes compare in relation to dealing with the seven challenges to which I have referred. I have said that the Government of Barbados is not in a position, Mr. Speaker, Sir, to clear the arrears that it owes to the civil society, the university. It is not in a position to clear the arrears it owes to the private sector. It is not in a position to clear the arrears it owes to the households of Barbados but if you have a programme with the International Monetary Fund and the Fund lend you money, it lends you under the condition that if you have arrears, you had to clear them, so that the University of the West Indies will not get any money from the Government of Barbados under the programme even though people like the University of the West Indies should be first in line telling that it has to go to the Fund to help us to get the money that you owe us. The private sector of Barbados should be calling upon the Government to enter a programme with the Fund where you get \$750 million, that is what you will get, together with hundreds of millions of dollars from Inter-American Development Bank and Caribbean Development Bank to clear the arrears that you owe us.

Mr. Speaker, the Government should also be hearing from the households to whom the Government owe income taxes that it should go to the Fund, and go not because we want you to do wicked things but because it is necessary in the situation where you simply cannot do better.

Mr. Speaker, I say also that the Government has a very significant debt problem and, Sir, it does. Now, what the Minister brought to the House yesterday was a series of measures to get the Central Bank of Barbados and the National Insurance Scheme to give \$70 million of relief but the debt maturing next year alone will increase by over \$200 million and for each of the next four years the debt of Barbados will be almost \$400 million each year. The Government of Barbados cannot rely upon the Central Bank of Barbados and the National Insurance Scheme just to help it with the debt. Sir, I think the Government has to put in place a programme agreed not just with the National Insurance Scheme and Central Bank of Barbados but with all of its creditors to take us out of the situation of an unsustainable position where trying to pay the debt over the course of the next four years, would put the Government in a position where it would default on the payment of the debt and in fact may even affect its reserves. The Government should do what other countries have done under IMF Programmes to use the IMF resources to employ and international debt advisor.

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The first thing you should do if he wants support from the National Insurance is to commission a special actuarial study to evaluate how much debt relief the National Insurance is in peril. The Government also in its programme should be looking to get some relief from the private sector. It would have to do an analysis of the quality assessment of the assets of the private sector how much debt they can accommodate but there are some major debts that will fall due especially the one with Credit Suisse Bank running to over \$300 million that the Government will need advice as to how it should renegotiate the debt and therefore why I appreciate that the Minister has made the effort to start dealing with the problem, Sir, what he has done is just scratching the surface.

Sir, I also am satisfied that to do in nine months what he has not been able to do in nine years by way of a fiscal consolidation programme is to engage in a programme that on the face of it does not stand the test of reasonableness. I also want to say that the Minister is introducing in Barbados that counter intuitive in respect of our recent experience. He cites the fact, and rightly so, that he was there when Mr. Sandiford had to face a similar problem but Mr. Sandiford's approach was not to treat it by way of increasing in a massive way taxes on a shrinking economy, he approached it by dealing on the expenditure side. If he learnt from that experience it should be that you deal with

it by dealing with the expenditure no matter how difficult it is because you come out of it faster. Sir, this Barbados economy has also been very responsive to tax reductions and I do not have enough time to go into that but I want to press on, Sir, because the most important thing that the Government of Barbados has to do is to settle on realistic policy on exchange rates.

A lot of what the Government is doing is inspired by the fear of a devaluation and having to explain to the public why it is devaluing the Barbados dollar. The Minister's presentation has put that issue to rest as a contentious issue because by imposing a tax on foreign exchange transactions the Minister is effectively change the price at which Barbados use domestic currency to pay for foreign currency and making it necessary for Barbadians to use more domestic currency to buy foreign exchange. Sir, that is a devaluation and if the Minister is not aware of what he has done, that is effectively a devaluation so let us take the issue of a fear of devaluation off the table. Barbados needs to have an exchange rate policy that enables the exchange rate to be used as an instrument for our growth and development rather than a sacred cow that we worship whether there is merit in worshipping the sacred cow or not.

The Barbados currency was not always linked to the US dollar at two to one. There was a time when the Barbados dollar, Sir, was linked to the British Pound but it was changed because circumstances surrounding what was happening in England required us to move from that peg. Barbados' peg to the US dollar at two to one is working a serious disadvantage to Barbados. At a time when we need to expand our exports, international business and capital inflows. The dollar is strong relative to other currencies therefore it is becoming more and more expensive for British people to have a vacation in Barbados. The dollar is strong relative to other currencies. It is more expensive for international business operators predominately coming from Canada to do business in Barbados. The dollar is also strong that it is stopping people from being effectively able to carry out real estate investments. There are other countries in the world that have had to face this issue and have decided that rather than pegging their currency to one currency they pegged it to a basket of currencies that reflect that currencies that reflect the relative date of their trade and their capital flows. The most extraordinary example of it is Singapore. Singapore currency used to be linked to the British Pound, then it was pegged to the US dollar but Singapore said that was not working for us and Singapore now has a currency that is pegged to a basket of currencies and they allow it, Sir, to be set and reset every so occasionally.

I believe, Sir, that for the purposes of protecting our competitive position that we too should unpeg from the US dollar. Not because of what has happened recently but what is likely to happen in the future and the world has to do

with a man called Trump. Mr. Trump is interested not in increasing economic activity but he is interesting in improving United States of America (USA) economy at the expense of the rest of the world and it is likely, Mr. Speaker, that as Trump implements his policies of massive tax adjustments and adjustments to the regulations that the US economy is going to get stronger relative to the rest because Britain is in a mess in terms of Brexit, European economies are all in a mess and that our economy is going to be tied, not because of anything that we want to do but what Trump is doing to an economy whose currency is appreciating and making our exports more expensive and less competitive, making it more expensive for us to do international business and making it more expensive for people to make real estate investments in Barbados. Sir, I want to propose and I have proposed that the Government of Barbados should do what Singapore has done and link our currency to a basket of currencies in the ratio of 40 per cent to the US, 40 per cent to the UK, 10 per cent to the Euro and 10 per cent to the Canadian to enable us to use the foreign exchange as a means of protecting the competitiveness of our economy rather than being dragged under in the undertow of an economy over which we have no control but is expected to get its currency become stronger and stronger and make ours weaker and weaker.

Sir, I have had someone do for me what a basket of currencies of Barbados, based upon a 40 per cent to the British Pound, 40 per cent to the US dollar, 10 per cent to the UK would look like. I would like to make it a document of the House and I would like to share it with the Minister of Finance because ...

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

Right Honourable O. S. ARTHUR: Wow. Sir, my time tends to go so fast as compared to the others.

Sir, effectively, if he was to link the Barbados dollar an unpeg and then set it within a band and vary it, it would move from US\$2 to US\$2.43 and it would bring it in line with the OECS and in the case of the British Pound, every person who is now a pensioner from Britain is suffering because of the weakness of the Pound relative to the strength of the US dollar and if he were to establish a new basket and change, Sir, people who are receiving pensions from England would find themselves immediately better off and you would improve the tourism product of Barbados, you would improve real estate development and so on.

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In line with these, I make it a document of the House, Sir, because I am serious, we have to do what Singapore has been doing since 1951: Stop worshipping an

exchange rate and try to treat it for what it is. It is just something that should be used for the purposes of developing the country's economy.

Sir, there are aspects of the Minister's speech that I would like to support him in, and I do not have the time to do so but just let me make this one point. The time has come for us to recognise that we have to begin to build a new society and a new economy for new times. Barbados in many respects has continued to function under the shadow of the Moyne's Commission Report and the programme of social democratic change that inspired our original leaders because the Moyne's Commission Report was very clear that the large mass of the people of Barbados were living in situations of complete and total poverty. The Government therefore felt, and rightly so, beginning with Mr. Adams and Mr. Barrow, that in such a circumstance the role of the State has to be paternalistic, the State had to give everybody a helping hand to help to lift them out of poverty.

I want to say, Sir, that the genius of Barbados' first 50 years of independence is that that has worked but it has worked by enabling us to have now a sturdy middle-class like myself whose parents were the beneficiaries of a paternalistic State but who now should be empowered to help ourselves rather than to depend entirely of the State. Sir, I believe that this is the challenge, that the State now has to find a new way of enabling those who have been lifted out of poverty by the State's actions to be able to assume more responsibility for their own welfare. I am not coming to this conclusion Sir, being wise after the fact.

In the mid-1990s my Government commissioned a Shorey Report and that Shorey Report suggested that we should impose tuition fees on Barbadians but that the cost of tertiary education was going to spiral out of our control. My Cabinet rightly said we could still continue to pay for it but we had to do something about this, and you therefore would recognise, Sir, that in the 1990s in furtherance of what I am telling the House is the role that the State must play, empower people to look after themselves, I brought to this Parliament as Minister of Finance a registered education savings plan to enable people to start to save to pay for their children's education at the tertiary level. That incentive was that any moneys that you put into a registered education savings plan that you would be enabled to get the interest without withholding tax. We build your balance faster.

I feel, Mr. Speaker, that I should save for my children's tertiary education and I feel that to do so that like others we would do so better if the Government was to have the registered education savings plan, but I am sure that was one of the measures that the Minister took off the books, and if it is not, I would think, I would even agree, that any moneys put into a registered education savings

plan to let people who can afford it to pay for their children's education that we should do that.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: It is still there. Sir, let us allow that all of the money that is putting on... so let the middle-class agree that they should begin to save because the point has come where the Government of Barbados has to ration the resources that it has to deal with the truly needy in our society and let those of us who have benefitted from an enlightened Government in this country to be able to look after our own welfare.

I also am of the view that the problems in our healthcare system can be addressed by governments enabling people to be able to claim investments in health insurance and the ability to purchase health on the private market by way of an incentive for the purpose as a means of reducing the need for Government to spend so much money on healthcare, so that the time has come when there has to be a sensible discussion in Barbados about whether we can have still a paternalistic Government that has to look after everybody in the same way, and I say that time must yield to the view that the Government's resources in critical areas must be used to help those who are still in poverty even if it means that we have to do means testing.

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

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, the approach of the Government has to be to enable those of us who can do so to look after our own welfare.

Sir, C. L. R. James in a piece called the "Birth of the Nation" once wrote that nobody knows what the people of the West Indies are capable of, nobody has ever sought to find out. The seven major challenges facing this country will test what the people of Barbados are capable of.

Having had the great privilege of leading this country for 14 years it is my firmest conviction that when once we steer our people in the right direction and give them the correct incentives to do that which they need to do, that there is absolutely nothing that the people of Barbados are not capable of.

I leave this debate, Sir, telling the Government that the salvation of the Barbados economy is a great cause, it is a massive cause, and to remind them in the words of Manley in Montego Bay in 1947 that great causes are not won by doubtful men.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES (Recommitted)

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. SPEAKER: I beg to give notice of the Magistrate's Court (Amendment) Bill, 2017.

FIRST READING OF BILLS (Recommitted)

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Magistrate's Court (Amendment) Bill, 2017 be read for a first time.

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

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

SUSPENSION

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 7.30 p.m. this evening.

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

The question that the Sitting do now suspend until 7.30 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

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6.41 p.m.

RESUMPTION

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, this Sitting is resumed. When the Suspension was taken we were on Government Business and with that we shall continue.

ORDER NO. 19 (RESUMED)

Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, 2017.
Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I wish to join this debate on this most important Resolution because it speaks to budgetary proposals, those things which we intend to pursue over the next year in order to achieve certain given and stated objectives by the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs. Mr. Speaker, let me at the outset state that the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, 2017, as presented possibly for the first time in the political history of Barbados, recognises that it is not a budget which reaches out to all and sundry in the community as a means of giving expression to some notion of an election a few months away from now.

Mr. Speaker, it further recognises that we are steering into a very hard place and that the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, as well as the Cabinet of Barbados, had to have the courage to say to the people of Barbados that there are no goodies to give and that it would have been extremely reckless to try to do that. I know it is not easy to take the difficult road, particularly when there is an Opposition that is straining at its ropes in order to achieve the Government of Barbados, but I have always been confident that when it all boils down that Barbadians are by their very nature are sensible people and even though we seem to be more harshly divided politically, that in the quiet moments when persons have removed themselves from the mob-like behaviour, that they would reflect on what is important to Barbados, because what is important to Barbados must be important to themselves, to their communities and to their families.

I know that Barbadians become very pumped up when the smell of the theatre called politics is in the air and over the last, particularly the first two days, I witnessed much of that theater; first, the theater on the outside when all kinds of orchestrations were delivered and I thought that what I saw was a sad day in the political history of Barbados. Mr. Speaker, we have always been a mature people with possibly one of the best democracies anywhere in the western world. There are persons who have said that if today June 1 we were to have an election and any political party is successful and there is work the next day, that persons hardly noticed that an election had taken place, but we are moving the goal post more and more dangerously towards what can only be referred to as conflict.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I heard loud booing, I do not know who started the booing but on looking outside I realise that it was a set of persons dressed in red - red tops, red dresses, red shoes, red lipstick, red toe nail polish and realised that the Right Honourable Prime Minister was being driven in. I said you do not have to demonstrate disrespect to your leaders, you do not have to like them, not everybody likes everybody in the world, it is part of the nature of human civilization, but one of the issues which is very important is that we must always practice a certain level of respect in our political dealings. Now, people know the seeds they plant and I hope that when they reap the repercussion of those seeds that they do not say that they did not plant those seeds, the harvest might be most dangerous to those who planted those seeds.

I am also concerned because the Honourable House has also been reduced to certain theatrics. In the presentation of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, the Leader of the Opposition, there are certain words which shouted loudly from her mouth which literally leaped off the pages. I believe that there were 19 or 20 uses of the word war -- you ready for war, you have war, Mr.

Speaker, that particularly became implanted in my mind, in a democracy where the practice of politics in now entrenched it should not be seen as a war and stands and posture which you take relative to the use of that word can be highly provocative to all involved and all engaged, so we had that. Mr. Speaker, I am not beating up on the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, I am not in that in that rhythm tonight, I am not in that mood, this is a serious time, we are, in fact, at crossroads. I know for those persons who are spiritual or religiously bent the crossroad meant some significance to them, but we would not go into that tonight.

Mr. Speaker, I also heard coming from the mouth of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition a phrase which startled me, "When I become Prime Minister...", "When I become Prime Minister..." as though you can choose yourself if you become Prime Minister and that was spoken about 13 times. I know we are taught that repetition is important for persons to lean so that "when I become Prime Minister..." was repeated so many times that that was to convince either the Members of the other side who really do not want that because they still speak to you in huddled groups and in corners.

Asides.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to expose those persons, I hold it in confidence what it is that they say. It is not over till the fat lady walks off the stage and I know that there is greed and hunger in some of those Honourable Members who would wait for the last moment for themselves to climb through the windows to say I claim victory in your name. Mr. Speaker, the other point that was being made and this possibly is the most insidious of those three points. I have spoken to this matter before and this has to do with how we paint each other. We can have our noises and we can have our quarrels but this notion of corruption, the public does not admire us at all, especially when it is not founded on truth or reality.

7.53 p.m.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East has developed the art of pulling papers and shaking documents and spouting that this body has to be corrupt because they drive a motorcar that they could not drive 25 years ago, as though life is not dynamic and life changes. I am sure that the Honourable Member, who has never lived in what we would refer to as a board-and-shingle house, would want to -- if she had the opportunity to so do -- still be living in that board-and-shingle but would want to look for positive means of achieving a stone house to live in; possibly well put away. We point fingers constantly and we make claims as to who is corrupt and who is not.

Mr. Speaker, we are now in this country with 62 per cent of the electorate, according to the statistics of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission, actually turning up to the polls to vote, but there were other times in this country when we nearly at 80 per cent. Eighty per cent of the electorate was voting, then 75 and 77. You just need to go back to 1961, 1966 and 1971. Even as late as 1999, one had reasonably high turnout, but then it went downhill from there. In 2013 only 62 per cent of the electorate has been voting. If we continue to beat up and create this barrage on the minds of people that those politicians in there are no good, then persons move away from the persons. They do not want to hear the governors. We can win on our intellectual ability, on our ideas.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member. Just a minute.

Mr. E.G. HINKSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a Point of Order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. He has obviously forgotten that he was elected as part of a Government in 2008 on a platform of corruption charges that were never substantiated against the then Barbados Labour Party Government, but he has a convenient memory.

MR. SPEAKER: No Point of Order found. Honourable Member, please.

Hon. R.D. JONES: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The point that I am making is one to me which still remains very real, and I am speaking to how the electorate, the wider body who put us here, are seeing us over time. The documents which were produced in 2008 -- and we are nine years away from that event -- were real documents. They were not taken off the back of a truck. They had their origins where they had their origins, and found themselves in the hands of the leader at the time, who thought that he should expose that rapsallion behaviour. I am speaking about just simply pointing fingers, creating innuendo without substance, trying to place persons under the critical scrutiny and being lambasted by persons who do not understand that it might just be a simple game that gives some people pleasure. That is what I am talking about.

To the more substantial points before us. That has to do with -- and I do not think we have said it enough -- the representative for St. Peter said it this evening; two fundamental points he made, and I am not doing an analysis of his speech. That can stand alone. He said that the nature of the Barbadian economy has changed and has particularly changed fundamentally over the last nine years, where a major crisis of the world initiated by bad practices in another place has devastated to some degree, not totally, the Barbadian economy. The economies of the United States, United Kingdom, Greece, Turkey, Italy; wherever

you look one saw this devastation in the economies of these countries. We have tried to put in place and into the pool -- with the guidance of the technical experts, economists, tax persons, finance individuals and, of course, ourselves -- a set of ideas which would assist in bringing this economy out of the mud that it was in. These are the realities. Some things worked. Some things did not work as effectively as we would want. If we did not see in the last three years a growth in our economy, we would know that nothing worked, but this economy grew in 2015; still below one per cent. In 2016 it grew 1.6 per cent, and it is projected to grow this year by two per cent. We know this economy has to grow first to recover that which it has lost and to further project into the future; so we have to create an economy that is robust, that is dynamic, that is people-centred and that is people-focused so that more and more benefits can now accrue to those who are still currently dispossessed, to those who are in vulnerable positions. That is why we are here. We have used the phrase that "it is better to deal with the pain now and work towards the gain in the future", and we have had in Barbados even in the best of times some pain our economy. Sometimes things never grew the way we wanted them to grow, and we go back into time. Some Governments have been fortunate. The Government between 1961 and 1973 was fortunate, because after the 1973 oil crisis one started to see emergence of issues. Between 1976 and 1986, one saw further growth but there were challenges around 1981-82 and we made the adjustments. In 1991-93 there were other challenges and we made the adjustments. Now, we have this adjustment to make, because this has been the most protracted and difficult period for any Government, for any leaders, for the people that we have ever had in the history of an Independent Barbados or from 1961 until now.

There were different policy options offered. There were different things accepted and some things not accepted but that is a moot point. We can debate those things, and we can say if we had done this, this would have been the end result. That is always a moot point. Some things work and some things did not work. We are also changing the nature of the economy, and I said to the Minister of Finance a few months ago that we need to speak to this. There was a time in the tourism sector of Barbados when we were not opening hotel facilities. We were closing them. There were several closed in Christ Church, there were several closed in St. James, there were one or two closed in St. Peter. We always had to seek to rescue some of these hotels. Today, there is a new perspective. We are inviting brand names into our space. We are building bigger and better hotels, so we are revitalising that segment of the economy because it is an employer of a lot of persons in one fell swoop.

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Mr. Speaker, most of them of course, in that area of housekeeping in the kitchen and things like that and we have the institutions to train those persons but we are also doing other things as well. We have made the point that the creative industry and the cultural industry sector can have an impact on foreign exchange earnings that we can have more and more of our persons being involved in drama, theatre, bands, orchestra, sounds, you name it and that is true because when you look at Barbados generally what is happening is now this blossoming and burgeoning of a creative class that needs, yes, infusion of resources so that they can conquer the world. The Barbados Community College continues to put out some excellent musicians and excellent graphic people. Sir, all of what they do in that segment over there tends to be of supremely good quality and there are persons who in our schools, who when you go to various events that are put on you see the quality and timber of their voices. We have pop bands in several schools in Barbados, at Harrison College, at Frederick Smith School, at the St. Michael's School, at the Dayrell Jordan School, at the Lodge School, wherever they are, and they are brilliant young people. How do we get them to understand, beyond the academics that what they are doing can provide a good living and could add to the gross domestic product of Barbados. We have to have more conversations relative to this and where we can, it might be incrementally because we do not have large amounts of money and reserves that you can put into a cultural industry fund at one time but where we can incrementally do that we do that, just do not simply see it as a handout but see it as equity, as investment in your future.

Mr. Speaker, I am not one that necessarily know the cost of producing things for Kadooment but that is a business. When you put 1 000 people at \$2 000 on the streets I believe that is \$2 million. You might expend, I do not know but let us say \$800 000 and then you still call on the State where things are not as easy to give you more. You say, "I want more", otherwise we are going to pull out and the festival is going to crash. The festival is too dynamic to crash as though the taxpayers of Barbados must keep giving and giving without anything really in return outside of the enjoyment, the behaviours, the gratification of people, so we have to look at that.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East as well said that Barbados has and does well two important things, a reasonably good health care sector system, very well qualified doctors, et cetera and we need to exploit that area. This Government over the last nine years sought to do that but sometimes you have to be careful in whose bed you lie because persons who come necessarily bearing gifts might want to take more from you than they give to you and therefore you have to be careful but there is an important area of delivery, I am sure places like India are able to do many of the operations that are

done in the United States of America at a lot cheaper cost and Barbados can also do that.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member also spoke to the exploitation of education as an area of activity that can generate substantial earnings, employment, foreign exchange, et cetera. I wish to assure the House as Minister of Education that this has already started. I just wish to share with the House a study done under the Human Resource Development Strategy. We have a five-year strategy and action plan for higher education services in Barbados. We have a document on higher education as an economic sector, policy and institutional implications for the Barbados Ministry of Education Science Technology and Innovation and an assessment of the real and potential on education services on the economy of Barbados. This helps in the form of current initiatives on the exploitation of medical education in Barbados. With currently the presence of four medical schools in Barbados going back to 2012. We have the American University of Barbados now located in the old BET building at the bottom of Wildey Hill. They have purchased that building and they are moving ahead renovating it and by the time that is completed and in the next three years to four years will have on campus 2 000 students. We have the Washington University of Barbados, which as the Honourable Member said is in St. Philip utilising facilities up there and that too at the end of between a three to five year period should also have in the first year, second year and third year roughly some 2 000 students as well. Sir, these are their projections. We have Queens University that is in a relationship with Codrington College and they have also rolled out and one looks forwards in five years' time about 500 to 600 students in that facility.

