
THE

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HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

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RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: Good Morning, Honourable Members, this Sitting is resumed. When the Suspension was taken we were on Order No. 20, and with that we shall continue. The Honourable Member for St. George South.

Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on this Appropriation Bill, 2017, and at the outset I want to congratulate the political leader of the Barbados Labour Party, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, who spent only one hour yesterday in her Estimates reply to address all of the issues that would have been presented to this Honourable Chamber by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West and Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs. Mr. Speaker, let me say though that the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs spent close to six hours asking for solutions, blaming the Barbados Labour Party and was ably supported by this colleague, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central, in blaming the Barbados Labour Party or trying to apportion blame for the state of the economy.

Mr. Speaker, let me say that I listened attentively and was really saddened by the approach taken by the Democratic Labour Party in these Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, 2017-2018, because it is clear that from 2008 that the Democratic Labour Party was given a mandate by the people of this country to govern. Again in 2013 the Democratic Labour Party was given a second mandate by the people of this country to govern yet again. Mr. Speaker, I find it hypocritical that the Democratic Labour Party could come here to apportion blame to the Barbados Labour Party for the state of this economy.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs spent most of the six hours asking for solutions,

asking for a plan from the Barbados Labour Party. I cannot anymore count the number of times during the six hours that the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs spent on the Floor of this Lower House in asking for solutions. Mr. Speaker, I say that against the background after the Leader of the Barbados Labour Party and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East proposed a Joint Select Committee to address the economic and financial affairs of this country back in 2009 when the Honourable Member recognised that as Gypsy sang in his song, that the ship had already started to sink.

Mr. Speaker, that is not all, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East came again in 2013, the ship was sinking further and the Honourable Member proposed an Eminent Persons Grouping to address the fiscal issues, “the economic” issues of this country. Mr. Speaker, do you know what? Mr. Speaker, the Right Honourable Prime Minister of this country responded to the Honourable Member’s call for the Eminent Persons Group and said that all Members of this Cabinet are eminent persons, that he does not need an Eminent Persons Group. Mr. Speaker, but the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs has the audacity and temerity to come to this Lower Chamber to ask for solutions from a Barbados Labour Party whom he ignored for the past five years. Mr. Speaker, worse yet, the Honourable Member pilloried the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East and told her everything under the sun, including to run down Broad Street naked if she wanted attention. Mr. Speaker, that was said in