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

Hon. R.D. JONES: We have the American University of Integrated Science which commenced operations on 19th of this month utilising a facility at 5th Avenue Belleville and in many instances those are temporary headquarters. Sir, all of themselves institutions that they will build a campus on suitable land in Barbados. We are currently in negotiations with the International University of Barbados College of Medical Science to establish a campus here in Barbados and we are going through checking its bona fide et cetera and the sixth one is in contact with us and is looking to commence in September of 2018.

Mr. Speaker, I am not an economist or anything like that, so I have asked the Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister with responsibility for energy to work out a formula based on these numbers and based on that initial formula simply dealing with students that once these numbers hold true between five to eight years that we

should be generating \$80 million just from those student services alone from medical schools. The University of the West Indies through its medical faculty is also looking for expansion particularly into the North America market space and has moved its current compliment of about 225 regional students to some 455 students at that facility. There is quality teaching, good lectures and professor and therefore there would be that contribution into the economy of Barbados as well. Sir, many of these universities have said that they would be moving beyond the whole issue of just medical teaching but into other areas of activities and two or three of them would be building buildings, dedicated hospitals which would allow them to do their teaching on island rather than to teach in hospitals in other place. Sir, I look forward to that because we recognise that we have a good product and, Sir, regardless of how we criticise our product, we have an excellent education product that can be better among primary and secondary schools and that is why we are building out very strong early childhood education with the assistance of philanthropy, particularly the Maria Holder Trust and persons are seeing these facilities going up Holders Hill and the one at Government Hill will be the next to be developed in the nursery school establishment.

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Mr. Speaker, we also look at the teaching of English at the University of the West Indies (UWI). We have had students from Ecuador, Panama and we have an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to sign particularly with Panama which will not only bring those students, using English as a second or foreign language but that we are going to be able as well to have students coming from Panama to go to Erdiston Teachers' College and if you go there you will see the transformation that is taking place at that institution, the physical infrastructure and the quality of the staff there to embrace tertiary level education as an economic ???? These are the things that we are doing but sometimes even when you speak about them you do not see or hear them reflecting in the media. There are other noises that the media carry therefore they blur the significant achievements even in difficult circumstances that are, in fact, taking place. We become victims really and that is unfortunate because what we used to perceive one time as a unity of purpose is really now fractured initiatives based on the noises of persons who do not want democracy to thrive and democracy to work therefore you quarrel with people, you see to sabotage initiatives, you put your people in the media to write stories that have no bearing on what you are actually doing in the work, you excite and incite your people in institutions that hitherto carry a lot of respect when you beat down in the back of the sea shore on Bay Street with leaders of movements in Barbados and you plan your strategy for disruption. All of this is known but not necessarily spoken about when you urge persons not to invest in the economy, this is known. I do not know why

people pretend that this is not known. When you get documents passing out of ministries into the hands of persons who should not have them. When you have persons who, when retired, can turn up with documents under their armpits to share with others and I wonder where has the integrity gone, where has the decency gone and today, Mr. Speaker, these things bother me.

I remember the statement of an old lady, a supporter, who is still alive and who said recently I will still vote for you because you have not moved from the guidance that I gave you in 2001 when I ran for the first time in 2003. Do not change who you are regardless of the circumstances. I know you as a good teacher, respectful and respecting of others, do not change that and I have maintained that *modus operandi* therefore, nobody can pelt stones. I used the word "pelt" because there is a lot of viciousness in some people who would like to pelt stones at you, refer to you in all manner of names, discuss you behind your back, go where they eat pork and discuss the destruction of the Government of Barbados. A lot of this has happened therefore those seeds which are now planted by the behaviour of certain persons will come back to damage them. Mr. Speaker, we go forward. There are several options. Life is dynamic. I believe there is a certain dynamic nature in these Budgetary Proposals and the Minister of Finance and representative for St. Michael North West should not feel he has to stand alone.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please wind up, Honourable Member.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Rest assured, Mr. Speaker, that the Members on This Side and those Members of the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) rest with and would give advice and suggestions to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West and the current Minister of Finance of Barbados.

I thank you.

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

Miss. S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to lend my voice to this debate on the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals for 2017 introduced by the Honourable Minister of Finance day before yesterday.

At the outset I would want to congratulate the Leader of the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) and Opposition for the response in the presentation which she made in this Chamber yesterday. Sir, I believe that it would be fair to say that she outdid herself. She illustrated by her breath of knowledge her experience and her vision for this country that she is not in a race with anyone else, there are

no competitors but that she is way ahead of the pack. Sir, I think it is fair to say based on the comments from several commentators, persons across the political divide and certainly if Members on the Other Side did deeply into their hearts where I am sure many of them who have spoken in this debate and some who may not speak in this debate know in their conscious that a lot of the things that were advocated by the Leader of the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) Opposition yesterday are in fact that best course of medicine for this country at this point in time.

The Leader of the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) Opposition knows that there are certain things she would have to do whenever that time comes and the bell is rung and she no doubt will become the Leader of this country, that she will lead a team, together she would have to execute the vision that she has put forward to the people of this country. I would pray, Sir, that by the Grace of God that she would be given such an opportunity to be able to rely on all of the knowledge that she has built up over the years to be able to execute the vision for this country in the manner which she has taken several years to advocate. The only people, Sir, that believe that the Leader of the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) Opposition spoke in this Chamber yesterday and did not know what she was coming to say or that believe the Members on This Side did not know what she was about to present and that in some way, it took us all by surprise, are really the Members on the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) side. We are clear on This Side that all of the things that were announced in the response to the Budget by the Leader of the Barbados Labour Party (BLP), we have endorsed, we have discussed, we support and we are prepared to execute whenever that time is placed upon us, but I understand the reason why Members on the Other Side would take a position in the last few hours that Members on This Side do not know what the Leader of the Opposition was going to say and that we are not on the same page with the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) Opposition Leader because the fact is that Members on the Other Side often do not collide with what the decisions are that are being placed whether in the Estimates or whether they are placed in the Budget to read proposals so we appreciate that really they are talking about things that are internal to them but it cannot be a reflection on the Members of the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) because we are united in respect of whatever it is that the Leader of the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) has said yesterday.

I want to make it clear, Sir, that I would never stand before this country and say to you that Members on the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) have not had their differences that we do not sometimes have a difference of opinion because, I think, that is part of the course of both political parties and we have had our challenges. There are times when we may not always deal with our internal affairs in the way that perhaps the country has wanted us to

deal with it but the one thing, Sir, that I can say to the country tonight is that the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) is united in its fight against corruption, in the fight to bring integrity legislation and to establish a commission to examine the issues of integrity in public life in this country, that we are united on a platform to be able to make a change and to transform this country and the Barbadian economy in a way that works, not just for Barbados Labour Party (BLP) members but works for all of the people in this country.

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We are united, Sir, on that platform and regardless of what differences we may have or how many times Honourable Members on the other side want to raise claim forms and want to cast aspersions on the characters of the Members of the Barbados Labour Party we will remain united as we certainly go forward to put Barbados on the right track. We like the people of this country are tired of the rot that has taken root in this country under this Administration over the past few years and we collectively, both Sitting Members of Parliament and certainly the candidates who are vying for elective office, intend to put an end to what has now become the norm and a dangerous precedent that is being set in the history of this country.

Sir, yesterday what you heard from the Barbados Labour Party leader did not come about by chance. There has been several years and certainly within the last few months were we have taken to the road, we have been accused of having all of these “Rubbing Shoulders”, and have been able to talk to the people of this country and have had the benefit of going from constituency to constituency talking to people in every area being able not just to take a position on what our constituents require but certainly getting a better understanding of, what each and every Member on this side and certainly on the other side, what people in those constituencies are facing and it has informed the policies that you heard here expounded by the leader of the Barbados Labour Party Opposition, it has informed the position of Members on this side and certainly it would inform us as the next Government to lead this country whenever the next election is called because we believe that power does not come simply at an election but power from the people must be something that we must ensure is enshrined on a day-to-day basis.

We must continue to listen to the people of this country, and it would mean that the Democratic Labour Party would do well to take that advice because it has become clear in the course of this debate that even Honourable Members on the other side have even expressed their own dissent from the very Budgetary Proposals that the Minister of Finance has put before this Chamber and to this country. It is not that the Minister of International Business, Commerce and Small Business

Development has waited until after the Budgetary Proposals and the Resolution has passed this Chamber, but on the Floor of this Chamber already in the course of this debate he has expressed concerns about the Budgetary Proposals which you would expect that he is some observer, some commentator, that is expressing an opinion in relation to the proposals that have been put forward and not that he is in fact a Member of the Barbados Government and the Barbados Cabinet, and that perhaps is what worries the people of this country because it appears as though you would want us to believe on this side that after nine years of failed policies year after year and after Minister after Minister has expressed their disgust and their dissent in respect of policies that have been put forward by this Administration and that you would want us the good people of this country to believe that somehow you have the magic formula to be able to lift us out of this economic turmoil.

Sir, I believe that is where there is going to be a divide as it relates to how we go forward in relation to this debate. We cannot support these Budgetary Proposals and even on the own admission of Honourable Members on the other side there are flaws within the Proposals that have been put there, so the Barbados Labour Party cannot continue to support anything that the Democratic Labour Party has been putting forward.

We are united, Sir, in recognising that the only solution to the problem that we have is not more policy pronouncements, is not the grandstanding by Members of the other side but in fact it is to give the people of this country a mandate to be able to say that they have simply had enough of this Administration and they would like persons who have a clearer vision in mind for this country to be able to take this country forward.

Sir, the question on the minds of Barbadians is not whether we need to transform the Barbadian economy. Member after Member has spoken to this issue. That is not the issue, we agree on both sides, but the question of whether this Democratic Labour Party Administration possesses the necessary qualities and certainly the ability to be able to take us forward is where the difficulty lies for most citizens in this country. I believe, Sir, that is something that I have difficulty with certainly when I would have been younger and I would have heard the late Honourable Member for St. John speaking for his vision for Barbados back in 2008, certainly when the Honourable Member for St. Peter would have been speaking on the liberalisation of the markets and globalisation and understanding that there was a direction that Barbados certainly had to take in terms of expanding the economy if we were to survive.

This is nothing new to the Democratic Labour Party. The late Honourable Member for St. John understood when

he came in in 2008 what had to be done. The difficulty is that from 2008 to now the Members of the Democratic Labour Party have been unable to execute the very things that they continue to speak about. If you listen to yourselves in these debates each Honourable Member on the other side speaks in a way as though they are going to implement proposals 10 years down the line. They speak in glowing terms of things that they must do as if they are not the Administration and they do not have the power with which to do it. There is nothing more frustrating for Honourable Members certainly on this side and for the general public to listen to Minister after Minister speaking about their ministries in a way that suggests that they are colliding with the ministry for the first time in their lives. You cannot expect to come into this Chamber and speak on issues whether it is tourism policy or whether it is education or healthcare or even housing as though you have come now to the ministry with recent discovery, the things that you must do. Even the Minister of Finance spoke in here in this debate about the issue with housing and the contractors making amendments to the Housing Act and that they are going to allow contractors now to be able to play more of an active part in the market.

Sir, the Minister of Finance admitted that he did not even appreciate, I supposed, what is low-income housing, again contradicting the HELP programme which the Democratic Labour Party has touted for the last few years but which they under on their own admission know they have failed to be able to deliver to the people across constituencies the houses that they have said that they would give to low-income people so when you have Auditor General Reports that speak to the issue at The Grotto and at Valery that people who were promised in low-income environments that they were going to be the first persons to receive low-income housing and that has not happened it is not surprising whatsoever that a Minister of Finance would now come and distanced himself completely from any knowledge of a low-income housing programme because that is the madness that we have now become accustomed to under a Democratic Labour Party Administration, pronouncements on the Floor, disassociating yourself from policy and then you expect us on this side, after coming now to take a tax grab of over \$480 million, to believe that you are able to not only collect the revenue in this environment but that you are also able to grow the economy when you yourselves have not even demonstrated that you have been able to grow anything apart from perhaps your salaries taking back your 10 per cent and perhaps having lavish lifestyles and driving cars that do not belong to you and should not belong to you but yet coming in here and wanting us to believe that these things are now the norm, that there is a new norm in public life which each of you will now want to justify to us is okay.

Sir, the most difficult thing for me being in public life is that when I look at Honourable Members on the other side and I listen to their comments it concerns me that there is this belief and this notion that unless you have come from humble beginnings and have been brought up in a chattel house that you cannot relate to the needs of the people in this country. It is a notion that is unfounded because simply because people have not come up in humble beginnings does not mean that they do not relate to the needs of the people in this population because what you are saying is that you are not prepared to give every citizen of this country a chance to be able to play a role in being able to advance the lives of people in this population, so you are saying that the Muslim community must not play a role, you are saying that the Indian community must not play a role and you are saying the people with disabilities must not play a role because they have not been through the same economic circumstances as you. I ask Honourable Members on the other side to reflect sometimes on the things that they are saying because rather than seeking to enfranchise people in this country what you are seeking to do is to make it appear as though you have all of the solutions.

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Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that many of you who started out have not remained poor, you have elevated yourselves and in some cases have forgotten the ladder on which you have climbed up to be in the positions that you are and you seek to kick down the ladder for the persons who are seeking to climb up the ladder, Sir. Mr. Speaker, it is a difficulty that I believe Members in the Democratic Labour Party have and will continue to have because the rhetoric that I continue to hear from Members on the other side will get this country nowhere.

Mr. Speaker, if I closed my eyes and I did not know the complexion of the people in this room I would think that they are from the planter-class the way that they speak because they speak in a tone that only people who look like them and who have been through their circumstances have anything to offer to this country. Mr. Speaker, it is wrong at every single level, particularly when you are going to say that you are bringing policies in this budget which are intended to raise revenue but on the other hand there has been no thought in this Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, 2017, in relation to impact on the people of this country. The Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs has alluded to the fact that there is going to be hardship, that the cost of living is going to go up, but when the Honourable Member brings proposals that also seek to now introduce tax police into the system where persons in communities like St. Michael South East who are selling snow cones outside of Wilkie Cumberbatch Primary School, Grantley Prescod Primary School or even Parkinson Memorial Secondary are now being caught or

are now being asked to fall within the tax regime or you have people who like “La” who rides a bicycle through St. Michael South East selling IT-burgers. Are they now caught within the tax regime, Sir?

Mr. Speaker, this Administration has made a pronouncement in relation to grabbing at whatever they can, grabbing at all of the low-hanging fruits but in doing so, Sir... Mr. Speaker, I have no difficulty with making people who can pay to pay but I think we have to understand that this proposal is being placed in a context where people have tried to find a living doing other things, either because they have been laid off, because they do not have the means within which to sustain themselves and have tried to find other forms of employment to be able to sustain a living for themselves and their families and now all of a sudden after all of these years of failed tax policies by the Democratic Labour Party Administration the snow cone vendors, the IT-burger man, the man selling wrappers all now fall within a set tax regime and having a set of tax police coming after them.

Asides.

Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members on the other side could make mock sport about this but the fact remains is that there are people out there who almost every weekend are running from the police, who are vendors in this country, who do not have licences and they are on the run trying to make a living to stop the police from arresting them. You have now widened the gap... Mr. Speaker, I need to be able to ask Honourable Members on the other side, have you thought through how wide this net is going to be cast, because constituents are asking me are they going to be caught in this tax grab? Are the mechanics in the constituency going to be caught in the tax grab? The people who have been sent home, who have now started to make their home become a facility for being able to sell whether juices or to make food, are those persons going to be caught?

Mr. Speaker, there is another serious reality, that some of these people who have been sent home and who have sought to earn a living at home by selling things from their homes now find themselves applying for Town and Country Planning permission to be able to expand their businesses, only to be told that they have to take those structures down. Mr. Speaker, as you heard from the Leader of the Opposition yesterday, we find ourselves in a situation where it is one rule for one and another rule and another rule for another set of people, so I ask the question for the people in my constituency and across Barbados, when is the playing field going to be leveled.

Mr. Speaker, I have no difficulty with you going after people to make them pay a share of the bigger picture but what I have a difficulty with is when the playing field is

not level and then you go after a set of people who at the end of the day, the circumstances in many cases that they find themselves in, have been created by this Democratic Labour Party Administration, and that is the difficulty that we will have.

Mr. Speaker, the other question that I have for this Administration is that the policies that have been introduced in relation to the increase in the National Social Responsibility Levy will carry up the cost of living in this country. I remember speaking to shopkeepers recently and they indicated to me that on the last occasion when the levy was introduced that they found themselves in a situation where if you were a shopkeeper running a rum shop you found yourself in a situation where the cost of your drinks and all of your items started to increase, so that if now it has gone from 2 per cent to 10 per cent, an increase of 8 per cent, it is only obvious that things like four beers for \$10, things where people were able to do promotions to make some money, those things are going to be passed on to the persons purchasing these products. Even down in Moon Town, I am sure that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy will start to feel the impact of what is happening in relation to what is happening to the National Social Responsibility Levy but the Honourable Member may be able to have a buffer because the Honourable Member is a Member of Parliament but there are people in my constituency who have no buffer and for whom when this is passed on to them, coupled with the fact that every weekend you have police across this island coming to inquire about loud permit licences and as soon as the party has just started at 11 o'clock or 12 o'clock, they are coming to tell you to close down your business at 1 o'clock.

Mr. Speaker, I say, Sir, that this is only making things harder. The Minister of Industry, International Business, Commerce and Small Business Development indicated earlier that they were bringing a whole new regime in relation to liquor licences but the reality is that loud permit licences also need to be examined. Mr. Speaker, I have heard the talk for almost the last two years about revamping the position with restaurant licences and the liquor license scheme but the reality is that nothing has happened, so that it is not that the Barbados Labour Party does not want to believe that the Democratic Labour Party will not do anything, but the facts have shown that even when Ministers speak out and say that they are going to do something they have not been effective in actually implementing the things that they said they were going to do in order to ease business in this country.

Mr. Speaker, the Democratic Labour Party announced, I believe in April, that they were having a scheme to enable small businesses to be able to get access to funding through FUNDACCESS. They started off by saying that it was going to be \$50 million to capitalise the fund and then all of a sudden the money dropped to \$10

million. Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that even with \$10 million there are still conditions that have now been placed on the accessibility of the financing, and in some cases the persons are not getting access to the grant funding but they are getting access to the loan funding. I have not heard the Minister coming to this Honourable Chamber today to give us some assurance that more and more people are applying to the fund and are accessing the funds that are available or that those persons now will form a class of persons across the country who will be now the new set of entrepreneurs in this country that will now start to emerge. We have not had that assurance from the Democratic Labour Party, all we have been told was that there is a fund but we have not been given any assurances to let us know and to make us feel as though even with all of these revenue measures that have been introduced that you have actually thought through the ability now to have the small business sector and the microenterprises placed in a position where they start to build up and to emerge on the business community as entities who can now contribute back to the society.

Mr. Speaker, the harsh reality is that even if you have these business established you have given with one hand and it as if you are taking back with the other because when these businesses who in some cases are involved in what we would call the new economic sectors spend a lot of time doing credit card transactions they are now hit with 2 per cent; on top of that the ones who may be involved in manufacturing are also hit with the National Social Responsibility Levy. Mr. Speaker, these are the realities that businesses are going to face, this Administration has given with one hand and has taken back with the other hand.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps I can give the analogy of even the issue with pensioners, in the last budget you gave the pensioners an increase of \$10, which is great for the pensioners across Barbados to have a little extra something to put into their pockets, but what is the reality? You have now taken up in this budget the cost for every pensioner in this country to be able to buy a little extra medication. I have people who come to me weekly for money to assist them with medication that is not on the formulary because they are elderly people who are not able to grapple with the situation in this country in relation to the cost of living.

8.49 p.m.

When you hear you have got \$10 extra, but then on the other hand you are now being told that the cost of living is going to go up, do you understand that the choices which people are having to make are between whether they should buy a loaf of bread and whether they should pay \$50 for glaucoma medication? I do not think this Administration fully appreciates the decisions that people are taking, because if you did, you would no doubt have

referred to some of the so-called practitioners whom you have taken into your bosom. They should have been involved in being able to advise you in relation to the social safety net that is necessary when you introduce these types of tax measures. Those social community practitioners have clearly not collided with this Document either. They came out of the bosom of the Barbados Labour Party when we established the Poverty Alleviation Bureau, and we established that at a time when things were good, but we established it and you all will know who those individuals are. I do not have to call any names, but you all will know who they are. At the end of the day, you cannot tell me that you are either seeking to represent people or you have represented people in this country, and a Budget which seeks to take away from every single individual in this country you remain silent on. Something is wrong, Sir. Something is terribly, terribly wrong.

The Democratic Labour Party Administration has offered nothing in relation to these fiscal measures to give an assurance to the most vulnerable in this country that they are prepared to look out for them. We have seen that as the current trajectory of the Democratic Labour Party Administration. It is not about looking out for the people. If it was, when you were assessing the measures you were taking in relation to this Budget, you would also have considered that when you take up the cost of living in impoverished communities across this country, that, particularly in large housing estates like the Pinelands estate, you have not over the past few years done any electrical wiring in a number of these areas; that you have not improved the conditions for people living in these low-income housing communities; and that when you decrease the amount of money which these people have in terms of disposable income, they cannot fix any electrical wiring for themselves. They cannot fix anything in relation to a door that may need changing, because you know National Housing Corporation tells you they do not have any money and they cannot fix it for you, and all they have is labour. You have further imposed an additional burden on people who themselves are already struggling, who you have lied to by giving them the impression that they would get conveyances some nine years go to be able to have a piece of the rock, but in truth and in fact you have now been doing all kinds of gymnastics by saying, "They have illegal structures in St. Michael South East and across the communities, and those problems existed for a long time."

I say to you, fix the problems. Fix the problems, give the people the units, allow the people to go forward to get whatever financing is needed. In a time like this when the prices are going up on every single thing that these people have to purchase for their children and their families, the ability to own a piece of the rock and not just say that you own a piece of the rock, but to actually have a document that you could get mortgage financing or borrow money on,

is something that is very important to people across these constituencies.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have five minutes.

Miss S.J.O. BRADSHAW: Thank you, Sir. I have tremendous difficulty with a Budget that has not taken a number of these things into account. Sir, the middle class across my constituency is crying out. These are the people who will be affected by all of these measures. These are the people who hire some of the people in the Pinelands area and in the City and all over Barbados. These are the people who have said to us on different occasions that they are finding it difficult to make ends meet; that now they are making choices in relation to how they should spend the money and whether they retain persons on their payroll. This Democratic Labour Party asked people to hold strain, and "hold strain" was what people did, but they did not expect that they would continue to be taxed and taxed and taxed, and then be told, "Tell us what to cut." The thing about it is that we had confidence in the Democratic Labour Party Administration that they knew what they were doing, but then each year the Democratic Labour Party has come back and demonstrated that it did not know what it was doing. Now you are nine years later asking us yet again to believe that you actually have the solution to the country's problems. If there is one thing that the Barbados Labour Party is clear on, it is that we believe we have the solutions to the country's problems. We do not have all of the solutions, but the one thing that we pride ourselves on is being able to listen to the people of this country; not being able to talk down to the people or not talk to the people at all, Sir, but being able to engage people in a conversation which allows us to understand what is needed to advance this country.

Minister after Minister has spoken on their respective Ministries but in a very narrow way. They have tried to score political points on this side on various matters, but at the end of the day the people who are listening to this debate recognise that these measures which have been introduced only will carry up the cost of living for the average Barbadian in this country. People are making decisions in this country as to whether to remain overseas if they have been studying, whether to come back to Barbados. You have now made it more difficult for persons who are even studying overseas, for their parents now have to pay extra money on transactions to send money overseas. These are the realities that people are facing, and I am not sure if the Members of this Administration appreciate that the criticism is not necessarily about the policies alone, but it is about your ability to implement the policies. You have said to us in tourism that you were going to get financing from the Chinese to build the Silver Sands Resort; we heard nothing further on that. We were told there was supposed to be an

IDB (Inter-American Development Bank) policy-based loan of which part was to pay the creditors; we have heard nothing on that. The Minister of Tourism spoke very little about his Ministry but did not even address what is owed to the creditors in relation to the tourism industry.

In international business, you heard the Minister today speak. He made a pronouncement that I do not know the Minister of Finance is going to agree with or that he is even going to change his position on, but the fact remains that international business in this country was lost under a Democratic Labour Party Administration, and let us not forget that. The Auditor General Reports are very clear. The Democratic Labour Party has no track record in building out the international business community, so all you have done in this Budget is added another layer to the already existing burden and the lack of competitiveness that already exists within the industry in relation to international business. I believe the Prime Minister was supposed to chair the Competitiveness Commission; we have heard nothing further on that. Sir, there are a series of things that this Administration has not been able to adequately address, and in my wrap-up I certainly want to say that it pains me to know that even in relation to culture -- the creative economy -- the Minister of Culture comes to this Chamber time and time again, speaks to the Cultural Industries legislation but is unable to accept that even though legislation has been passed, cultural entrepreneurs in this country have not been able to access any money to develop their craft, to be able to export or exploit their services anywhere, whether in Barbados or across the world. We do not even hear anything about the Economic Partnership Agreement. That was touted, I think, when the Honourable Member for St. James Central and I were in the Senate. Exotic brochures were brought into Chamber and waved in front of us but we hear nothing from this Administration about the opportunities even under culture in relation to the export of our services across the world. It is unfortunate that these things were put in place by a Barbados Labour Party Administration. It does not matter who passed it. The platform was left in place by a Barbados Labour Party Administration. The Preservation of Antiquities legislation was put in place by a Barbados Labour Party Administration. You all hit the ground running, as you did with all the money that we left as well in the Treasury, but the reality is that the mismanagement and the misguided policies and the fact that you were starved of any kind of finance while you were in Opposition has led to a situation where year after year you have not been able to even move this country or to be able to share a vision with this country as to the direction in which we are going. Sir, I say to you tonight that the people of this country are fed-up, they are frustrated with this Administration, and they have not seen Tourism Master Plan, Sports Master Plan. The Minister of Culture has not even....

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please wrap up. Your time has expired.

8.48 p.m.

MISS S.J.O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Culture and Sports has not even addressed the merger or the restructuring of any of the entities which fall under his portfolio, we have heard nothing about COMY, we have heard nothing about the National Sports Council but yet you have communities across this country where young people would want to be able to recreate where there are no proper lighting facilities, where there are no proper playing fields...

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I give you one minute to conclude.

MISS S.J.O. BRADSHAW: You have a situation where this legislation is no doubt going to increase the level of employment across this country and in particular amongst our youth and I urge members on the other side to reevaluate the steps they have taken and to step back a little bit. It is not too late to say you have done wrong, all of us will go down if you have made the mistakes here that we have articulated to you and therefore I urge Honourable Members on the other side to take the opportunity to reflect on this Budget because it is going to pose disastrous consequences for the people of this country.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. F.J. STUART: Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my annual intervention in the debate on the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals this time for the financial year 2017/2018 and I want to begin by thanking the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, the Minister of Finance for the dedication and commitment which he has shown over the last seven years as Minister of Finance and I also want to congratulate him on bringing to this House a set of fiscal proposals which are intended to make an impact on two of the more serious challenges which we have been facing in Barbados and which have been the subject of animated and sometimes agitated discussion over the few months.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I think that this debate is significant for a number of reasons. It is taking place at a time when certainly Honourable Members on this side are reflecting on life in Barbados 30 years after the passing of the father of our Independence, National Hero, and the late founder of the Barbados Labour Party, the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, who today, June 1, 2017, would have passed exactly 30 years. I always remember Mr. Barrow saying in Budget debates he did not think the Floor of Parliament should be used as a platform for personal edification (3:53) but that it should be used for the

enlightenment of the people of Barbados. Of course, he was saying that against the background that continuously these opportunities were taken to launch vicious personal attacks on Honourable Members on one side of the House or on the other. Sir, I subscribe to that view that when we have opportunities of this kind that these opportunities should be used to be sources of enlightenment for the people of Barbados and that the things we say should be a lamp unto people's feet and a light unto their pathway and that no time should be spent launching personal attacks on Honourable Members of this House. I am not pleading for any mercy because I never felt in anyway threatened by any of those approaches. I do not mind what is said about me, all I ask is that I be given a chance to respond if I want to and at the time I want to and once I am given that assurance that I can respond, I am comfortable because I can defend myself.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I listened yesterday to the speech that was made by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. I sat here in my seat and stared here in the face for three hours and seven minutes and I listened to everything that was said and after the speech I actually shouted across to her and she acknowledged that she heard me. There were the usual untruths contained in the speech but I am not intending to use the time available to me tonight to deal with the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East. I do not attack people in politics, I explain people in politics. I do not attack anybody I explain them and the time is sure coming when I am going to very fully explain the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East to the people of Barbados. I will not have to attack that Honourable Member, I am just going to explain the Honourable Member and my experience is that explanations last, attacks vanish with the passage of time but explanations last. Sir, that time will come, it is coming not too long from now and I will deal with that when the time comes.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I just want to make two points. Sir, reference was made to a letter which as Prime Minister I was supposed to have received from the bankers on the 2nd May, to which I did not reply. I know the letter referred to, I have a copy of it here with me. It was not copied to anybody. It was written to the Prime Minister and not copied to anybody. Now, if a letter written to the Prime Minister was not copied to anybody but it still ended up in the possession of the Leader of the Opposition, clearly, if the Prime Minister has replied, his reply would be in the possession of the Leader of the Opposition too. Sir, I remember meeting with those estimable ladies and gentlemen and I remember the Minister of Finance cautioning me that I should not be surprised if every single thing discussed was conveyed to the Leader of the Opposition. I took the caution and I did not restrain myself because the truth is I we not have much to hide or anything to hide in dealing with affairs of the people of Barbados,

and certainly nobody is going to get this Prime Minister to get into any slinging match with so importance a sector of Barbadian financial community as those referred to by the Leader of the Opposition in the letter, far be it for me ever to get into any public spat over something like that but I have mentioned it only to have Honourable Members take cognisance of the fact that the letter was written to me as Prime Minister as Barbados and copied to no one yet it ended up in the possession of the Leader of the Opposition. Fortunately, there is no reply from me because that too might have ended up in the possession of the Leader of the Opposition.

Sequence 59

The second point I want to make, Mr. Speaker, has to do with reference to another piece of correspondence from the High Commissioner to Canada. I know a little about the diplomatic world. It is not my understanding or experience that embassies in foreign countries discuss Government's business with opposition parties. That is not the protocol, it is not the practice, it is no part of the diplomatic ethics of foreign representation for any foreign embassy to be discussing Government's business with the Opposition. You just do not get involved in domestic politics, yet I have heard about this letter that the High Commissioner wrote to me and how frustrated the Canadians are. I do not believe that the former High Commissioner or the High Commissioner breached any of their professional ethics in terms of what I sat in this House and listen to yesterday. I think the diplomatic standards of Canada, the diplomatic standards of most of the countries that have embassies here in Barbados are quite high and certainly my experience over the last seven years as Head of Government has reinforced the view that these embassies are committed to the highest standards. How that information could have reached the Leader of the Opposition, if you rule out the diplomats, is anybody's guess and I supposed we would have to continue guessing. All I would say is though, not too long ago the Barbados Labour Party's candidate in the constituency of St. Michael. That is all I will say and we will move on.

The third point I want to make is this. I heard reference made to a legal partner whom I have, I have never been in a legal partnership at any time in my professional life. I have always been a sole trader as a lawyer and I have heard about a partner I have who charged some statutory board some horrendously large fee according to what I was listening to yesterday and that partner of mine was in the constituency of St. Michael South handing out envelopes with money. I hope that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition will have the courage to go outside and make those statements and then I will leave it to the legal partner to deal with those issues but all I would say to the country is this, the same statements that were made in here yesterday about that legal partner were

made on a platform at Rices in the parish of St. Philip by, at that time according to my recollection and according to the report reaching me, an Honourable Member who sits a on that side of the House tonight as I speak. Those same statements that were made in here yesterday. Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? The Leader of the Opposition took up the telephone the following day and called the legal partner and said to him -- he reported it to me immediately so it is all part of the *res gestae*. Your Honour would know what I mean by *res gestae* -- look I heard that thing being said last night and I called you to let you know that I have disassociated myself entirely from it. It was a scurvy thing to do and now you understand what I have to deal with on my side of the House.

Asides.

Hon. F. J. STUART: Let me say something else about that legal partner. The legal partner was appointed by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East to the Board of the National Cultural Foundation where he served for 14 years. When the Honourable Member was Minister of Education and Culture that legal partner was appointed to the Board of the National Cultural Foundation and served there for 14 years between 1994 and the year 2008. That legal partner was appointed by the present Leader of the Opposition when that Honourable Member was Attorney General of Barbados to serve on a four-man commission to draft a Republican Constitution for Barbados. The other members of the Commission were the late Sir Roy Oshley Marshall; the late Professor Keith Patchett, who started the law faculty here at Cave Hill, the first holder of the Professorial Chair here at Cave Hill; the Professor Simeon McIntosh and that legal partner, appointed by the Leader of the Opposition. He did very good work. He drafted the Republican Constitution now he is the most corrupt man in the world ...

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Chamber. If the Honourable Member wants to refer to the same gentleman as corrupt those are his words. My simple allegation was that the fee which was charged was disproportionate for the work which was done since he did not have to draft a single document, but in addition to that ...

Mr. SPEAKER: No point of order found.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: The Honourable Member is misleading the Chamber on a second account.

Mr. SPEAKER: A second point, let me hear.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: The second account relates to a conversation that is purported to have taken

place between me and the gentleman on the day after a meeting at Rices. I have never once ...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, that is not something on which I can rule. I was not there.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: I have never once had such a conversation.

Mr. SPEAKER: There is no way I can know whether you said it and so on. No point of order found. Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. F. J. STUART: I thought that the Honourable Member was going to deny that she said he was in St. Michael South handing out money in the last election. I thought she was going to deny that. Anyhow.

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She is now saying that it is true, so she will repeat it outside. I had to advise that same legal partner not to do it. I told him it was a scheme that was shapened in iniquity and conceived in sin. This same corrupt man now, that same legal partner, was approached by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, when the Honourable Member was trying to make sure that the present Solicitor General of Barbados did not become Solicitor General and begged him to accept the position of solicitor General on contract.

Asides.

Hon. F. J. STUART: Yes, I advised him not to take it. He consulted with me. I said you have a son studying in England, stay at the Bar and try and earn and educate your son. When that explanation, according to what I was informed by the legal partner... I have never caught him lying to me and we go back to 1967. When he went back and explained to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East that he could not accept the offer to be any Solicitor General by contract, that he was looking after his son's education, he was assured that was not a problem and was told I would look after your son for you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want the Prime Minister as he willingly took his seat even before I stood because he knows from which he speaks, that is utterly and completely untrue... What is even more, Sir, the Honourable Member is not only misleading the House in that respect but in every other respect because all that he has repeated thus far as to work done by the person who happens to be here is all work that was done for free, and at no stage did a Barbados Labour Party Government paid him cent one for sitting on any Constitutional Commission so that to cite that as compared to paying \$1.5

million from the Barbados Water Authority that cannot now find money to pay its bills...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, no point of order found. Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. F. J. STUART: Anyhow, Mr. Speaker, he was a good man. He was good enough to sit on the Board of the National Cultural Foundation, good enough to be on a high level Constitutional Commission and good enough even to be the Solicitor General of Barbados, but all of a sudden he is a rouge and a thief and he is corrupt. Well, I have no problem with those assessments, I only hope that if the Honourable Member feels as strongly about what she said in here yesterday as she professes to do that she would go outside and repeat the statements.

Asides.

Hon. F. J. STUART: Right, okay. She said she will.

Mr. Speaker, William Congreve is well-remembered for the famous couplet: "Heaven hath no rage like love to hatred turn nor hell a fury like a woman scorn".

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. The Honourable Member yet again is misleading the House. The truth is...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, he quoted the wrong author or something?

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Yes, he did, Sir, because I can assure you there is no love of his pal but more importantly I can assure you that of all of the things that I said yesterday...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please sit down. Honourable Member...

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: ...the only thing this Prime Minister can start on is an attack on his friend instead of \$480 million in taxes on the backs of people.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you spoke three hours and one minute yesterday and nobody interrupted you, the Honourable Prime Minister has the right to speak, please do not interrupt him.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: That is not a point of order I ruled. If the Honourable Member for St. Andrew wants to come up and chair he could come. I did not even know that he were in the House because I do not see him in the House. He walks in here each time and does not acknowledge the

Chair. I did not know he were here. Honourable Member, please continue.

Asides.

Hon. F. J. STUART: All I was saying, Mr. Speaker, is that I have regarded that couplet by William Congreve to be a sexist kind of couplet and in these days of political correctness it might have been better if he had said that heaven hath no rage like love to hatred turn nor hell a fury like an imposter's scorn.

Mr. Speaker, the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals for the year 2017 comes at a time when Barbados has just completed 50 years of independence - Guyana has just done the same thing and four years ago Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago completed their 50 years of independence - so really 54 years after the movement started in the English-speaking Caribbean a look across the English-speaking Caribbean today would reveal that all four of the independent countries, the two from 1962 and the two from 1966, are experiencing very serious economic problems. Guyana with all of its gold, bauxite, forestry and of course the vast land area it has, a great country Guyana, is facing some serious economic challenges, foreign exchange issues very much like Barbados. Trinidad and Tobago, oil-rich, a country that has vast economic potential is also facing serious economic problems. In fact, to the extent that downgrades matter Trinidad and Tobago has just had its own share of downgrades. Jamaica has been experiencing economic problems for some considerable time now and has been in International Monetary Fund programmes. Of course, Barbados as everyone knows has been having its challenges, foreign exchange, deficit and so on. If we go into the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States the story is no different. In fact, I heard the speech of the learned Attorney-General today but I think five of those countries in the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States are in citizenship by investment programmes and in fact Heads of Government of those countries, at least two or three of them, have actually said that if they were not in those programmes their countries would be in basket cases, so 55 years after independence the English-speaking Caribbean is in that state. I mean if we went into the Dutch Caribbean, Suriname is also in that state and Suriname failed an International Monetary Fund test I am advised not too long ago, and of course Haiti, on the French side has always been problems.

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There has to be a meaning behind all of this. We are discussing Barbados' Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, 2017, tonight but the issue that is really facing this region is whether in the context of a world that has changed as dramatically as the world has changed ever since the end of the Cold War and certainly the onset of

globalisation and so on and more ominously still since the global financial meltdown at the last quarter of 2007, what is the future of these countries here in the Caribbean? What kind of future can they look forward to embracing?

Now, the formal colonial master of the English-speaking Caribbean, Britain, about two years ago announced that it was making a grant of £300 million to the English-speaking Caribbean for infrastructural development. The concession was made that for the last 40 years Britain had turned its back on the Caribbean and its way of announcing its return was to make this commitment of £300 million for the infrastructure of the development of the Caribbean. Of course, Barbados did not qualify for that, it was thought that Barbados' infrastructure was so much better than the infrastructure of a lot of the other islands, that they should enjoy a preference over Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, that is the state of the Caribbean as I speak tonight and this region has not been able to evolve an economic paradigm that would make contact with its specific problems. The Caribbean region, Barbados included, is still trapped and is still pursuing the Arthur Lewis model of the 1950s, a model that basically anchors itself in trying to attract investment by incentives, waivers, concessions and so on, and some attempt was made in the late 1960s and early 1970s by a group called the New World Group -- Lloyd Best, George Beckford, Norman Girvan, Clive Thomas, among others, to evolve a new paradigm for the Caribbean that reflected the Caribbean's peculiarities. The New World Group did not fear too well and therefore we have been locked into our developmental approaches that are to be traced back to the Arthur Lewis model.

That is a point I have to make in order to make this other point. The structure of our expenditure here in Barbados and the structure of the expenditure in most Caribbean countries was set over the last 50 years because at Independence, in the case of Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago over the last 54 years, we found ourselves in this region having to play catchup in practically every sector of our economies and social life. There is no reason for surprise that so far as the structure of our expenditure is concerned... Mr. Speaker, this is a bipartisan understanding, both the Barbados Labour Party and the Democratic Labour Party got locked into this structure of expenditure, education: because when we started out on this journey after Universal Adult Suffrage, yes, there was primary education but secondary education was still something of a privilege and tertiary education of course was beyond the reach of the ordinary people, so that we had to invest heavily in education and Barbados went further out on that limb than any other country in the Caribbean.

We then had to play catchup as well, invest in health and again because between the end of slavery 1838 and 1938, the riots, nothing much had happened in the area of health for the masses of the people of the Caribbean, Barbados included and therefore we had to invest very heavily in health and we continue to do so to build out our health sector, and challenges continue to present themselves, our most recent challenge being the issue of chronic non-communicable diseases.

We had to invest very heavily in housing because housing conditions, according to the Moyne's Commission Report, were deplorable here in the Caribbean, Barbados included. In fact, having a conversation with the Honourable Member for St. Philip North not too long ago, the Honourable Member was drawing to my attention that issues that the Housing Committee of the 1930s and the Housing Board of the 1940s here in Barbados were dealing with or were supposed to be dealing with involving the Greenfield and Catts Castle and so on, we are still dealing with in 2017. The Housing Committee could not deal with them, the Housing Board could not deal with them, the Housing Authority could not deal with them, the National Housing Corporation has not dealt with them yet either, so that issues that go back to the 1930s we are still dealing with here in 2017, so that there is housing.

Mr. Speaker, we have had to invest in tourism. We have had invest in the Sanitation Service Authority, and of course we had to employ people after educating them so that wages and salaries became an essential part of our expenditure structure. Well, we now face an additional problem because the baby boomer generation, that generation born after WWII roughly between 1946 and 1962 or 1964, that generation is now retiring. Only last year we had a public officer here who worked in the public service for 49 years and was retiring last year. Mr. Speaker, 49 years is almost a lifetime. We have also had quite a few retirements, so that one of the faster growing areas of Government expenditure is in the area of pensions expenditure, and here are we trapped in this expenditure structure and we have been so trapped for all of our Independence period but even from before that. Mr. Speaker, these costs get higher and higher and higher, in education they have got higher, in health they have got higher, and in housing our expenditure continues to grow.

The point that was made by the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter this afternoon is a point I have been making for the whole of 2016 as we celebrated the 50th Anniversary. Can we continue the 50-year culture of entitlement which we had to do over the next 50 years of our Independence? I said right through the 50th Anniversary Year that the first 50 years were years of entitlement and the next 50 years are going to be years of responsibility.

9.32 p.m.

We are going to have to assume greater responsibility for many of the privileges and the entitlements that we enjoyed in the first 50 years. I put it in writing, I did it in broadcast, I said it at media conferences, I just made that point over and over again that the first 50 years were years of entitlement but the next 50 years have to be years of responsibility. That is where we are now. The State has found itself in a position where -- with spiralling expenditures in those areas like health, education, housing, sanitation and so on, and with dwindling revenues -- the jockey, it seems, has become too heavy for the horse. Whenever the jockey becomes too heavy for the horse, the horse cannot compete effectively in the stakes. That is where we are, and that is the context within which this Financial Statement and these Budgetary Proposals have to be seen, analysed and evaluated.

I am very indebted to the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter for his intervention here today, because the message needs to go abroad that the opportunities created in the 1960s that led to the creation of Barbados' middle class were created for our parents who were working in the plantation, who were leaving home on mornings with a hoe or fork over their shoulders, a crocus bag tied around their waists and a pair of pumps on to go and work in the plantation; the luckier ones got a chance to work in plantation kitchens and so on. They were leaving chattel houses that had no electricity in them nor water-borne facilities, and they were going to work for very modest wages. These opportunities were created for them so that their children could have a better life than they, and the State now finds itself in a position where those entitlements cannot continue. Even though the entitlements cannot continue, the State still has a responsibility, though, to make sure that the most vulnerable elements in the society are shielded from the worst effects of the very highly competitive world in which we live.

That is where we are, and that is why I do not have to make any long speech tonight, because that is the crux of the matter. The entitlement superstructure rebuilt over the last 50 years is now being maintained on a contracting infrastructure, and therefore the State has to make certain decisions in the areas of education, in the areas of health, housing, sanitation and so on, always ensuring, though, that the most vulnerable elements in the society are shielded in that process of transition. Nobody ever says that any set of Budgetary Proposals partakes of anything called perfection. What we do is analyse the situation before us and we try to respond as creatively and as sensitively as we can to the situation with which we are confronted. Over the last 18 months in Barbados, there has been a raging debate over the state of our foreign reserves and the trajectory that those foreign reserves were on, and of course the fiscal deficit with which we were confronted. I do not mind the

disingenuousness of those who say that the global financial meltdown had nothing to do with us. Donald Trump still says that the Americans have not yet recovered from it. It is still evident that in the United Kingdom people in England on the whole have not recovered from it either, and if they have not recovered from it, I do not know how it can be said with any degree of seriousness that markets on which we depend could be in that difficulty, but we can say that we should be taking our destiny into our hands and shaping reality despite what is happening beyond our shores.

That is our reality, and in that context the Government over the last few years, motivated by a desire to ensure that public officers kept their jobs.... Mr. Speaker, you would have heard. There were subdued noises at first but they have become louder and louder in recent times, advising us to send home public servants. We have been told, "If you want to make serious gains in your expenditure cuts, you cannot limit the sending home to the people at the bottom. You have to go into the upper rungs of the Public Service and start sending home them too." The Government of Barbados, led by me, has frowned on that advice. We do not feel that the workers of Barbados, certainly the public workers of Barbados, have created the problems that we are in, and we do not see why they should be the burden-bearers in all of this. Yes, they have to help us make some of the sacrifices which have to be made, and they have been making sacrifices, but the solution to our problem is not to cut off a few thousand public officers and get our books to balance again, while we unleash a number of people to go out there in society and have to fend for themselves in very difficult circumstances. The world has changed much since 1991. I well recall when the few hundred workers were sent home from the NEEP (National Environmental Enhancement Programme). I met with them at Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre to explain to them why we had to do what we were doing, and I was touched by the fact that young women stood up and looked me in the face and said, "Sir, thank you. The little job we had in the NEEP programme was the first time we had worked in Barbados for the last 20 or sometimes 23 years." They were still feeling the effect of what happened in 1991. This Government does not feel that is the way to go.

It is a strange kind of logic that says that you have a revenue problem which was created on the revenue side of the balance sheet, but your solution to the revenue problem is to brutally cut your expenditure. I say the revenue problem created on the revenue side of the balance sheet because it is now no secret that a \$9 billion economy had to make a decision around the year 2011 as a result of developments taking place in the international business sector arising out of a budgetary measure introduced in Canada in the year 2007 and taking effect around 2010-2011, Mr. Speaker. We had to do a reduction of our tax rate for a critical area of that international business sector. That has led to severe revenue loss, but the alternatives were

worse than the revenue loss that we have suffered because businesses had actually begun to leave Barbados and to migrate to areas which they thought were far more competitive than Barbados.

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We had a competitive and comparative advantage in the area of the international business sector because we had a double taxation agreement with Canada but once Canada took the decision to equate the entitlement of countries that had tax information exchange agreements and countries that had double taxation agreements our competitive and comparative advantage was lost and businesses began to migrate to more favourable climates, and we had to take a decision. Sir, in addition to taking that decision accompanied by the then CEO of Invest Barbados and Senator Boyce of the Prime Minister's office go up to Canada and meet all the CEOs of the Canadian banks that operate here in Barbados and give them the assurance that we were stabilizing the situation and that there was no need for panic. I also went on that occasion and addressed the Canadian Board of Trade to ensure that we stabilise that situation in Canada and ever since then, we have been trying to rebuild our business coming out of Canada and I want to pay tribute in that connection to the Minister of International Business who has been working consistently and very enthusiastically to get that situation back to some state of normalcy in addition to trying to diversify and broaden our source markets so that we can recapture the corporate tax revenue and the other spinoffs that we have lost in the society as a result of what happened on that occasion.

Mr. Speaker, the challenges we face in the economy some would have you believe that these challenges result from the Government's wickedness or the Government's incompetence and we hear it coming from the other side all the time but the truth is the realities are different. There are some stubborn realities that we have to face as a country, there are some easily identifiable changes that have taken place in our political economy to which we have to adjust as a nation if we are going to be able to protect the standard of living that we have so jealously guarded over the last 50 years. Sir, as I have said, those are years when the State stepped forward and create a super structure of entitlements on the basis of which we were all able to benefit, put a social security scheme in place, the most advance social security system in the English-speaking Caribbean, and free primary education, secondary education and for a while tertiary education as well, and the question that now arises in the context of the imbalance between our revenue and our expenditure, what is the way forward supposed to be. Sir, reality, according to the last report we got was that our revenues now represent about 30 per cent of Gross Domestic Product but our expenditure accounts for 36 of our Gross Domestic Product. Sir, that gap exists, and our

expenditure are structural and we have to decide the way forward. It does not matter whether it is Honourable Members on this side or Honourable Members on the other side, these questions cannot be escaped. They have to be faced. When the facts change as John Maynard Keynes is quoted as saying, you have to change your mind and, Sir, the facts have changed. Sir, all the talk about giving on the part of the State, that language must now become past tense because the world has changed. Sir, an inward looking United States of America, a rattled and still not settled United Kingdom and Canada within the context of that western North Atlantic understanding, the world has changed and we have to face the reality that there is no escape from that.

Mr. Speaker, the Government has put these measures in place, yes, and I have heard it said of the Minister of Finance and of the Budget that this is the highest tax take other but you know, interestingly enough, Mr. Speaker, I was around long enough to be able to say to this House that I have heard those words already said about tax takes by Errol Walton Barrow, tax takes by Tom Adams and tax takes by Erskine Sandiford. Sir, fortunately for the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, he did not have to deal with those problems because the VAT was introduced in 1996 and revenue flowed rather easily. In fact, that Honourable Member did not even have to deliver Budget speeches. He used to come every year and deliver something called an Economic and Financial Statement. He did not have to deliver a Budget Speech but the world has changed and that is the context within which we have done has to be analysed and evaluated.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East made some observations about implementation. I have heard the word used by other Honourable Members in the debate during the day and yesterday. The Minister of Finance will attest that we took a conscious decision not to have the two major initiatives in this Budget take effect until July 1st, and today is June 1st. Sir, the reason for that is that we wanted to hear all the comments coming from all the interest groups likely to be effected by the measures so that we would have time to make sure that any kinks that existed in the measures can be ironed out so that when we get to July 1st, all systems can say go. If we had said that they would take effect from midnight Tuesday night, we would be in a completely different position. We took a conscious decision to have the implementation begin on July 1st, so that we have between June 1st and the June 30th to consult and talk to people and so on to see what their particular challenges are going to be but that we can benefit from nine months of the measure once implemented.

Mr. Speaker, in that context we expect confidently that there would be less reliance on the Central Bank of Barbados for financing and we hope we do not have to rely

on the Central Bank of Barbados for financing or too much of it. The expression "printing money" has been around for a little while now and everybody's lips and, of course, one got the expression this was something new.

I heard these debates between Richie Haynes and Tom Adams in the 1970s and early 1980s and they go back centuries. In the first decade of the 19th Century during the Napoleonic wars, Britain entered the Napoleonic wars and its expenditure spiralled as against its revenue and the Bank of England started printing money to finance the deficit.

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The classical economist David Ricardo applied his mind to that issue, if you have a large fiscal deficit do you finance it by borrowing or do you finance it by taxation because that issue confronted Britain in the first decade of the 19th century during the Napoleonic wars. Ricardo died around 1823 and I believe the wars ended around 1815. That changed the whole character of the Caribbean as well because countries like Guyana, St. Lucia and so on became English colonies.

These issues are not new but they were made to sound new here in Barbados over the last few months but we hope to get this printing money business out of the national discourse by being more fiscally responsible in terms of the Government's response to the deficit. In fact, that is why we are trying to get rid of the deficit all together. It is not that we no longer believe in deficits. Our history going back to the first Budget delivered in 1962 by the then Honourable Errol Barrow takes the position that there is nothing wrong with deficits. In fact, Barbados' position was that without the deficit you could really development the place but you had to have a small enough deficit that you could manage and that large deficits were always going to be troublesome. We are trying to deal with these problems, we laid no claim to perfection, this is an honest effort, we consulted with people in the social partnership, we benefited from a report of two committees, one on the foreign reserves and one on the fiscal deficit and we have fashioned what we have brought before the House against that background but understanding that this cannot be a one off thing that we have to, in the context of recommendations made to us in the two reports, continue to go through the necessary reforms so that we can get ourselves to some state of more permanent stability. I had listened with great interest this afternoon to the speech of the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter. I heard the suggestions. We have talked these things before and, of course, because of where we are and because of why we are here, and I have said how we got here, this is a discussion that must take place. I heard the speech of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East. In the Estimates debate this year I reminded that Honourable Member that during the brief period when that Honourable

Member was not Leader of the Opposition after 2010 September when she was overthrown by her colleagues that speeches made from where the Honourable Member for St. James Central is not sitting were telling Barbadians that the problem with Barbados is that we are running a Government that we cannot afford. That was being said by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East and when I repeated here in the Estimates and called her out on it, she said that is still my position but you would not have believed that when you heard the Honourable Member's speech here two evenings ago. A serious discussion has to take place in Barbados in the light of changed circumstances in our political economy. Academic discourse and toying around with concepts and so on is not going to get us very far. We have to have a discourse that bears some relating to our own reality and how that reality has unfolded and we, I am sure, have the creative enough imagination to be able to do that and to put, not only Barbados but the remainder of the Caribbean on a more secure economic and social footing. At the CARICOM level and at the CSME level we had to create an organ called the CARICOM Commission on the Economy because every Head of Government recognised that we have an economic problem in the Caribbean that the models we have inherited are not working for us anymore and we have to find a way out of our present predicament. I want to commend these measures to the House. I want to say to Barbadians tonight that the world has changed, Barbados has changed, the environment in which Barbados now operates is fundamentally different from the environment in which it was operating in 1966. All the preferences and all the concessional opportunities that were available to us are now gone. We now have to box in the same ring as larger and better resourced countries.

Only last night the Government of Brazil enthusiastically announced that for the first time in three years they are able to report growth in a quarter and Brazil is one of the bricks countries, one of the emerging economies that the whole world was looking forward to see take its place amongst the larger countries but for three years they did not have any growth in that country and only last night announced that they were able, at last, to get a little growth in the last quarter. The world has changed and we have to face that reality and make the adjustments necessary without any compromise of our quality of life, our standard of living and if you are going to do that, it is going to mean that each one of us is going to have to be prepared to do a little more and rely on the State a little less. Once that message gets across, I am confident that Barbados can do it, Barbadians can do it and that we can get ourselves back to a state of economic viability where those whom we owe can get paid and I take on board, with all the sincerity I possess and all the seriousness I possess as well, that those businesses what we owe VAT returns, those individuals that we owe Income Tax Returns, and anybody else in the society that we owe needs to get paid

because the truth is if they do not have the resources they cannot lubricate the economy in the way in which we want it lubricated. If businesses cannot get their returns the scope for reinvestment is thereby circumscribed and that can be of assistance to no one, it certainly cannot help employment generation or the generation of revenues through taxes and that kinds of thing.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to make those few observations. This debate is not going to finish here tonight. It is going to continue in the school rooms across Barbados, it is going to continue in the society as we carry this message that the first 50 years were years of entitlement and the next 50 years are years of responsibility and that each of us has to be prepared to pay a slightly greater part than we were asked to pay over the last 50 years.

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With those remarks, Mr. Speaker, I just want to indicate to the House and the country that this Resolution has my full support.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. Speaker vacated the Chair and Madam Deputy Speaker assumed the Chair.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. James Central.

Mr. K. D. SYMMONDS: I am obliged to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and in the limited time available to me I want to make a few observations. I listened carefully, Madam Deputy Speaker, to the hour-long presentation of the Prime Minister and I want to say at the outset that I believe that my speech could be encapsulated into a very simple philosophical position that I too agree that there is a need for us to review and indeed to revisit the entitlements that we have grown accustomed to in Barbados over the course of the last 50 years and to review and revisit them within the context of the fiscal capacity of this country being mindful of its debt obligations but to do so also within the context of a genuine debate, a debate in which all options are placed on the table not a debate in which we just place the option of a bindery choice, either you pay more taxes or you are going to lose the social service, but we keep in mind all of the available options, a genuinely intellectually honest debate.

Ma'am, I want to start by saying that one of the options that must be on the table as far as I am concerned is the option or the area of discussion which carries its own consequences in dollars and cents even though it is completely non-fiscal in nature and non-financial as you articulate it. We have to start by putting the issue of inertia

on the part of Government and the inability of Government to implement efficiently and effectively on the table.

Ma'am, the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South, began his speech in the context of a defence of some of the things that were said by the Leader of the Opposition. Particularly he seemed to be provoked about the fact that a letter ended up in her possession which came from the Bankers' Association in Barbados. Ma'am, I too have had the privilege of seeing the letter and the letter says essentially two things to the Right Honourable Member who is the Prime Minister of Barbados. It says that they are extremely uncomfortable with the current state of Government's financial affairs. Ma'am, that is not limited to them, that is a view articulated everywhere you go in Barbados. Secondly, the Bankers' Association of Barbados expressed concern about the paucity of information that is being supplied by the Government, and they did so within the context of the assessment of their credit exposure. In other words, they are saying that from their perspective they are being exposed, it is a point which I made on VOB a few days ago, and they are concerned about the extent of that exposure.

Ma'am, the truth of the matter is that again that should not have been news to the Honourable Member because when the debate took place in this Parliament about changing the Barbados Revenue Authority Act in the silly way it was done, every Honourable Member on this side who spoke drew to the Government's attention that this end result was almost inevitable, so that when the banks brought land back transactions to a virtual standstill, something unprecedented in the English-speaking Caribbean, something that is disgraceful and shameful and collides with Government's stated policy of business facilitation, then it was only as a result of the ineptitude, the inertia and the failure to respond in a swift and sensible manner on the part of the Government that caused the banks to write to the Prime Minister in the tone and in the tenor that they did, and for the Honourable Prime Minister to find fault with the fact that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition saw the letter is shameful. Respectfully to the Prime Minister, Ma'am, I say that it is not the fact that the Leader of the Opposition saw the letter, it is the content thereof that the Prime Minister should have been concerned about. All of that we say was imminently avoidable had Government been mindful of that which it was forewarned in advance.

Beyond, that, Ma'am, we had a budgetary exercise here a couple nights ago and I want to say that the Budget comes at a time and within a context of tremendous uncertainty in Barbados, and that is the second issue, if I may, about which we have to be genuinely honest in this country and put all of the options on the table, again entirely non-financial in nature as it meets the naked eye.

Ma'am, the fact is that as you walk about Barbados you come across countless individuals who live in absolute fear of the future: Fear of losing their homes because they are struggling to pay their mortgages; fear of being able to properly provide for their children; fear of being able to sustain or find employment, if they are currently employed; and fear of having savings to carry them through their retirement years because they have run out, they are living on fumes after nine painful years of sacrifice. That is a context, Ma'am, which does not appear to be financial in nature but is a psychological issue that has severe consequences for the people, the working public in Barbados and the non-working public as well, and the respond of Government to those people and to those issues within the context of this Budget has been disastrous because after Tuesday night all of those fears were made worse. There has absolutely been no promise of hope and there has been no sign of a safe landing. The truth of the matter, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that all the people of Barbados could have said after Tuesday night was that what was the last nine years of sacrifice for. There have been virtually a decade in this country, a lost decade, where we have sacrificed over and over again and every single year successively the situation about which we have been asked to sacrifice has gotten worse, and that, Ma'am, speaks directly to an issue that is confronting this country, the question of confidence, so let us put all of the issues on the table. You cannot talk about having growth if you have no confidence. The fact of the matter, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that the people of Barbados, the investors in Barbados and those who are outside of Barbados looking potentially at coming to invest, as the Honourable Member for St. James South so correctly pointed out to us today in his speech, are questioning whether or not they can take the risk of investment in Barbados in the current financial circumstances, so let us put all of the issues on the table as to why we are doing, how we are doing and how we got here because I listened to the Prime Minister but he does not believe that his inertia matters and he does not believe that his failure to dialogue with the people who he leads matters but it does matters because it tells a tale in confidence, and out of that confidence or out of that lack of confidence comes another issue. The issue is that we, as I said, have lost a decade that we cannot afford.

This country is a post-colonial developing state. Per this Democratic Labour Party misrule we were on a trajectory in which we were able as I say not only to attract substantial foreign investment to Barbados but we were on a trajectory, Madam Deputy Speaker, where this country was on a clearly-defined developmental path meant something for young people in Barbados who chose not to leave, as they do now to seek greener pastures abroad, they did not want to be part of a brain-drain but they wanted to be here to help build up this country.

Madam Deputy Speaker, where are we today with respect to those young people who must form the bedrock of future economic activity in this country?

Madam Deputy Speaker, the University of the West Indies, as so eruditely expatiated upon by the Honourable Member for St. James North this evening, is \$200 million in debt. The University of the West Indies, Ma'am, is facing a system-wide shut down because of the fact that the Government's failure. Ma'am, it is facing a system-wide audit which will shut it down because led by the Government of Barbados the debt is becoming too much for the University of the West Indies system to manage. Madam Deputy Speaker, in September, 2015, the figures that came out was that we had lost 1 700 graduates. By 2016, it had gone to 2000-plus undergraduates and it is still climbing. This Government, Ma'am, response was paltry, they promised to have bursaries which came this year, three years after the holocaust began. The leader of the Campus, Ma'am, Sir Hilary Beckles, described the situation as catastrophic.

Ma'am, we talk about the consequences of a lost decade in social terms, a Rural Development Commission that has not submitted a streetlight phase for the electrification of rural Barbados since 2011, Madam Deputy Speaker, yet you have the Honourable Member for St. Philip North who represents rural Barbados. Ma'am, my constituency in partially rural Barbados, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West who will speak after me who represents rural Barbados, a Right Honourable Prime Minister who lived in rural Barbados became the Honourable Member came to inhabit the luxurious splendor of Ilaro Court and forgot about the poor people about whom the Honourable Member likes to trumpet when it suits the Honourable Member, the Honourable Attorney-General who lives in rural Barbados, but the reality is that we have an underdevelopment taking place in rural Barbados that must be dealt with.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition was quite right when the Honourable Member said that there are over 1 000 homes in this country that still need to get basic amenities of a water toilet in 2017, so that we cannot pretend, Ma'am, that you do not have to put all of the options on the table. If there is clear-cut need for us to be in a situation where we have so much social work to do and we are confronted with nine years of rolling back the hands of time, nine years of rolling back the development that this country was achieving when it was on its post-colonial developmental path then, Madam Deputy Speaker, when you come here to rake in \$480 million in new taxes, the Leader of the Opposition must be correct when the Honourable Member says that at a minimum you have to have the human consideration, the humane consideration rather, of setting aside a percentage of your budget in order to deal with the most vulnerable,

those people who are socially genuinely in need and relying upon the State to assist them. Ma'am, this Government came here and quite frankly in a manner that was reminiscent of Rome's reputation for global conquest and war, they pillaged, they plundered, they destroyed, that is what the Roman did and they called it an empire, they created desolation and wilderness and the Romans called it peace and that was what the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs literally did.

Asides.

Mr. K. D. SYMMONDS: Yes, not only you could read, the point is that I could collide with 2017, while you are lost in antiquity, you are still in the Napoleonic era, the Right Honourable Prime Minister and that is where you and I differ politically. Ma'am, the fact of the matter is that we are in a situation where the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs came here on Tuesday night and devastated the lives, aspirations and financial standing of thousands of households in this country. Ma'am, the issue which I say must be before this Honourable House and about which I hope the Right Honourable Prime Minister would speak is where does the Honourable Member stand with regard to all of this. Ma'am, you know well, better than most of us, that there was a previous Prime Minister who articulated a... I cannot call it a philosophy, really, because it was a little bit enfeebled but he tried. He said that Barbados is not just an economy, that it is a society. Ma'am, it therefore provokes the question, what is the nature of the society that we are building, what is the nature of the society that we are consider to be the good society, the society where we want to bequeath to our future generations, born and yet unborn.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the question that puzzles me is, is the Barbados of tomorrow supposed to be a Barbados that is led by an aristocratic class and we the average people and the people whom we represent we become petty men and women to peep about between the huge legs of one mighty aristocrat and his immediate friends and family or, Ma'am, it is supposed to be a Barbados that we bequeath to future generations where there is fairness of opportunity, where there is an equality of opportunity, where there is an equality of a chance that you can amass a little wealth for yourself and you can enjoy upward social mobility, instead of rolling back the hands of time, instead of rolling back achievements that you have struggled to make? Madam Deputy Speaker, that is the question that the Parliament must answer.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Right Honourable Prime Minister spoke, so I cannot ask the Honourable Member to speak to that because the Honourable Member used his unlimited time to talk about other things. The Honourable Member chose to defend a law partner and so on and so forth and that is all well and good but Madam

Deputy Speaker, the country did not want to hear about that, the country wants to hear about the fact that a month ago the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South stood in his place and reclaimed the restoration of 10 per cent of his salary. The Honourable Member fortified himself financially in the certain knowledge, Madam Deputy Speaker, that my constituents in Fitts Village, those in Paynes Bay who are civil servants have not seen a salary increase in eight painful agonizing years. Ma'am, a month ago the Right Honourable Prime Minister did not just fortify himself but put himself in an impregnable position because the Honourable Member reclaimed not only his 10 per cent but the Honourable Member reclaimed it by way of back pay, so that a

\$40 000 cheque goes into his account, while my constituents in Redman's Village and in Hoyte's Village are in a situation where they are confronted with a rapacious 400 per cent increase in a National Social Responsibility Levy.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let me say something about that levy because I think we have to put the people of Barbados in a situation where they understand that which is about to confront them. As recently as this evening I got a Whatsapp on my phone telling that the phone bill is going up for postpaid phones by 5 per cent, and every morning that any one of our constituents wakes up, because the Honourable Member for St. James North made the point about the knock-on effects of this tax and the Honourable Member is quite right, the estimate is that it is going to carry up inflation in Barbados by 10 to 15 per cent, so that the toothpaste that you brush your teeth with will cost 15 per cent more; the soap that you bathe your skin with will cost 10 or 15 per cent more; the clothes that our constituents must wear will cost 10 to 156 per cent more; the breakfast that they must eat and feed their children with will cost 10 to 15 per cent more.

10.29 p.m.

The gasoline that they will use to transport themselves to school and work and wherever else will cost ten to 15 per cent more. They must recreate themselves. They must find recreation, which will cost ten to 15 per cent more, Madam Deputy Speaker. It goes on and on for people who have been living on fumes, who have not seen pay increases for a decade. Let us put everything on the table, because when you are going to tell me that all of that has to happen, then the first thing I have to ask the Honourable Minister of Finance is, "Could you not do better? Were there no more options?" If I listen to him, the answer is "no", but I know better, because I know that when you were looking for your late husband on evenings and he did not come home early, he was in at Mau Pau, a gambling den on the South Coast. One-arm bandits; the one-arm bandits have not been touched, and the slot

machines have not been touched. There is an injunction before the courts of Barbados that has been there for the last five years, and it is to certain knowledge that the enforcement of taxation on slots in Barbados has been placed on pause for half of a decade; so do not tell me that you had to put my constituents on the frontline, on the front burner, while you shield those people who are going to be in the gambling den, while you shield those people who are gambling. That tells me your philosophy is not about human beings. It never was. This generation of the Democratic Labour Party is not about putting people first. This generation of the Democratic Labour Party is about looking after their friends, like those at Mau Pau, your partners, financial partners.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the reality is do not tell me that was the only option, because I know that CARICOM created new tariffs six years ago and I know that the new tariffs had new tariff heads and the new tariff heads have not been imputed into the Customs computer systems; so there is a substantial haemorrhage taking place at the Port. Correct that, but do not go in Bagatelle and go in Prior Park and go in Husbands and humbug people.

Asides.

Mr. K.D. SYMMONDS: Madam Deputy Speaker, the truth of the matter is that the difficulties which this Government has been dealing with could have long been corrected if Government had been less inept and less prone to inertia. Madam Deputy Speaker, the reality is that this Budget has been characterised also by false choices. We have to be real about that, because I think it is beyond doubt for us, as I said. We can live within our fiscal and debt management means, but we have to do some reformation of social entitlements. That is no question, but this Budget has been silent on the other options, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Minister of Finance has not talked about wastage, and under this Government it is not wastage; it is squandermania. The Minister of Finance has not spoken about inefficiencies that have to be detected and corrected; and they are vast, and the Minister responsible for Business knows that. The Minister of Finance has not spoken about the need for substantial managerial reform in the administration of the statutory corporations, but the Minister of Finance gives you a false option: "You will either pay more bus fare or you will not have access to the transportation." What will you do? Will you pay at the hospital \$800 a night or not have access to the hospital? That is a simplistic approach but it does not do justice to the range of issues that are before us.

Ma'am, one of those things which were before us since 2011 was articulated by the same Minister of Finance in an address to the 185th annual general meeting of the Barbados Chamber of Commerce and Industry on May 25, 2011. Ma'am, in that speech this is what this Minister of

Finance said: “Even a blind man on a trotting horse sitting down backwards would be able to see that too many statutory corporations have in fact become too much like the very central Government administration they were created to assist. They have become wholly inefficient in service delivery. They have become immense, extremely costly to maintain many a week in managerial and operational systems as well. That is not say that they have bad managers, but at a systemic and structural level they can no longer effectively and efficiently deliver to the public they are supposed to service. Clearly, Mr. President, it is no mystery that agencies such as the Barbados Port Incorporated, the Transport Board, the Barbados Water Authority (BWA), the Sanitation Service Authority (SSA), the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), the National Housing Corporation, have all become in one fashion or another increasing burdens on the taxpayers, who are called upon in one way or another to support various levels of inefficiency; and as that cost continues to rise on a yearly basis, it must be addressed by the nation sooner rather than later.” This was 2011, and this Government with this Minister of Finance have held the reins of opportunity and authority to correct these issues for six years. What is the report card? Why does the Minister come here and put my constituents in Prospect on the frontline of an adjustment when he has not been able to come here and tell me what he did to solve the problems at CBC with respect to inefficiency? Why does he come here to put my constituents in Greenwich Village on the frontline of an adjustment when he must know that in April of this year, the BWA was owed \$30 million by the Government of Barbados, inclusive of \$20 million at least in VAT, and that the Light & Power was writing to the BWA threatening to deprive them of any more supply of electricity. That is a fact.

Madam Deputy Speaker, why does he come here to put my constituents on the frontline when the Minister of Finance must know that SSA cannot find the money it wants for 25 trucks? I am grateful to my friend, the Member for St. James South, because he wants me to get onto another matter that is vitally important, so I am going to do so. Ma’am, that matter that he wants me to get onto is the critical issue which this Government refuses to talk about, and that is the issue of consolidated wealth in Barbados. I heard a Member of Parliament, a Cabinet Minister, talk about this being really an issue of classism and that a Leader of the Opposition comes in a classist way to attack the Finance Minister. It is not true. Let us not play that kind of politics. This issue has nothing to do with any class that the Minister of Finance came from. This issue has to do with the class of people who are benefiting from the consolidation of wealth in Barbados.

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

Mr. K.D. SYMMONDS: Ma’am, it is a fact that in 2011 a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was created, which I will make a Document of this House, and that MOU was created with a company called SMI Infrastructure Solutions and the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated. Reference was made to it in passing only yesterday, but I have walked with it, Ma’am. Under the MOU there were three ways that you could leave the contract: One, you could...

Aside.

Mr. K.D. SYMMONDS: Ma’am, if you could shield me from the Member for St. James South because I try to be civilised to him but I believe he cannot help himself. The ways in which you could leave the contract were via the execution of a mutually agreed implementation agreement, which was not done. You could reject the client’s work, which was not done, or you could leave the contract and just walk away with 120 days’ notice. Now this MOU was for the purpose of delivering and constructing a marina at the Pierhead, creating a master plan for the redevelopment of the surrounding areas, including the reclamation of some marine land, and the construction of a resort hotel, which we now know to be the Hyatt, Ma’am. We had a debate in this Parliament in 2014, a tourism development debate; the Tourism Development (Amendment) Act.

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

Mr. K.D. SYMMONDS: Yes, Ma’am. If you would allow me to wrap up, please.

10.25 p.m.

Mr. K. SYMMONDS: Youth Entrepreneurial Scheme, Madam, if you would allow me to wrap up please. Madam, at that time, we were told that this was going to be built by the Hyatt but what we were not told was that one month before, the Cabinet decided to walk away from the contract and leave itself exposed to the tune of US\$48 million or over BDS\$90 million for walking away from that contract in order to make sure they give a new contract for development to one of the most favoured sons in Barbados. Mark you, having done that, they have now exposed the Government of Barbados to potential liabilities in a law suit for loss of profits of about \$100 million. I do not know what the court will award, it might award \$50 million, it might award \$75 million. Madam, I am going to take my seat and I am going to ask you to reflect on it because I know you too must be concerned as to how much more money now your Children will have to pay as a result of the fiscal lawlessness of this Government.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am obliged to you.

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

Dr. the Hon. D.C. ESTWICK: Madam Deputy Speaker, let me take this opportunity to first thank the good people of St. Philip West for having continued to repose confidence in me to represent their interest and let me also say to them and give them my honest commitment that I will continue to do so with all of the skills and all of the expertise and knowledge I have amassed over many years and particularly in politics as I go into my fifth General Election, I think I understand the pros and cons of having to see Government and governance from Opposition for a long period of time and now having to exercise those elements of governance from within a position of a Cabinet.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I start there because there comes a point in time when as we sit and analyse what is happening in global politics and economics and we transduce that date to an appreciation to the impact of the international economics and politics as it affects Barbados' capacity to manage within a very turbulence economic paradigm and in particular I speak to the last eight to ten years or so. I have listened with great interest and great appreciation to the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter which I thought presented an excellent presentation, very matured and one that is pregnant with reason and understanding from experience within Barbados and externally and several of the premises I concur with and I will speak to but I also will say that I understand the challenge that the Minister of Finance has. I understand what it is he is attempting to achieve and as the Honourable Prime Minister would have suggested would have essentially been an exercise in trying to appreciate which model for further and future development of small open economies, we intended to exercise and whether or not the strategies that we attempting to employ, Madam Deputy Speaker, that strategy being underpinned largely by an austerity policy and a strategy wherefore our fiscal consolidation utilising most expenditure containment and tax increases.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have said, looking at what has happened in Europe and what has happened in several other jurisdiction where crises have occurred that the issue is not actually the strategy but it is when you apply the strategy and apart from when you apply the strategy, it is whether or not the strategy is enough to deal with the particular magnitude of problem that you have before hand.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I use the analogy and I use this with my colleagues. If you have lived a lifestyle that predisposes you to cardiac disease and you have coronary artery asteroids, that is cholesterol plaque in the coronary arteries, it is already (6:22) there so you can alter your lifestyle which is only going to slow down further

depositions but it does not get rid of the coronary artery asteroids. I weight that analogy with my colleagues because the model of economic growth that has been followed by both parties would have resulted to a structure that has allowed the expenditure to grow at a significantly faster rate than revenue growth and the result of that is therefore, a growing fiscal deficit over time and excessive borrowing on the public finances in order to deal with your expenditure. Madam, those expenditure growth over time for us and throughout the region has been primarily in the area of education, in that area of housing, in that area of health care and, Madam Deputy Speaker, to a lesser extent in that areas of housing and transportation, when we speak to those within disadvantaged communities that we have to deal with. Madam Deputy Speaker, that has plagued all countries over the last 15 years and has become more so obvious and exposes as a result of the financial crisis.

Madam Deputy Speaker, why this is important is because the two strategies employed one by China, one by the United States of America and Japan has been that of fiscal stimulus. We tried a fiscal stimulus in Barbados and at the time the fiscal stimulus was a little over \$200 million but we could not continue a fiscal stimulus programme simply because we do not have the foreign exchange cover to continue that exercise. Madam Deputy Speaker, as a result of that, what has happened to verify what I am saying to you is this. Let me just quickly say to Barbadians so they understand exactly what I speak to, and as a result I will give them some numbers for them to appreciate. Madam, in 2008/2009 financial year, the current revenue was \$2 billion six hundred million. The expenditure including amortization, depreciation, bad debt and net enterprise Was \$3.2 billion.

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By 2017, the projected financial year, Madam Deputy Speaker, current revenue went up to \$2 900 million. In other words, only \$600 000 but expenditure, Madam Deputy Speaker, went from \$3.2 billion to \$4.26 billion so your revenue went up by \$500 million or so and your expenditure when up by close to \$1.2 billion because you are dealing with healthcare, education, transportation, the disabled and so on, but I will come to that, Madam Deputy Speaker, as the Honourable Member for St. Lucy would have alluded. Coming into that reality, Madam Deputy Speaker, was and has been said over and over was the transition to the accrual accounting. In addition to that, one therefore had to bring to book a whole lot of other off budget debts and so on that all contributed to your overall expenditure in particular your growth and interest rates and your amortisation. I say all of that to say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that when the Minister of Finance is then faced with a situation where you are attempting to move fiscal deficit from about 12 per cent of GDP by 2010/2011 and you are moving it down by 2015/2016 to about 4.0 to 4.6

per cent of GDP the issue with that was during that period of time your debt service continued to spiral out of control, in particular, your short term debt forcing you to borrow via the Central Bank of Barbados and via the National Insurance Scheme and via the other non-banking institutions in the country. If the Other Side were in office they would have had no other choice, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the evidence of what I speak to again, I like to do my research, is this. In 2011/2012, ... Let us start at 2008/2009. This Parliament would have approved a revenue of \$2.7 billion, the actual was revised \$2.6 billion. In 2009/2010, they approved \$2.8 billion, the actual was \$2.5 billion. In 2010/2011, they approved \$2.5 billion, the actual was \$2.3 billion. In 2011/2012, they approved \$2.52 billion, they actually got \$2.6 billion. In 2012/2013, they approved \$2.6 billion and we actually collected \$2.3 billion. In 2013/2014, we approved \$2.6 billion and collected \$2.3 billion. In 2014/2015, we collected \$2.5 billion and actually collected \$2.4 billion. In 2015/2016, we collected \$2.6 billion and collected \$2.5 billion. In 2016/2017, we collected \$2.7 billion and collected \$2.6 billion. The point I am making, Madam Deputy Speaker, is this and that is why I read it out deliberately that way because I want not only the Minister of Finance but I want all of us to understand that what has been put forward are a set of projects and proposals. They may be achieved or they may not be achieved. What I am saying, Madam Deputy Speaker, is this. When I look and I agree with the interpretations of KPMG and Deloitte & Touche that they are certain risk factors to achieving the particular revenue outlined. It is for that reason I outlined that entire series to demonstrate that we have not ever been able to do it effectively. Within the economic framework that we now have in regard, Madam Deputy Speaker, to where you want to drive aggregate demand or you want to adjust the components of aggregate it therefore becomes important that as we move to protect the external side of the economy which is your balance of payments side of the economy and your exchange rate there is another side you have to manage which is the internal side which is the domestic side which relates to fundamentals like economic growth, economic growth that becomes critical in order to generate the revenue that you would want because 90 per cent of your taxation variables are largely transactional. It is because of that I argued from day one that I could not see that we could move with the type of rapid reduction in the fiscal deficit within the period of time without providing and producing a chronic anaemic growth which is exactly what has happened. The series I outlined, Madam Deputy Speaker, is evidence of what I am saying. You will not get any revenue growth without you have appropriate economic growth, it is not going to happen. If your measures are not designed to give you the economic growth that you require and there are measures that undermine the capacity in regards to investment and to move the moneys from the banking system and circulate it through the economy, Madam Deputy Speaker, it will not

achieve the goal. It is basic growth theory appreciation, Madam Deputy Speaker. As a result of that I go back to the point. I concur with the views of KPMG and also Deloitte & Touche, but I will go further. I accept the Minister of Finance's view in regards to this notion of debt re-profiling but I have said before I do not believe he has gone far enough and I will continue to say so. The reason why, Madam Deputy Speaker, is very simple and I bring the evidence of what I say. When you look over the period of austerity we have made some progress but the progress made is in regards to transfers and subsidies so when I go back to 2012/2013 financial year, we were spending 46 per cent of revenue on transfers and subsidies. We were able to reduce that down to 38 per cent projected for 2017/2018 very good. When it comes to wages and salaries we had wages and salaries at 37.5 per cent of revenue in 2012/2013. We reduced that to 26.3 per cent but projected 2017/2018. These data, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I am using Table 6 and Table 4 of the Estimates document 2017/2018. Goods and services, again in the right direction, Madam Deputy Speaker, we had a reduction for 17 per cent 2012/2013 projected 2017/2018 to 14 per cent but the problem is that while you had those reductions your debt service went from 48 per cent to 62.6 per cent therefore any improvements you are getting on your consolidation exercise in regards to those measures are being undermined by your growth in your debt service of short term debt and medium to long term debt, Madam Deputy Speaker. That is a fact of life, the numbers do not lie. I am simply saying, Madam Deputy Speaker, that as a result of that if it is true and the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance have made the points that we have the option to make some adjustments at the end of July. I am saying that I think those options should be considered and we should more aggressively move, Madam Deputy Speaker, to refinance and restructure a significant portion of the debt of the country. We are not going to get out of this situation on a taxation and expenditure consolidation alone. I am going to be true to myself and what my mathematics and understanding of numbers tell me in my computations. I may be the only man under the burning bush or let me out on the ocean on an iceberg, I do not care. I am going to stand up because the people of St. Philip West are not in here.

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I do not get tied up with all of the talk because the Prime Minister understands two things: The Prime Minister understands that there is something called Cabinet collective responsibility and within Cabinet collective responsibility there are times when the whip is on and when the whip is off and there are times when you carry a Resolution or a Bill to Cabinet and you approve it and then you are going to come and the Prime Minister will take the decision whether you are free to talk or not. I mentioned that because I heard the attacks on the Honourable Member

for St. James South as though there is no good reason to benefit or no good rationale behind the whole thing.

My own view, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that in any of these situations the utilitarian position holds, the majority, but I find it a little bit disconcerting at times because it is a flawed governance model when I am sent to a Parliament to represent people and there are times when in representing the people that you may have to manage the whole notion of the collective responsibility and decide which option you ought to take, that is a flawed governance model in a modern democracy, but some people may not understand my philosophical position but that is another exercise.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: You do not understand nothing, that is the problem with you.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I say tonight that I understand the challenge of the Minister of Finance and I understand the attempt to move to a balance Budget or a small surplus. The question is: Are those measures going to allow that to occur given our history? Secondly, is that going to be enough given that that transition does not allow for other areas of public finance required?

All you have to do, Madam Deputy Speaker, for those who understand the Estimates document, is to look at Government's operations and finance document page of the Estimates and you would understand what I am trying to say. It includes amortisation that has to be financed and budgeted for the year and it would have to include in addition to those any arrears and it would have to include in addition to that all of your Supplementaries that are not budgeted for, so I am not going to fool myself about what the facts are. The reality is that a decision had to be taken and the Minister of Finance took the decision with respect to the Cabinet in regards to how he perceived that transition can be made. My position is I do not believe that that transition is going to be enough in order to deal with the other public finance requirements and I do not believe that it will have any significant impact on economic growth and as a result of that from the evidence I have provided, Madam Deputy Speaker, unless you have the economic growth, anaemic economic growth cannot cause a reduction in your debt service to any significant degree and as a result of that you are still in a situation where you have the cholesterol plaques within the arteries, so you have to go in there to angioplasty, put in a balloon, open it up, put in a stint or do bypass surgery, that is how it has to be done. In our situation to dealing with the analogy the way to deal with that is to create the fiscal space that you are attempting to create via consolidation, that is in an attempt to create fiscal space with a fiscal surplus, so you attempt to go to a primary surplus on the primary balance, which is,

your revenue is higher than your expenditure to give you a primary surplus, so what happens is in order for you to have that you have to have economic growth to do that and I am saying that the rate of economic growth that we have is not going to be enough when you add in your expenditure on interest and amortisation to achieve any significant change, that is why I would stand my ground that what needs to occur is a more aggressive approach in dealing with our debt crisis because we are now spending about 64 cents out of every dollar on this matter of our debt service.

My concern, Madam Deputy Speaker, is very simple. Any time you are spending \$1.7 billion paying debt, that is \$1.7 billion that is not going to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, to housing, for roads or to restructure your tax system. That is the point that needs to come over, Madam Deputy Speaker, and that is why for me that is the elephant in the room and that is the reason why I will stand on that position because I know it is the right decision to take given the evidence that even though we are making improvements in regards to wages and salaries and transfers and subsidies our debt service goes the completely opposite way.

I understand the movement of the Minister of Finance so that if you went to a primary surplus then overtime you should be able to bring your debt service down but the issue is that to do that you have to have enough robust growth that you have to have enough of a fiscal surplus so that you can move the downward trajectory of your debt service by paying down debt over time. That is what the economics is and that is what I am going to say, Madam Deputy Speaker. I understand his challenge, I understand what he is attempting to do and I am simply saying that I do not believe that he has gone far enough in that regard. As I said, they are projections and only time will tell who is right and who is wrong. Time is the best revealer and is the best healer so I do not get tied up any longer with those who may have different perspectives, I will stand on mine, let them stand on theirs and I can live with that because I was not born with anybody else, I was born here by myself and when I die I am going to die by myself in a box and I am not afraid of that.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: In a box. I am going to die in a box, man. Barbadians understand what I am saying. The only body who is going to have two boxes is George Payne, he is that short.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I think that we are at a critical juncture and I think that Barbados is at a point of inflection. I think that the choices taken are in an attempt to correct for once and for all the trajectory that we are on,

and all I can do, Madam Deputy Speaker, is hope that the measures result in those targets set and all I can do is to say as I said earlier that from my own analysis, I have read those measures, I understand the impact on domestic competitiveness, I understand the impact on domestic production and costs, I understand the impact on external transactions and costs and I understand the implications of the National Social Responsibility Levy in relation to its VAT as an accumulated tax, I understand all of these variables, it is for my business to understand them, and therefore that is why I conclude from what I said that I am not convinced or confident that we will have the level of economic activity growth and development to achieve those measured targets, and I think the Minister of Finance needs to move with significantly greater haste and robustness to let us refinance or restructure this debt and create the fiscal space that we require so that you can grow the economy and manage your taxation systems in a much more effective way.

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

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Madam Deputy Speaker, I therefore would want to take this opportunity, as I said earlier the whole notions stems around the model of development. I spoke to the model of austerity, I spoke to the model of fiscal stimulus but I would also want to say that a lot of European countries have gone along the model of austerity measures, on the strategy of stimulus, particularly Japan, the United States of America and China. I also would want to say that what is now emerging is another model. As I said, the economists tend to be persons who love scenarios, they are now talking about a neoclassical model that premises around something called the Ricardian Equivalence, something called market competencies, and crowding out as another strategy that may very well in some circumstances work.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am clear from my own understanding and appreciation that when you are faced with the types of challenges with which Barbados is faced, the decisions that you have to take sometimes, even though unpopular, are decisions that have to be taken and you have to hope that the psychological economic side of the decision as they impact upon people, you would hope you could get the people to appreciate what it is that you are trying to do and hope that you can have them coming on board with you, so that at least you can have an opportunity and a chance to see the measures through, so that those measures can achieve the goals that are being targeted. Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Andrew.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Madam Deputy Speaker, one of the beautiful things about the Internet is that we become experts overnight. The speaker who just spoke, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West is a medical doctor by profession, the Honourable Member is not trained in Economics but has used all the gadgets at his disposal to inform and to misinform. Madam Deputy Speaker, it is fairly obvious having listened to the Honourable Member after listening to the Honourable Member for St. James South, that this Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, 2017, has not been discussed at Cabinet. Madam Deputy Speaker, I was a Member of Cabinet and I know the process is that whenever there is a budget the Members of the Cabinet are briefed. Madam Deputy Speaker, if I would say one thing about Right Honourable Member for St. Peter is that there was transparency to the hilt and the Honourable Member understood that when Cabinet made a decision, that each Member of Cabinet was like a preacher who had to go and defend the position taken in Cabinet.

Ma'am, I am a little surprised at the antics of the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, at one stage the Honourable Member spoke so fast that I thought the Honourable Member was using indecent language. I was about to get up and ask for it to be withdrawn but then the Honourable Member for St. Joseph told me no, that the Honourable Member was speaking something about some gadget and so I allowed that to rest. Madam Deputy Speaker, it is interesting, the Honourable Member started out at the outset by supporting the measures of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West seemed to be a little puzzled. If I were in the Honourable Member's position I would be wondering whether or not I have some stranger in the class because at one stage the Honourable Member for St. Philip West was supporting everything in the document. Ma'am, I do not even want to refer to it, I believe that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East has dealt with it so well, it is the best presentation that I have ever heard in this Honourable House by anyone responding to the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals and so there is no need for me to go there, but this Honourable Member purports to support the document. Ma'am, I do not know if it is on pain of being fired by the Right Honourable Prime Minister but the Right Honourable Prime Minister does not fire anybody and so the Honourable Member is safe, so that the Honourable Member sort of pegged back, so that you are hearing certain sentiments coming out of the Honourable Member for St. Philip West mouth, sentiments to which we have become accustomed.

Asides.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Madam Deputy Speaker, nobody on that side spoke about the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, 2017, so that I do not intend to

speak about it. Madam Deputy Speaker, you may recall that when the former Right Honourable Prime Minister were alive and there was a problem, because there is always a problem with the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, that the Honourable Member spoke about time, the Honourable Member said that time is longer than twine. The Honourable Member now comes back with the same thing, the Honourable Member supports certain aspects of it but the Honourable Member cannot tell you, with all of these medical terms, I say medical terms because they are not accounting or economic terms that the Honourable Member has used.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am not an economist but I have enough knowledge of Economics to know that what the Honourable Member was saying was a lot of economic jargon, but the Honourable Member has not been able to convince the Cabinet of Barbados to see his point of view but would want to come here at a time when everybody wants to get home -- the Leader of Government Business tells me that I should only speak for five minutes -- but the Honourable Member would want to convince Members of Parliament, including Members on this side, that the Honourable Member knows more in terms of Economics than the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West.

Asides.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am telling you that the complexities of Economics, the complexities of a budget, the complexities of the Estimates are such that by now the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs would know a lot more than the Honourable Member for St. Philip West or any student of Economics with respect to the proposals which are here, but if it is one thing that we agree on would be that it is a document which nobody, including the Honourable Member for St. James South can understand. Ma'am, there are a number of things that we need clarified. I still do not understand the Exchange Control provisions with respect to the United States of America dollar. I think that is a matter which has to be revisited. I still do not know when a client decides to send \$100 million to Barbados to buy a property and that money is on a USA account, I do not know whether or not commission is attracted there. I can agree with you that sometimes the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs makes certain decision, then has to come back, clarify and explain and I really need the Honourable Member to clarify and explain that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is the same Honourable Member who a few years ago... Ma'am, the Honourable Member dwelled on the 2012-2013 figures in presenting his arguments but I have a document here: "From Recession, to Stability and Growth" which was presented to Cabinet. Ma'am, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West would be familiar with this document.

Asides.

11.11 p.m.

Of course it is a confused Document, because the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West told me that he cannot understand the Document either. What I can understand is that the Honourable Member for St. Philip West indicated certain options that were available to the Government. I will read the options. Let us read them. He presented certain options to the Government and he comes in here and contradicts himself. Nothing has changed, very little has changed, the economy has not grown in any manner that you can say anything has changed. Option 1 is to continue on the path of fiscal consolidation, which evidently is resulting in economic contraction, which is still happening; keep printing money which is still happening; buy Treasury bills which is still happening, and support Government expenditure which can create inflation -- still happening -- and run down the reserves and worsen investor confidence. This is still happening.

Option 2 is to seek to refinance the public debt, create fiscal space -- I am going to make this a Document of the House if it has not been already made -- and introduce debt and fiscal sustainability.

Option 3: This is the option you should listen to very carefully because this is what he favoured. I do not know how a Member of Cabinet -- I was a Member of Cabinet -- could have connections with people in Saudi Arabia and Dubai. I do not know how they could get those ties. I do not know if it had something to do.... Do you know there is something called a finder's fee? I do not know if it is finder's fee. How much billions is it? The finder's fee is normally about seven per cent. Do not get me wrong. I am not saying that you presented this to Cabinet in order to get a finder's fee, because somebody else could have been getting the finder's fee. I was a Member of Cabinet and I think that Members here could tell us if they had those contacts. How could a man who is a Minister of Agriculture have those sorts of contacts to be able to seek and try to influence and overturn a decision by a Minister of Finance? If I was the Prime Minister, he would be fired.

Aside.

Mr. G.W. PAYNE: The Member for St. Philip was flying into the face of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance with a document. Sir, Option 3: This is what he said: "In this analysis, I am advocating Option No. 3 as the most feasible option, given the magnitude of macro-economic instability in the Barbados economy." Listen to Option 3. It is to seek to refinance and restructure the public debt, to create fiscal space, create debt and fiscal sustainability and to engender investor confidence and foreign direct investments. I still want to know what was

the finder's fee, and how could you expect a Minister of Finance to accept something like this. These Budgetary Proposals; we on this side do not agree with anything in here. You either agree with the Minister of Finance or you do not, so you cannot come in here and talk about you agreeing with one section of it, and that you understand the movement of the Minister of Finance, and at the same time you do not understand? Where do you stand on this Document? I believe that your best bet....

The Honourable Member for Christ Church South, the Leader of the House, claims that he has a special position. I will not tell you what he said about you in the recreation room but I heard the term "maverick", and that you cannot tell the Member for St. Philip West what to do. I do not know if he is going to speak. I hope he is not going to speak. All of that was said about the Member. He knows. Madam Deputy Speaker, having drank water and having listened to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, I was somewhat saddened, to be quite honest with you. There were certain expectations that I had when I looked at the type of problems we are having in St. Andrew. Quite frankly, I was somewhat disappointed when I listened to him and I did not see the expectations coming out of what he said. I must say that there was a certain degree of sadness on my part with respect to what I had read and heard from the Honourable Member. I do not know if it was on that same day when I had just returned from a fire in my constituency. I was saddened because the victim of the fire, I had never seen a man cry like that. I came straight to the House. You know what it is to lose all your possessions in a fire. He lost all of his possessions, and I emptied my pocket and I assisted him on my way down to Parliament.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not know if my sadness had anything to do with the fact that we have had very little done in St. Andrew in terms of the roads and bridges. What further saddened me is that I had also just come from White Hill, which this Democratic Labour Party Government has abandoned completely. To be honest with you, having listened to him it was such an emotional moment for me that, as a student of Shakespeare, my sadness was reflected in *The Merchant of Venice*, namely Antonio:

"In sooth, I know not why I am so sad:

It wearies me; you say it wearies you;

But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,

What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,

I am to learn;

And such a want-wit sadness makes of me,

That I have much ado to know myself."

Madam Deputy Speaker, while reflecting on Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice* -- it has a lot to do with the social media now -- I was sitting at the other end, and to be honest with you, I was really saddened. All of these I was reflecting on, and having listened to the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, I am still saddened. I got a WhatsApp message from one of my constituents and it said -- in the country we pronounce things a little different -- "I summed up Chris' speech, his 58-page Budget, in two lines: The cost of living will rise and the people will suffer more."

11.14 p.m.

It was then I realise the seriousness of the measures that have been inflicted of this country. Sir, everybody had hoped that the Minister of Finance, who had characterised his Government as a responsible one would have come with measures however painful to bring back some confidence and growth to the economy instead we were literally bored with a treaty on the global recession, a pat on the back for the Democratic Labour Party's sterling efforts to revitalize the economy and the vicious assault on the poor and middle class in the country on a scale never experienced before.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as I have said already, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East dealt admirably with the presentation but there are certain things we expected. There was not a single word from Minister of Finance on CLICO. Sir, I have already said in this House that the position with respect to CLICO is so serious that there should be a monthly update. Sir, investors at CLICO have not received a cent despite the assurances from Government when the crisis first broke way back, when the former Prime Minister was alive but there was not a single word from CLICO. Sir, the company that was set up, we are having a situation where the Chief Executive Officer is now driving around in the most expensive vehicle you could think about. Sir, as I have stated earlier this is a matter that could have been handled by the National Insurance Department but absolutely nothing has happened, not a single cent.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said already not a word on White Hill, not a word on plans to revitalize the economy to get the people back to work. Sir, what is instructive is that the Minister alluded to the fact that there were certain working groups that have been set up. It is fairly obvious that there is some disconnect between the Minister and those working groups. Sir, I am quoting from page 28 of the Budgetary Proposals. The working group constituted of representatives from the Government, the private sector and labour met over a two-week period for intense discussions and have both submitted their preliminary

observations and recommendations. They have presented their recommendations but their recommendations are not contained in this document. It is fairly obvious and my intelligence also tell me that the Resolution to this problem is not something that could be done immediately.

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

Mr. G.W. PAYNE: Thank you. The best course of action would be to get a mandate from the people because the type of recommendations that were supposed to be made require further consultations. Sir, as a matter of fact this is confirmed in the next paragraph. Some of these recommendations could be used immediately to addressing some of the challenges while the majority of the recommendations are in fact of a more medium term focus and definitely will require stakeholder and national consultation to define them out. Sir, coming out those consultations was the fact that the Democratic Labour Party should have called an election and in this connection it shows the lack of leadership in the Democratic Labour Party. This lack of leadership did not begin with respect to the economy. Sir, when you read about persons being critical of the management of the economy no one seems to have done a treaty on the stewardship of the Prime Minister. It is poor leadership and I think the leadership started when the Prime Minister was appointed. Sir, mistake number one is the appointment of the Honourable Member for St. Philip South as the Attorney-General of Barbados. You have a situation where you have the most junior Attorney-at-Law in Barbados being appointed Attorney-General. Sir, I say that it is relevant because it is issues we are having, a lot of the problems we are facing now with respect to the certificate of compliance that is being required to complete transactions which the Barr Association have deemed unconstitutional is a direct result of the failure of the Attorney-General to give proper advice to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, I am telling you that none of the former Attorneys-General would have gone along with that. Sir, you should not really call names in here but in a positive way, no former Attorney-General and you have an Attorney-General who has never practised law in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of things are involved with respect to this. Sir, when you are completing land, you have to pay stamp duty, you have to pay property transfer tax, you have to get a land tax certificate, and all those matters which you have to complete are done almost on the same day. Sir, you have to wait now for a Certificate of Compliance. The Director of the Barbados Revenue Authority quite rightly said that 73 per cent of those applications are dealt with promptly, and that is understood but it is the 27 per cent that is the problem and I am saying that if the Minister of Finance was afforded with proper

advice, this would not have happened. Sir, again, this is lack of leadership by the Prime Minister, the failure of Prime Minister to deal with his Ministers who have been renegade. The Honourable Member for St. Philip West -- at least if you cannot fire them, there are Cabinet reshuffles. The Honourable Member for St. James South -- the failure to rein in Ministers who have been making statement inimical to the State. The Honourable Member for Christ Church East is the worst of all, talking about cracking heads. I mean the type of language and not once has the Prime Minister made any comment on that. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy if you do not agree with Government policy, you are an enemy of the State. Sir, the Prime Minister should be able to rein in Ministers.

Sir, worse of all the Honourable Member for St. John joined in the fray, attacking childless women.

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These are the type of things that a minister should reign in. The Prime Minister had ample opportunity to rid himself of the Minister of Finance when the Governor of the Central Bank was fired. That was ample opportunity and he did not and, of course, failure to call elections on time.

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

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Madam Deputy Speaker, we have operation cleansing which will call on the people of Barbados to make sure that the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) remedies the situation that we are facing in this country, the triumvirate affair and it involves tackling three seats. We are asking the Barbadian public for those three seats and we will earn the rest, St. Lucy, St. John and St. Michael North West.

I am obliged to you.

Asides.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Madam Deputy Speaker, allow me to thank all Honourable Members for their contribution to the debate and particularly to recognise and commend the contribution of Members of the Government Side who actually spoke to the measures which were introduced and comported themselves with the level of dignity that the House of Assembly, this August Chamber and the Parliament in general has been come to be and to have over the years. We know the politics, particularly the retail politics will get a little harsh sometimes and things are said across the Floor and in speeches. That is normal

politics. We expect that. I do not take offense to any of it because the truth is that a lot of it is just stuff that is said but I think, of course, we still owe it and I believe I said it in the Budget Speech, that we owe it to the country in the days following the presentation that we would have a level of seriousness and decorum that would be characterised, that is the debate, more by the contention of ideas rather than the hurling of insults. Of course, it did not take very long after that, only 24 hours after the Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East made her presentation and decided that she was not going to take the high road on this occasion. Well I cannot recall any high road she normally takes but she did not take the high road on this occasion. She decided that she would descend into making a speech that did not connect to anything in the Budget whatsoever but was laced with insults, innuendo, accusations, half promises and a whole set of other things that amounted to nothingness in terms of the type of presentation that you would expect from a person gladly, wilfully, willingly and excitedly determined that she would be the next Prime Minister of Barbados. In fact the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East said very clear, “as Prime Minister” not if I get the privilege to serve as Prime Minister, or when the people give me the privilege to serve as Prime Minister. She said as Prime Minister I am going to do this and as Prime Minister I am going to do that. In fact, she was so anxious and confident about her becoming Prime Minister I am not surprised by that because Members of her party including some of the ones in here who had some of the worst things to say about her, but we will get to that, some of them are running around calling her Prime Minister already. “Madam Prime Minister, Madam Prime Minister, Madam Prime Minister.” I do not begrudge anybody the office of Prime Minister. I come from very humble beginnings. I called the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South Prime Minister because that is what he is and he fought an election because it is said that became Prime Minister because the former Prime Minister died, but he fought an election and won and became his own Prime Minister so he is entitled to be called Prime Minister so that is not a problem. I was not born in elevated circumstances, I came from very humble beginnings. Nobody throughout the course of my life when I was small said to me that I was born to be any Prime Minister so I empathise actually with the Leader of the Opposition because apparently the Member has been told from the time she was born that she will be Prime Minister of Barbados. If you keep hearing that from the time you were two days old, you will internalise it and you feel that you are Prime Minister even when you are not the Prime Minister, you will believe that you are a Prime Minister. Ambition is good. People feel that ambition is a bad thing but ambition is not a bad thing, ambition is a good thing and if your ambition is to become Prime Minister then that is ambition, however, I really do feel that -- and I know Barbadians are very weary of people who are so anxious to become Prime Minister

because they want to know what it is they want to be this Prime Minister for -- but if that is her ambition that is for the Honourable Member. What I deprecated do not boast about is not the spurious accusations of corruption. At one point and time, the venom was so acid that the Member said, “I would pay each of you all a million dollars to leave politics right away.” It did not surprise me because I will tell you a little story later that will surprise you.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: The thing that I really deprecated about the presentation, not those allegations because I know how that operates. You just throw something out there, you have no evidence, you know that generally there are some people who relish that kind of thing, it goes on facebook and underground and all over the place and they say all kinds of things about people they do not even know. They call this body a crock, and that body a criminal, who have AIDS, that is just part of the course so you just scatter those things out there and leave them and let them grow or spring wings and fly all over the place. What I found to be a little thick is the manner in which this Leader of the Opposition believe she could speak to me and other Members in here too but as I am speaking, I am speaking in relation to me. She called me a boy, a monkey handling gun, and that I was Erskine Sandiford’s errand boy, I am a monkey, a criminal, I am corrupt and all of these things and certain other attributes. I do not know what other attributes the Leader of the Opposition knows that I have. She said all kinds of things about me in this kind of derogatory manner.

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Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Do not let him side-tracked you. I notice somebody in here say it and it is a fact, you see you can pretend for some period of time that you have transcended your class origins, that you are working-class, you understand the working-class and you move with them because you get a Rastaman to drive your car up and down or you walk around with your hair uncombed and you put on ratty clothes and probably bathe every other day. You can do all of those things and try to give the people the impression that you are working-class, but you cannot suppress that aristocratic attitude. That aristocratic attitude and inbreeding cannot be hidden for very long, it creeps out when you least expect it and on Wednesday evening the people of Barbados saw it in full flight. The people of Barbados saw it slipped out. It just slipped out. The Honourable Member could not even contain herself. When she realised it she said: Oh chute, it drop out. She could not contain herself and then she started to talk about everybody on this side and people outside of here. She did not even ask the Speaker of the House of Assembly for permission

to call names but she started lambasting people starting with me, but I am nothing so she could dismiss me because I came from nowhere, I did not go to school anywhere, and then you see all of the others over there who have the same class origin. I sat down and watched them. I watched the Honourable Member for St. Michael North giggling because that excites him because he could get up there and pretend walking around very humble in Eden Lodge giving people the impression up there that he is really interested in them but they do not know him very well, but we get to see when that aristocratic arrogance thing creeps out of him. You see them skinning. The person who is the greatest disappointment of all is my friend the Honourable Member for St. Michael East because he is a man deep in the philosophical groundings as he says, who know more about working-class people, and he does. He is not only from the working-class, he has worked with the working-class and for the working-class and for that he should be given credit. However, as the oldest Members in here, I believe he is chronologically by age the oldest Honourable Member in the House of Assembly, he has waited until he got to this age to forget where he really has come from and has become the chief defender of the aristocrats in Barbados because it serves a particular purpose to get into Government. He disappoints me in particular, but you can only be disappointed by somebody you really have respect for, and I am a little disappointed in him.

I saw all of this class thing on display and then it came out in relation to speaking about lawyers. When I grew up around politicians all I used to hear was that the Barbados Labour Party was the party of lawyers, we always used to hear that. The most candidates they run were lawyers and the people they put on boards were lawyers. In fact, there are a number of them over there who are attorneys-at-law because the lawyers gravitate towards it I do not know why... What is bothersome about the whole thing, Madam Deputy Speaker, is how these lawyers - and I do not know them too well -- could be so disdainful towards each other. I scratched my head to try to find out what is the real reason, but I collided with the fact that again it is a class issue in Barbados. Certain lawyers apparently are to work for money and there is no problem. They can work for many project, charge what they want and that is fine because this is this body and that body and the next person, but let a little poor lawyer from Brittons Hill or Brereton or wherever charge money on a project and it is a problem; this person is a crook, they overcharging fees and they are corrupt.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition, who again came in here making these charges about people, worked on projects in Barbados and have been paid and is still owed, according to the records, millions of dollars. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East worked as a private attorney-at-law and I have no problem with that let me put that in the record. You work, you charge fees

and you are to be paid. If the people who hire you did not want you to make that type of money or work, then they should not hire you. If you bring a plumber at you to fix a pipe and he tells you it is \$350, when he is done you got to pay him, you cannot tell him that you do not think that it is \$350 in work and want to pay him \$100. He is a professional, he is an artisan, he comes to do a job. If an engineer comes to do a job for you and they charge you you got to pay them. That is not the issue, but how could you work on a project and charge close to \$8 million in fees, get paid about four of them already, and see no problem with that but a lawyer can work on a building for the Barbados Water Authority, charge \$1.whatever million it is and this person is to be brought down, ridiculed, harassed and tried to be disgraced in Barbados because some people can charge whatever they want but other people because of where they came from and who they are, are not supposed to, they are corrupt and nasty and cheating and taking something from somebody that they should not have.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: There was a debate in here.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: I do not mind you, you could talk whatever you want because you yourself told me downstairs that a white man told you that he loves you and he would give you any amount of money to win the next election, and you said you are going to take it, so do not start with me, not you.

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

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: You are a political fraud, that is what you are. Do not start with me.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, control yourself please.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker. You drawing up under the Sandy Lane crowd and walking around trying to lecture me about working-class. You are a political hypocrite. You. I do not mind you.

Asides.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Members, can we get some order.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: You talking to me. Black Uncle Tom. Madam Deputy Speaker. You only learn it yesterday. I hear you. Relax yourself.

Asides.

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Hon. C. P. SINKLER: Jail? I have the affidavit from Prescod. I am going to tell who you who you said should be in jail.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West and the Honourable Member for St. Michael East would you refrain from flying insults across the Floor? Honourable Members, if you continue, I will have you removed, Honourable Members.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINKLER: Do not mind him with the false rage, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue with your presentation.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINKLER: Madam Deputy Speaker, I will continue with my presentation, do not mind him, Caligula's horse, that is what he is. They wrote an article on him called "Caligula's Horse", Caligula appointed his horse as an advisor, they appointed him as Advisor to the Minister of Social Transformation, and the advice he gave to the Minister of Social Transformation was to get rid of him and to appoint him as Minister.

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

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINKLER: I do not mind you with that foolishness. I hear you, I hear you, I hear you. Madam Deputy Speaker, it is going to offend them because they believe that they can say whatever they like about people in here and that nobody is to respond to them, but I am making this point abundantly clear, they cannot do it with me. The fact of the matter is that fees were charged and fees should have been charged. I am not saying that the Leader of the Opposition should not charge fee, but if you charge fees and you get paid for the work that you do, why should somebody else who charged fees should be criminalised? I do not understand it, those things are not fair or right, the taxpayers paid all. Ma'am, \$10 million of the National Insurance Scheme money was invested in the Four Seasons Project to assist with the restructuring down there, that the Leader of the Opposition was the attorney-at-law to the restructuring team there and was headed by Professor Dr. Gavinash Persaud, so that I do not understand.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINKLER: Let me tell you something....

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINKLER: Yes, Mr. King was the Board Secretary, he charged fees too and he was paid, but I do not understand. Ma'am, I will tell you what, what is of concern to me, though, because we are going to have this debate in here, is how is it that all of the creditors that are left to be paid, because some were paid after we took the loan for \$120 million but some were left because that \$120 million was not enough. How is it and who gave the legal advice that those creditors who were hired by a company that was different from the company that owns the lands at Paradise, the creditors who were paid, and I have a list of them, the ones that were left to be paid were hired by a different company, they were not hired by the company that controlled the land, because that was the structure that was there, there was one company Paradise Limited doing one set of things, Zinnenna 88, et cetera. There were companies all over the place, a lot of them registered outside of Barbados too, so that the creditor or the goods and services providers were hired by a different company, so that when that project went under those creditors were not secured, they were unsecured.

Ma'am, do you know what happened? Ma'am, somebody gave brilliant advice or foolish advice to the restructurers of that project for those creditors to be enjoined onto the conveyance for the land into the company that had the land, so that those creditors then became potentially secured creditors when those service providers were not previously secured in any way because they were just service providers, but they were enjoined onto the property so that anything that happens with the property by way of sale those creditors would have to be given something. Ma'am, do you know which company was listed among the creditors? Ma'am, a company called...

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINKLER: No, I am not throwing away any paper because when you are coming to accuse me of all kinds of things you have to come good. Ma'am, the company was called Elliott D. Mottley Associates.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINKLER: Yes, that is the company. Ma'am, in other words, the company that the Leader of the Opposition was working for, who was a creditor was enjoined onto the land and given a certain securitization, Madam Deputy Speaker. Ma'am, now all of these crocodile tears for the taxpayers of Barbados and the people at the

National Insurance Scheme and those people who are exposed because Government gave money down there, all of these people who have a vested interest through the Government of Barbados down there and at Claywater Bay then had to deal with the situation where the service providers... I cannot blame them, but I want to know who gave the advice.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I also want to know which Board, because when I was asked I could not answer, I did not know, it was not approved by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, I have not seen any approval from the Board by way Resolution for Paradise Limited for this to be done and certainly I saw nothing for Claywater Bay and those were the three principals involved. Madam Deputy Speaker, so that the taxpayers who are \$120 million exposed at Paradise had no less a person than the very good friend of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East making sure that they securitized themselves over the taxpayers of Barbados. Madam Deputy Speaker, there is more to come.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINKLER: Not yet, not yet, there is more to come. Madam Deputy Speaker, I did not come here to 'ting' nobody, the Leader of the Opposition is who opened can of worms, trying to offset or to get in front of anything that they thought that I was going to say, because I was not going to say anything at all. The Leader of the Opposition who is so concerned about the taxpayers of Barbados and the poor people of Barbados admitted of herself that a firm that she was associated with -- notice the terms "was associated with" -- owe, I do not know how much because I have never investigated it. It was of no interest to me and as Minister I am not supposed to know people's tax information. I do not know, other than what is mine and my wife deals with my tax information so that I do not know much about that either, but the Leader of the Opposition admitted herself that some company she was associated with owes taxes.

11.55 p.m.

She said, "I want to admit it. I want to admit that we owe taxes and we are negotiating a loan to deal with the taxes under the amnesty." Madam Deputy Speaker, we are now going into our fourth amnesty since we were in Government. We had a WIP (waiver of interest and penalty) programme. We extended the WIP programme, then we came back with another amnesty, and this is the fourth time we are doing amnesties. Four times we have given the Leader of the Opposition and this company, whose name she did not call, a chance to pay their pay their taxes in Barbados so that they can go and get a tax clearance certificate, which apparently is so difficult to get. It is difficult to get if you do not pay your taxes. She

admitted herself that there is a company in Barbados which she was associated with; and do you know what she said? "We are going to get the loan even if it takes us 30 years."

Asides.

Hon. C.P. SINCKLER: You had three opportunities to go and clean up whatever it was you had to clean up, and you have a fourth opportunity so we will see what will happen. I did not introduce that, because as Minister of Finance it would be irresponsible of me to talk about anybody's taxes. I did not even know; it is the first time I am hearing it, from her. She introduced it, not me.

Asides.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. C.P. SINCKLER: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I am supposed to be this crook, this criminal and this corrupt person. All of these things are being said in here about all the Members here. I am now a Chinese twin to the Member for St. Michael South Central. You know last Budget he and I were not agreeing. We were supposed to be at each other's throats for the leadership of the Democratic Labour Party. All of a sudden, we are now Siamese twins or Chinese twins or whatever she called them. All of a sudden now, we are best friends now. This is the attitude, Mr. Speaker. I tell you it is based deeply in this classist view that once you have not come from anywhere, you have to be stealing. You have to be up to something wrong. You have to be carrying away money. If you win an Election, you hear the Member for St. Michael North saying "cha-ching, cha-ching", trying to give the impression that you bought an Election.

The most famously bought Election, according to a report in Barbados historically -- I do not know -- was in St. Peter, when the then Minister was called the "minister of floods". There was a flood between the Election, and televisions, freezers, beds, refrigerators, video cassette recorders, washing machines all kinds of things were given out. You try to give the impression that all of a sudden it is only when the Democratic Labour Party comes to office that apparently somebody buys an Election, so you hear the Member for St. Michael North saying "cha-ching". From the time he walked in here in 2008, that was the refrain from them. That was the refrain.

Aside.

Hon. C.P. SINCKLER: I do not want to say anything about the Honourable Member, but it is true. We are not going to find anything about you because the Honourable Member left the Cabinet. He says that he resigned, the word is that he was fired, and up to now he has not told

anybody why he was dismissed from the Cabinet other than to say that the Member for St. Michael North East has done him some very painful things but he has got over those demons. It is in his affidavit too. He has got over those demons. It is in the public record, and you can go into the Registry and look at it if you want to see it. If you want to see what he says, he said, "Some demons She did some very bad things to me but I have now gotten over the demons." The Honourable Member is like a hushpuppy who has been properly whipped by his mistress. "Oh, I have gotten over the demons now." That Honourable Member, so there is nothing to know about you. There is nothing to know about the Honourable Member other than that he has no intestinal fortitude. They all are now drawing up under the leader because they smell government; "just-in-case" politicians. "We do not really support her, but just in case she wins, we could get a ministry." Just-in-case politicians, that is all it is.

We are supposed now to be.... You know. The Leader of the Opposition said, "Everybody knows. I grew up in front of Barbados. Everybody in Barbados knows me, and Uncle Errol gave me a legal practising certificate", which we later found out to be nothing more than something like a Police Certificate of Character. Uncle Errol. I did not grow up in any Uncle Errol kind of environment so I do not know anything about it. I do not call anybody my uncle unless he is my uncle. I know about Hugh Wooding Law School. I do not know about Uncle Errol. Is that a law school? I never heard of that yet. Have you ever heard of that law school yet? Uncle Errol. A lot of people in Barbados do not know, you know, but I first came across this Leader of the Opposition on a truck in a Democratic Labour Party motorcade jumping up next to the very said Uncle Errol, but when the Democratic Labour Party won 24-3, the Leader of the Opposition then realised that "they did not have any room out there for me, I want to be in politics", she switched and went to the Labour Party, but she was a Dem. A lot of people in Barbados do not know that. She was on the truck jumping up with Uncle Errol. She was there jumping up with Uncle Errol.

Asides.

Hon. C.P. SINCKLER: Rattled? I look like I am rattled? You have not seen rattled yet, my friend. You have this situation where now everybody now is to be vilified and criminalized, and I went to Flushing Meadows. Where is it? The place where horse races are run? Wherever it is. I do not know where it is. Flushing Downs or whatever it is. I am not worrying about that. The Members of her party have put in sworn statements things that were said at a Labour Party leadership selection meeting. If those things were said about me, I would not want any of them supporting me.

Asides.

Hon. C.P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, the Chairman of the party is gone. He does not want any more of that. Too many home truths. Sworn. They said that the Leader of the Opposition canvassed against them, paid people to campaign against them, gave them vehicles. What else did they say, and embezzled.

12.03 a.m.

Sir, those are the accusations that the Leader of the Opposition was asked to reply. She was not the Leader of the Opposition then, she was disposed a couple of years before, that she embezzled funds belonging to the Barbados Labour Party, funds that were given by this Parliament as subventions to the political Party, including that I should say because they were not only those funds, given by the taxpayers of Barbados and that those funds were surreptitiously moved out of account to some other account to which there was no Barbados Labour Party signature and those part of the funds are funds given by the taxpayers, and we have never had an accounting for those funds. There is a Barker Report though. The Treasurer wrote a report, and I am going to make it a document of the House about the movement of monies out of that account into other accounts and a full accounting could not be given. Sir, that is why one of the allegations against the very now Leader of the Opposition that says that the public knows her from the time she was born...

Asides.

Hon. C.P. SINKLER: Sir, I will make the Barker Report, by Tyrone Barker the Treasure, a document of the House. One of the accusations is that when the Leader of the Opposition was disposed as Leader of the Opposition by the "devious" one, a gathering of men, the accused the same Leader of the Opposition, all of them that now sitting down and cheering her on and saying "do not touch me leader, I love my leader. Oh, we are rubbing shoulders". Sir, these same men who sworn statements saying that all of the information on the computer was erased.

Asides.

Hon. C.P. SINKLER: Yes, that is what they say, that it is one of the accusation. They are saying the money gone and then the paper trail to money gone. The evidence is gone too and everybody knows this Leader of the Opposition from the time she was born. She says there is nothing more to know about her. Sir, I say, "Oh really now". She says there is nothing else to know about her but I will not go into all the sordid details because if you read those things, especially the statement from my friend, the Honourable Member for St. James Central, you would really want to know but, Sir, I will not even talk about his statement because his went into some personal touch that I

am not touching at all, I am not getting involved in that, I do not want nothing to do with that.

Asides.

Hon. C.P. SINKLER: Sir, he is my friend and I am not going into that because that touches a little nerve, so I am not going there, Mr. Speaker. Sir, the point I am making is when they sat there thumping the table when the Leader of the Opposition was saying she was washed in the blood of the lamb. Sir, the Honourable Member said: “(4:03) Here sex me, come forth to the people of Barbados, the next Prime Minister, everybody knows me from the time I was born”, all Honourable Members on the other side know that none of it is true. They know it because they have sworn this is what was said and the person who said it, who has made a hasty retreat from this Parliament has never been refuted.

Mr. Speaker, I always grow up hearing a statement that it takes a crook to know another crook. I always grow up hearing that so the Honourable Member for St. James North knows everything dirty about people, and every time he gets up with this disdainful attitude. Sir, somebody messaged me on the phone and ask me, what is that Bumble saying in that disdainful attitude in which he talks about people. Why does he have to be so?

Mr. Speaker, the other point is this. I know that you usually keep very strict rules and conditions in here according to the Standing Order. I know that it slipped you but I did not want to stop the Leader of the Opposition in her full flight because I had my time and nobody got up on a point of order and I thought it would be discourteous of me even though what was being said was not exactly accurate, when the Leader of the Opposition called me a liar, that I lied to the country of Barbados, that I lied to the House of Assembly, and that I am a liar, that I misled the House because when I was challenged by her that Barbados had restructured its Credit Suisse loan, to extend the time limit of the loan and that I did not come back to Parliament to get permission for that extension to be done, that I said that it was not true and that she was right and she has now been proven right because she took up the Estimates document and see that the loan time has been extended from five year to 2019, because it was 2013 and five years would be 2018 extended to 2019. Of course, the Leader of the Opposition omitted to say that even in the Estimates document in the pages at the back here related to Barbados' external loans that it says in here 2018/2019. It does not say 2019, it says 2018/2019, so you have to ask yourself why they hyphenated and put 2019 on to it.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition went to a political meeting and delivered herself of these words and this is where the thing started. It never started with any extension of any loan, it started on the issue of default. The

Leader of the Opposition said on June 30th, actually it was the Sunday, June 28, 2015, when the Leader of the Opposition said at a political meeting and I quote:

“Information is being hidden from you in the country and if the Budget was called a month later, Sinckler would not report to you that the foreign reserves are in good condition because the Credit Suisse loan has to be paid on June 18th and as of Friday 19th June, 2015, it still was not paid and that is \$88 million.”

Mr. Speaker, of course, when I heard that I said I did not recall that. I get the daily Central Bank foreign reserve statement which tells you the movement of foreign exchange in and out and I said I did not recall seeing this so I sent off an email to the people in the Central Bank of Barbados who deal with this. Sir, I will not call the name of the lady but I have the documents here in case anybody wants to see them. I sent and asked a question and the lady sent me back a response to indicated that in fact what had happened is that Credit Suisse, in keeping with the loan agreement had said to Barbados that in this loan agreement we have a clause that if you had a credit downgrade you would have to pay extra and since that has happened, we had to pay some extra money, since you seem to have been achieving your performance target there is also a clause in there that allows us to give you the benefit and we are now going to offer you, Barbados, the benefit of the pre-arranged, pre-negotiated clause to extend on the loan payments to reduce the amount that you would have to pay in June so that you would not have to pay that now, you can pay that at the end.

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They also made it abundantly clear, Credit Suisse, we can only do this for our part. We are the arranger and the majority holder of the loan, we can only do it for our part because it is a syndicated loan. We cannot do it for the others and I do not think the others are interested. They want to keep the terms as they are but we feel, in good faith, since you are doing well in trying to tackle your economic issues and your fiscal issues, we are going to give you what was pre-arranged. If you go to the terms and conditions of the Credit Suisse loan in here you would see in the terms and conditions, ... Mr. Speaker, this is the House of Assembly Resolutions 2013. This is the book that we use for Resolutions and if you go to tenure, in the Schedule terms and conditions, Tenure, five years from financial close which is 2013 to 2018 and then it says, “subject to the principal extension option”. It was pre-negotiated and pre-arranged and Credit Suisse triggered the option. Barbados never went and asked them to trigger anything. They said we are going to trigger it because we feel you are doing well and if you get high with a downgrade and you have to pay more, if you are doing well, we have the option in here to reward you for doing

well and we want to do so. The Government of Barbados said, okay, we will accept it, naturally. Do you know the Leader of the Opposition get in here and said that I went and re-negotiated this clause or re-negotiated the loan, restructured the loan, extended the maturity and I never told Parliament? Do you know why it is in this book as 2018/2019? Because Credit Suisse extended to 2019 and the other creditors held to 2018. That is why it now has to have 2018/2019 and I was buried in here and being made to the public of Barbados to be a liar when in fact, I said to the Leader of the Opposition ...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, just a minute. Let me make this point here. You did mentioned that you had been called a liar by the Honourable Member and I made two observations to you. I indicated to you that it was not my recollection. My recollection was that she had said you had mislead the House. I also indicated to you that I decided I would get the record for the avoidance of doubt and check it.

During the first part of your speech, I was going through the record but I had been given an incomplete record so I have not yet seen it and I would undertake that if the record shows that, I will have it struck from the record but I also want to say that I would think though that if you are in your seat, as you were, and an Honourable Member called you a liar, you would get up on a point of order so that it can be dealt with. I just wanted to say that is the position of the Chair. We will continue.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, I am not reflecting badly on you because as I said at the front, I know that you usually keep a fair tight line here and you do not really allow those things to go so I am not reflecting on you. That is why the newspaper article today states in the headlines, "Corruption and Lies". That is where the lies came from because that statement was made. I said I am not going to get up because to get up now to interrupt the Leader of the Opposition, I did not think that was courtesy. She should be given the opportunity to complete her speech but whatever it is, it was not true and I issued Press Releases and Ministerial Statements in here giving the facts but do you know when people ... Mr. Speaker, bullying does not only take place in schoolyards there is bullying all around and there are people who feel that they can bully you into what they want and they must be right and you have to be wrong. I was being politically bullied because of this being held up to ridicule in Barbados for something that I was not involved in because they wrote the Central Bank of Barbados they did not write me. I was not involved in this, all we did as the officer said - and I can make this a document of the House - is that we called out lawyers. Mr. Speaker, this is what the officers said:

"As requested please note that the payment of the Credit Suisse facility was made as scheduled on June 18,

2015 in the amount of BDS\$41.23 million representing interest of BDS\$20.6 million and amortisation of BDS\$20.63 million to the various holders of the facility. By way of background please note that on June 1, 2015 Credit Suisse made an offer to the Government to extend their own holding of the facility for an additional year. This was a vote of confidence by Credit Suisse which the Government of Barbados accepted.

Government's Foreign Counsel reviewed the Clause of the original contract and it is fair common for loan agreements to contain pre-negotiated extension mechanisms. Agreeing to an extension cannot be considered to be a form of restructuring as it was pre-agreed as an option in the original facility when it was executed back in 2013."

I make this a document of the House. This is an email from the lady.

I was not lying. Sometimes you may make a statement or truths, something may slip or whatever the case may be. The Honourable Member for St. James North keeps talking about the Barbados Agricultural Management Company Limited (BAMC). We approved the BAMC accounts at Cabinet. Usually it says, "Invitation to the Cabinet" for the approval of the BAMC accounts to be laid for the accounts to be laid in Parliament. That happened weeks before and I said well okay. When he raised the issue, I got up on a point of order and said, but that is not true, those accounts were done. We approved them in agriculture, we approved them in finance and we approved them at Cabinet. I did not know that all the time the thing was still held up in the system. I thought the thing was brought here and laid.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading the House. He know differently. The Honourable Member held ...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you cannot accuse the Member of knowingly misleading the House.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: I stand corrected, Sir.

The Honourable Member, held up a document like how I am now holding up his Budget Speech and said he has the financial statements in his hand. That is what he said and for that, Sir, he apologised to this Parliament and to me. He held it up and said he has it in his hand, this is it. That is what he said and he apologised so he knows.

Mr. SPEAKER: Very well, Honourable Member. I cannot rule on a point in your favour on that one.

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member for St. James North were struck from the record by Mr. Speaker.

Asides.

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Mr. SPEAKER: It is late. Continue Honourable Member.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: I said I approved the reports. I knew that I approved them and Cabinet approved them as well and that was it.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Alright Mumbles go back to sleep, man.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, just a minute. You have been ill-mannered for most of the day shouting across the room and saying all kinds of things and I ignored it, and now you are shouting telling him to stop telling lies, I will not tolerate it again and if I get any more of those outbursts I will ask you to leave. I mean you the Honourable Member for St. James North. Good. Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: I am going to wrap up now, but there are a couple things that I want to deal with, Mr. Speaker.

The other issue is this issue of Sam Lord's Castle. Again, as is the wont of the Barbados Labour Party every time the Democratic Labour Party is trying to do anything good, they throw some cold water on it: Somebody thieving, some lawyer getting fees that they should not get or they carrying away something. They shroud it in this kind of dirtiness to slow it down and pull it back. That is the modus operandi of this party. After harassing us about not getting Sam Lord's started now that Sam Lord's has started...

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Oh yes. Trucks are up there every day, excavators are up there doing ground works and things are being dug out.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: I am going to take you up there tomorrow because you have no legal work to do. Things are up there happening, moneys have come into

Barbados from the Exim Bank and the roadworks started to happen. The next thing they hold on to now is: Oh, we now trying to build or force somebody to build the thing with precast concrete or pre-stress concrete, I do not know what it is called, when the architects are saying that the thing should be built with blockwork, that is what was said in here on Wednesday evening, and that we are harassing these people to build this thing because we want to give the contract to one billion dollar man or to one particular man because they only got one company in Barbados that is doing precast concrete. The Honourable Minister and whoever else are responsible are the people behind this.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to make a document of the House ...from the local architects planners and quantity surveyors firm Design Collaborative. The reference is 1702 and it is dated June 1, 2017. It says: Dear Sir, further to my email I confirm -- because we know it is not true -- that since early in the design process the architects SB Architects in Miami - not here in Barbados - have coordinated their work with the structural engineers, Mahy Ridley Hazzard and other consultants on the basis that their design was for precast structures...

This what it says you know but the Honourable Leader of the Opposition came in here and tried to give the impression that somebody in the Government was doing something underhand to change the thing from blockwork to precast so that somebody that got her initials, who by the way the Honourable Leader of the Opposition gets in here every opportunity she has the chance to speak publicly and lambastes that person, yet the same Honourable Leader of the Opposition sent emissaries with messages to the same person telling them she wants them to come to dinner and meet with her and her operatives to discuss... I do not know what. She told them she wants them to come to dinner never mind all of the thing in Parliament, that is just for show, that is just politics, do not take that seriously.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: You see I make this a document of the House and I want the Media to know that the Miami architects said that it has always been their decision that they should be built with precast concrete, that the structures should be precast.

It goes on to say: At various progress presentation meetings to the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. and Wyndham their indicated their preference for this form of construction having previously designed a large five-star Ritz Carlton project in Bermuda using precast. Furthermore, they mentioned the coordination difficulties which could be encountered if their design was change to in situ concrete, which is blockwork I assume. Who is not telling the truth? Is it the Minister of Tourism and

International Transport or is it the person that is making the accusation?

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: You cannot tell off of one letter. How many you want? You want 500 letters? You do not even know if it is real. You know what the Honourable Leader of the Opposition had was real. You do not know. Oh, I know.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: You know why I know the Honourable Member for St. James Central could say he does not know whether it was real is because when the Honourable Leader of the Opposition was speaking she said that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North and the Honourable Member for St. James Central will speak to those and the two of them sit down there and because they never discussed it they were shocked, and since then they have both spoken and neither has mentioned a word about it because they do not know anything about it but I am glad because it will save them the embarrassment. This is the letter here. I know the Honourable Member for St. Michael North is cleverer than that because he has already confessed that she has done horrible things to him. My friend from St. James Central, to make it look good, might jump in but the Honourable Member for St. Michael North is not going in there so easy because once bitten twice shy. He is not going in there at all.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Sir, when you take the summed total of this speech that was delivered by the Leader of the Opposition and all of these innuendoes, all of this scandal and we are going to have our own Haggatt Hall meeting, well you can have your Haggatt Hall moment, I am going to have a Queen's Park moment and it is going to set political history in Barbados because we are going to hold that meeting at 12 o'clock because that is when you are supposed to strangle witches. Witches and warlocks are to be dealt with at midnight so we are having a political meeting at midnight called the witches and warlocks exposé and all of the other things: the Crab Hill Police Station, the Prison, the Pegasus deal, Greenland, the EduTech hotel, the one at the bottom of Rendezvous Hill, all of them.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: You do not know about the Pegasus deal? Oh man, it is coming. My friend, it is coming. All of these things we are going to talk about: The

Crab Hill Police Station, Four Seasons, all of them, so if we want to trade corruption we are going to trade it.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: We are going to talk about the taxis, the General Workers' Credit Fund and the loans that were given out of there without people thing.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: We are going to talk about Hafeez Karamath with the building up the road there. All of this will be done at midnight.

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CarMax. All of this would be done at midnight at a time to be announced, so that when you are having Haggatt Hall, the very next day we are going to have Queen's Park.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINKLER: We will have it the same night then because all kinds of things will come out - EduTech, St. Leonard, people will hear who got with whom and turned back the odometers on cars to make them less aged than they really were; which lawyer worked for both the plaintiff and the respondent; when the toilet ran away and left the house; "boonlarney, moonlarney, everything is going to come out that night, because you all have declared war. Everybody is going to have to answer because if this is how you all are playing the game, if this is how you all are playing it, let us break up the whole thing one time, because I tell you, nobody from Sandy Lane cannot frighten anybody from Black Rock or Deacons Farm. It has never happened and it cannot happen either, let us watch and see.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINKLER: Frightened? Frightened? Listen to me, all of them who got in here saying that I am a criminal and that I am going to be up at Dodd, if I am going up Dodds I know I am going to carry along a couple of you with me. If that is where I am going, we are going to share a cell, me and Pressie", so I am waiting on you all, so let us all go to the dance, my friend.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINKLER: I am not going to deal with the Town Planning Department permission. I am not going into all of them because I have the letter here, another bold face. I can make the letter a document of the House from

Maurice Clarke Architects about the Town Planning Department permission that was applied for, the changes that were made and this charge that we up there are starting to build a hotel and we do not have permission from the Chief Town Planner. I have all of these documents here, so if the Leader of the Opposition has a dossier so, I have one about “so-so.”

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINKLER: Is this another file now? Issues: Leader of the Opposition/Crab Hill Police Station. Look, tell them do not bring anymore. There are too many now, I do not want anymore. You have to leave back some for another time. Look, we came to this House of Assembly not to profess perfection, because we do not have any perfection... One of your mentors whom I admire a lot, Don Blackman, also the Honourable Member for St. James Central, used to always frown on economists, the Honourable Member Don Blackman used to have a favorite saying that you have the two-handed economist, on the one hand and on the other hand. Ma’am, economics is not a perfect science, it is about scenarios and models, one set of economist would tell you one thing, while another set of economists would tell you something else. Ma’am, for example, when we ran the measures through the modelling, one set of people said that it is going to have an impact of 1.2 per cent of Gross Domestic Product while another set of people using a different model said that it was going to have a .5 per cent impact, so that we decided that it was going to have a range of .5 per cent to 1.2 per cent.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there is no economist in Barbados today or no business person who can tell you with any degree of accuracy... Madam Deputy Speaker, I heard this thing from the President of the Barbados Private Sector Association, they cannot tell you with any accuracy what is going to be the real economic impact of the measures that I have announced, they can give a generalized statement such as: “I feel that it is going to claw back economic growth” but it will because the truth is that if you contract demand in an economy like Barbados you will contract growth, but folks let us remember what we are trying to treat, we have a reserve problem and we know that in a small fragile open economy like Barbados that the most efficient tool to deal with an external problem is the fiscal tool, which is the fastest way to deal with it, because you contract demand using the fiscal tool, that has always been it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, some people say that you go do an external adjustment, that is, a real devaluation. If you feel that you can treat that, you may treat it but you may cause repercussive implications on the domestic, that is why the basket of currencies issue that the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter has been speaking about sounds attractive, the Honourable Member is saying that

rather than just lodging it against one currency, since we deal with several major currencies, for example, Pound Sterling, Canadian Dollar, the United States of America dollar, let us to hedge it against those currencies and therefor the volatility in currency movement globally would stabilise. Madam Deputy Speaker, that is not an unreasonable argument, but that looks at the external competitiveness, you still have to think about the internal dynamics of the fact that you are basically and almost an all-importing client and therefore if currency price movements on the external side set against a basket of currency becomes too volatile, as happened in recessive conditions, you can end up having a serious pushback in your economy where your cost of living in real terms explodes and then you do not have control over that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, what we have traditionally done in these types of economies is to do what we call an internal devaluation, the nominal value of the currency, not the real value, because you are pulling back how much money a person’s disposable income would have in terms of the purchasing power, so that when you do a purchasing power parity analysis you are reducing the nominal value of your dollar. Both of them have regressive impacts, we know this but you have to look at what it is that you are doing.

Mr. Speaker, the issue is now, as the Honourable Member for St. Philip West was saying, is not just a deficit issue, everybody is just focusing on the deficit, the issue is that we are also looking at the financing requirements. Mr. Speaker, it is not just the deficit because were it just the deficits I would have said let us go to 2 per cent and that it a day, but the issue is how do you finance not just the 2 per cent but some of the other debts that are coming due that may not be rolled over. Therefore you have to narrow your “X” factors and I spoke about these “X” factors in the budget, the rollover risks, the issue of the guarantee of statutory corporation debt, the fact that some of these statutory corporations may not be able to pay and you may have to step in at notice, so that you have to make sure that you put yourself in a situation where you do not push Central Bank printing from \$785 million to over \$1 billion, which can happen.

Mr. Speaker, that is why we went in so stiff on this occasion but we always know in these types of economies, in fact, in all types of economies, that to counterbalance fiscal stringencies that you have to get the investment part of the balance sheet going, and preferably private sector investment. If you get that going it will counterbalance the fiscal stringencies. It would not eliminate it entirely but it would seriously counterbalance the regressive impact.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINKLER: Precisely, that is what the Member for St. Philip West was talking about.

12.51 a.m.

On the trajectory of expenditure itemisation is the growth of your interest costs, because as the Member showed, we have actually done well in all the other non-interest expense expenditures: Wages and Salaries, Goods and Services, statutory Transfers. We have actually either brought them down or kept them flat. The issue has been that you have a residual structural deficit, which the International Monetary Fund was telling the Labour Party to deal with since 2003, which they would not deal with. It is now here, it is heavy-set, it is structural so you get really down to about five or six per cent and you cannot get any further because that fire is being stoked, somebody is putting gasoline on it every year with that residual interest cost deficit.

You therefore have to look at a deeper issue of dealing with that interest cost, whether you call it re-profiling or whatever; it has to be dealt with, but in the meantime you have a budget to finance. You cannot say, "I will deal with this next year and I will take ten months to negotiate a restructure." You have got to deal with it, because you have to finance your budget. Schoolchildren have to go to school, garbage has to be collected; so when you hear people talking -- chat, chat, the chatteratti -- on VOB's Brass Tacks and all of these places where they like to hang out and "yap, yap", all they do is walk down the road waiting to hear somebody say something. Half of them do not know what they are talking about. They are just waiting to hear somebody say something or go around a meeting at the Labour Party and hear two things, and they rush to go to the call-in programme. Some of them read the stuff that they give them to read, they do not even put in the punctuation on the paper, and they are making everybody believe that they are experts on everything. I do not go in for that kind of thing. I do not go in for that. This is serious business. I am no economist. I am no brilliant person, but I know I am intelligent enough to put information in my brain and put it through a conversion process and come out with ideas. I do not always have to be right. I rely on my colleagues who have an opinion and who say what they think, whether they say it in here, in a newspaper, or in Cabinet. As the Right Honourable Prime Minister always says, "The only place where there is unanimity is in a cemetery," because everybody agrees. It is the only place where you have perfect understanding.

We sit down and we learn. I rely on the technical staff; the economists. As I said, they have different views and you have to find the medium, because I always say to my staff and my economists that economics without a philosophical grounding is just arithmetic. All economics is, really, is another form of arithmetic without philosophy.

If you do not have a philosophical mooring that will dictate your world view on how things should be and how you want them to be, then all you are doing is modelling, and that is just numbers. You have to make choices, and our choice is to say, "For the next fiscal year period, let us make sure we can finance the budget and in the meantime take the time to discuss these deep structural issues which we have to address, and come up with a comprehensive programme to implement." That is all we are saying.

Health care, education, the productive sectors. I made a revelation in that Budget. If you take up this Estimates Document and you look through it and you see how much money is spent on what we categorise as social expenditure, by functional classification, it is a significant amount. If you look at how much money is given to what we call economic and productive activities, it pales in comparison. We are a socially driven society, and the fact of the matter is we have reached a stage where we have to seriously re-examine that model. The model has to be underpinned by greater levels of productive output. This is what has to happen. We have to see how to produce more, produce it better, produce it faster, and produce it for the rest of the world. That is what will get us sustainably out of this recession. That is what will get us out. Some people call it economic growth. I call it increase of productive capacity and output. The growth will come, but you have to put the fundamental things in place to get higher agricultural output, to get more alternative energy produced, to get better product for the tourists when they come here. This is what we have to do. This has to be a collective thing. This is not just something for the Ministry of Finance or for the Government. This is private sector, this is unions, and this is civil society.

Aside.

Hon. C.P. SINCKLER: Parliament is here to pass laws. That is not so. I take advice from you all. Your advice to me was to stay far from the Leader of the Opposition. I took that advice. The best advice you ever delivered.

Asides.

Hon. C.P. SINCKLER: We have to get serious. I say the private sector but it is really a group of people other than the private sector, and they made some recommendations. Some of those recommendations are medium-term in nature. They are not immediate so they would not come in a Budget in three or four weeks. There are things that you have to sit down and discuss, because they affect fundamentally the structure and nature of this society. Then there is this issue about an International Monetary Fund programme; "let us go to the IMF". Listen, I have made it abundantly clear. We do not have an objection to going to the IMF. Every time they print

"Government says no to IMF". We did not join the IMF because we wanted to be part of some club. We joined the IMF so that if the time comes and we have to tap their resources, we will do so, but we have made the point that we are not turning up in Washington empty-handed saying "Looka muh! I done. There is nothing left for me. Let me lie down here on the ground and you can take your advantage of me." That is not how we are going there. There are too many good brains in here on both sides and outside for us to capitulate to that type of obsequious genuflection, and obscene genuflection too, in the form of international bureaucrats in Washington. I am never going to agree to that as a proud baby of Independence. I am not agreeing to that type of foolishness. I said it again, and I say it with all due respect to Professor Howard, who has fallen in love with the IMF. I want them to know, especially the people at the University of the West Indies, that the first thing the IMF is coming after is that University of the West Indies, because they have already made it very clear that we ought to cut them off and let them go and get an endowment somewhere and ask the students to pay. That is one of the first things they are coming after, so when all of these people out here are talking about IMF and saying "go to the IMF" and "the IMF has changed", it really has changed. It has changed its clothes but the blood running through it is still the same. I tell you all so already. A lot of the staff members are very amenable, some of them actually are quite liberal in their views and they will sit down with you and say, "I understand," but they always tell you at the end of the day, "It has to go through the Board."

When you get up there, there are the Europeans, the Americans. Do you know the Americans wanted to cut us off from IDB (Inter-American Development Bank) funding? You all know. If they could stop us from getting IDB funding tomorrow, they would do it, because they feel Barbados is too "developed" for that. Some people you would not even imagine are on that IMF Board. They are very, very conservative, and you think you will rush through there with some sweetheart programme and no austerity in it? I heard one person say, "The Minister of Finance is doing too much austerity. Let us do an IMF programme." What IMF programme? Do you think the IMF will do a programme without austerity? Go and ask the Europeans. They are coming after education and pension and health; those are the things they want to get at because they feel that we have reached the stage where we need to cut those people off and my view is, and this Party's view is that we have drawn a line in the sand.

12.51 a.m.

We have not heard from the Leader of the Opposition what is her position but we have drawn a line in the sand. There are things that we are not prepared to give up that easily or give up at all. We have drawn a line in the

sand and those people who are walking around and telling me that I must send home 8 000 public servants and go all up to managerial class, I am not accepting that.

Asides.

Hon. C.P. SINKLER: I never said it was the private sector. I never said the private sector said that but that is a view though. Sir, the Right Honourable Prime Minister knows what I am saying is true because it is a very prevalent view, and we have held the point that why should public servants be emasculated to help save Barbados when all us, the private, the public, everybody comes to the table and eat and drink and the only people who is to carry that burden is the public servants. Sir, anytime anything happens in Barbados we must cut off the public service, send home all the people, shut down this and shut down that but, Sir, it cannot work so. It has to be a shared sacrifice and each of us will make our own contribution. Sir, those who get impacted more than others, we will try to help them out and make sure they do not fall through the cracks. We will have programmes for this and if we have to give the Welfare Department money, we will give them more money. If we have to give Urban Development Commission and the others a little bit more money to help out here and there, we will try to do so but we have to do that within the context of available resources. Sir, this is what it is all about so when I hear some people out there saying Chris Sinckler is this and Chris Sinckler is that and all of that, one of these days they will get to learn that this very Chris Sinkler is who is saving them from total annihilation but I know my redemption is coming at another time, maybe 25 years from now but, Sir, it will come.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of people out there saying this Government is the worse but they have not seen the worse yet. Be careful what you wish for. Sir, if you notice, the Leader of the Opposition delivered a thing and up to now you have not heard any specifics. She says do not print any money at the Central Bank. Well, if the Central Bank stops printing tomorrow, if you pass a law to stop printing money tomorrow, how are you going to come up with \$700 million. It means that something has to happen, people have to go home, schools have to shut down, garbage cannot be collected. The Honourable Member say the deficit should be one per cent of GDP. We say 4.4 per cent and she says one per cent of GDP.

Asides.

Hon. C.P. SINKLER: Only salaries the statutory boards will get. These are great proposals of the Leader of the Opposition. She will reclaim 23 acres of land at Pelican and this is what is going to turn around the economy of Barbados. You are going to acquire land at Pelican, you are going to ban plastic bags and take back Pelican, make a

national independence institution of statistical data, and that is what is going to turn around the Barbados economy. This is the great plan that we were waiting to hear.

Mr. Speaker, do you know why we are not hearing any specifics from the Barbados Labour Party or the Leader of the Opposition, you are not hearing any of those specifics because this is a Trumpian event. They are waiting. They are not going to tell the Government of Barbados what they are going to do. They will criticise the Democratic Labour Party, tear them down, accuse them of corruption, and make them look like the worse thing in the world, put people in specific places, whether in banking, civil society, unions, populate it with people, make things about here miserable and confuse so that people would be fretting with the Government and then we will vote them out, and then we are going to the IMF, then we are going to cut them up, and then we will send them home and then we will have five years to get back in their good graces, so that is why you cannot hear any specifics.

Mr. Speaker, I say today if the Government presents a plan that they say cannot work tell me what your plan is, I want to hear the plan before the elections. Tell me what the plan is. I want to hear the specifics, tell me what you are going to do to bring down the deficit, how much you are going to cut it by, what measures are you going to take. Are you going to send home people, are you going to raise taxes, what are you going to do, bring the plan. You have said all the criticisms, that this is the worse Government that cannot implement nothing, that this tax cannot work, that tax cannot work, so bring your hand to the people of Barbados in good time so that we can analyse it before the elections and let the best ideas contend.

Asides.

Hon. C.P. SINKLER: Call the election and you will get a plan, and you will bring out a Manifesto two days before the vote. No, no, we want the plan now. We have a plan for the City and the Honourable Member for the City knows the plan because it has already impacted him. It already has him holding spot meetings every week and shouting at people and barking at people. He had a little thing down at Jubilee Gardens that had 16 people, 12 of which were police officers and the rest were performers. Sir, nobody turned up. Sir, as soon we went down there and clean up the Orleans, he sent out a message that he had a wonderful show down at Jubilee Gardens asking if anybody saw it.

Asides.

Hon. C.P. SINKLER: Sir, we have the colonel under real pressure and the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East trying to negotiate a switch of seat to St. Peter. Did you not know that?

Asides.

Hon. C.P. SINKLER: Oh, those negotiations are going on. There is nothing in the Barbados Labour Party that you know about. Are you really in that Party? They are trying to find a seat for the member because they know she is not coming back in here. Grant got the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East under bear pressure. The Honourable Member was driving up and down Pine East/West Boulevard Sunday gone. Sir, somebody told me to come and see and I told them I was here writing the Budget, I have no time with that. The Honourable Member is up and down Pine East/West Boulevard peeping in Parkinson School to see what is going on in there.

Asides.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I must say that the Honourable Member for St. Michael East did admit to me that the fellow has some support. I feel they will make it out but the fellow has some support. Sir, we came with an installment to the programme because these things are progressive. It is not going to solve every issue, we may not reach every target but we have to work hard to protect this society and this economy and, Sir, that is what this exercise was all about, and I ask for the country's support in this particular regard.

Mr. Speaker, as the Honourable Member for St. Peter has said, there is nothing we cannot do that we put our minds to.

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

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged.

The question was put to the House and agreed on.

PAPERS

Hon. C.P. SINKLER: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the following:

1. The Duties, Taxes and Other Payment (Exemption) St. James Atlantic Incorporate Order, 2017.

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GOVERNMENT BUSINESS (RESUMED)

ORDER NO. 20 – NATIONAL SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
LEVY BILL 2017

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: We are all familiar with the National Social Responsibility Levy and I want to beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

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

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This House is now in Committee.

Clauses 1 -- 6 were called and passed.

Clauses 7 -- 10 were called and passed.

Clauses 11 -- 15 were called and passed.

Clauses 16 -- 20 were called and passed.

Clauses 21 -- 27 were called and passed.

The Schedule was called and passed.

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

On the separate motion of Hon. C. P. SINCKLER, second by Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the National Social Responsibility Levy Act, 2017.

ORDER NO. 22 – MAGISTRATE’S COURT (AMENDMENT)
BILL, 2017

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, late last year we did an amendment to the Magistrates’ Court Act and in particular Section 17A.(1)(a) which provides as follows:

“Subject to section 18B, for the purposes of committal proceedings, evidence with or without exhibits, before an examining magistrate shall consist of written statements, whether for the prosecution or the defence, and

these written statements shall be admissible as evidence in the same manner as oral evidence given by a person where the written statement

(a) is prepared from a statement which was recorded, whether in writing or by electronic means, by a senior member of the Royal Barbados Police Force not below the rank of Sergeant or an attorney-at-law;”

it has come to our attention that indeed this is Administratively unworkable in many cases because the statements are taken by Constables therefore we are proposing that this section be amended by deleting the words, “a senior member of the Royal Barbados Police Force not below the rank of Sergeant” and substituting the words, “a member of the Royal Barbados Police Force” and that is the simple amendment. I will however say, for the record, Mr. Speaker, that from my information some Magistrates have taken the position that they could not move forward with matters. This Act was proclaimed, I think, on 1st February this year therefore my understanding of the law is that it was never meant to be retroactive. It cannot be retroactive in particular because it deals with criminal proceedings therefore there was nothing wrong with the Magistrates proceeding with the cases that were in the system before the 1st February of this year. Nevertheless, as I said, administratively I think it is cleaner this way therefore I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

On the motion of Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE, seconded by Hon. M. A. LASHLEY, the House resolved itself into Committee, Mr. J. D. PAUL in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This House is now in Committee.

Clauses 1 -- 2 inclusive were called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE, seconded by Hon. M. A. LASHLEY, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour the SPEAKER, the passing of one Bill in Committee and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

House D 12 C Seq 85 1.11 a.m.

On the separate motion of Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE, seconded by Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Magistrates’ Court (Amendment) Act, 2017.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, with that we have come to the end of Government Business for the day.

Just briefly, Sir, in keeping with custom I want to use this opportunity, of course, to thank all Honourable Members who would have taken part in this very important 2017 Budgetary Debate. I think we had a very interesting debate. I think a lot of our important points were made. We now face the implementation process and we look forward to full cooperation as we try to help those who would need our help and to make sure that we make some progress on the way to improving the general fiscal position of our country Barbados, so I want to thank all Honourable Members for their contribution. Of course, I want to thank the Clerk and his team at the Table, the security who make sure we are safe here, all of the caterers and all those who support the operations of this very important organ of Government in Barbados.

With those few words, Sir, I therefore beg to move that the House do now adjourn until Tuesday, June 13, 2017 at 10.00 a.m.

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

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Thank you, Sir. Just speaking briefly on the Adjournment, it is very late in the night or early in the morning and I would not want to detain the Chamber. I endorse fully all of the comments of the Leader of Government Business in relation to all of the persons who he has already thanked, but I would also like to take the opportunity to thank Honourable Members on this side for their sterling contributions to the debate and for remaining true to the Barbados Labour Party principles and certainly representing and defending the people of this country. We are here to serve the interest of the people who have put us here and also to ensure that we represent the views of the people who have certain positions in relation to this Budget and the way that the country is proceeding.

With those few words, Sir, I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Okay, just let me join in thanking the members of staff and so on for accommodating us once again. We are always appreciative of that. Before we adjourn, just let me make reference to some statements I made to the Honourable Member for St. James North. Let me say to the House that I have always promised myself that I would keep my cool in the Chair and dispense my duty with a cool and calm head. Obviously, I lost my cool for a brief moment and while not withdrawing the statements made, I still do feel that you were wrong and if you had continued I still would have put you out, I am only

saying that I want to apologise to the House for losing my cool in that way and I will always try to rule calmly and fairly.

Having said that, Honourable Members the question is that the House be now adjourn until Tuesday, June 13, 2017 at 10.00 a.m.

The question that the House do now adjourn until Tuesday, June 13, 2017 at 10.00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

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

EDITORIAL QUERIES

Points noted while 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. Opening. The source opens without the convening sentence (Pursuant to the adjournment ... met at ...). The date is taken from the heading of the source.

Q3. Order No. 19, resumption after lunch. The Speaker's resumption statement appears twice in succession in the source: the first says 'we were on Order No. 14' and calls the Member for St. Michael East; the second says 'Order No. 19' and is followed by 'The Honourable Member for St. Michael St, Thomas.' Miss C. Y. Forde (St. Thomas) then speaks. Both are printed as in the source.

Q4. Order No. 19, various take-slips. Several reporters' take-slips are typed as ordinary paragraphs in the body of speeches (for example 'se D 12 C Seq 39', 'H:No.D12C(42)', 'House D 12 C Seq 49', 'House D 12 C Seq 75' and 'House D 12 C Seq 85 1.11 a.m.'). and one speech by the Attorney-General opens with '(Seq 38)'. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Order No. 19, Mr. E. G. Hinkson's speech. The Chair is addressed throughout as Madam Deputy Speaker, but one ruling is headed 'MADAM DEPUTY PRESIDENT'; later, during Mr. G. W. Payne's speech, one ruling is headed 'Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER'. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Order No. 19, Lt. Col. J. D. Bostic's speech. The Speaker interrupts ('This is necessary') and Madam Deputy Speaker is next addressed in the Chair, with no procedural note that the Chair changed; 'Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair' follows the speech. Printed as in the source.

Q7. Government Notices (Recommitted). The notice of the Magistrate's Court (Amendment) Bill, 2017 is headed 'Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE' but its text begins 'Mr. SPEAKER: I beg to give notice'. Printed as in the source.

Q8. Order No. 22. The Order is headed 'MAGISTRATE'S COURT (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2017', while the Act is cited as the 'Magistrates' Court (Amendment) Act, 2017'. Printed as in the source.

Q9. Order No. 19, Minister of Finance's reply. The Minister of Finance's name is spelt both 'SINCKLER' and 'SINKLER' in speech headings. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly resumed on Thursday, 1st June, 2017, with Mr. Speaker in the Chair, to continue the debate on Order No. 19, the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, 2017, presented on the Tuesday by the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, Hon. C. P. Sinckler. Mr. D. G. Sutherland, Member for St. George South, said the Unemployment Fund had no reserves, and Her Hon. Mrs. M-J. M. Thompson, Member for St. John, called the Budget a watershed. Lt. Col. J. D. Bostic, Member for the City of Bridgetown, said the national debt could not be reduced without a growth plan and that 73 per cent of the economy depended on trading by ordinary Barbadians.

Hon. S. D. Blackett, Member for St. Michael Central, spoke next. Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, Member for Christ Church South, spoke on health care and said the St. John Polyclinic had seen 19 000 patients since it opened. Mr. D. D. Marshall, Member for St. Joseph, spoke on accountability and CLICO's monies, and Hon. M. A. Lashley, Member for St. Philip North, defended the Government's use of small contractors. After lunch Miss C. Y. Forde, Member for St. Thomas, spoke of the poor bus service on the Sturges route and the increase in petroleum prices; Mr. J. D. Paul, Mr. T. A. Prescod and Hon. D. O'N. Inniss followed.

The Attorney-General, Hon. A. D. Brathwaite, said the policies would not be reversed whoever won the next general election. Mr. E. G. Hinkson, Member for St. James North, raised a link with Transtech and cost overruns on the Grotto and Valery projects, drawing points of order from the Attorney-General. Dr. the Hon. D. S. Lowe, Member for Christ Church East, spoke on same-sex legislation and corruption, and Mr. Hinkson was repeatedly told to take his seat when he objected that Dr. Lowe had overrun his time. Rt. Hon. O. S. Arthur, Member for St. Peter, asked whether an International Monetary Fund programme would have inflicted less pain than the \$542 million in measures and called for a special actuarial study of the National Insurance Scheme. Notice was given of the Magistrate's Court (Amendment) Bill, 2017, which was read a first time, and the Sitting was suspended until 7.30 p.m.

In the evening Hon. R. D. Jones and Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw spoke. During the Prime Minister's speech, the Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley, raised several points of order over his references to a legal partner; the Speaker noted that she had spoken for three hours and one minute the day before without interruption. Mr. K. D. Symmonds, Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick and Mr. G. W. Payne followed.

The Minister of Finance replied at length, making documents of the House including a letter on the BDS\$41.23 million Credit Suisse payment of 18th June, 2015. Madam Deputy Speaker asked him and the Member for St. Michael East to refrain from flying insults. Certain remarks by Mr. Hinkson were struck from the record, and the Speaker warned Mr. Hinkson that he would be asked to leave if his outbursts continued. The Resolution was agreed to.

The Minister of Finance laid the Duties, Taxes and Other Payment (Exemption) St. James Atlantic Incorporate Order, 2017. The National Social Responsibility Levy Bill, 2017 then passed all stages, clauses 1 to 27 and the Schedule being agreed in Committee with Mr. J. D. Paul in the Chair. The Magistrate's Court (Amendment) Bill, 2017, allowing written statements to be recorded by any member of the Royal Barbados Police Force rather than an officer not below the rank of Sergeant, also passed.

On the adjournment Mr. Boyce and Miss Bradshaw thanked Members and staff, and the Speaker said he had lost his cool for a brief moment with the Member for St. James North. The House was adjourned until Tuesday, 13th June, 2017 at 10.00 a.m.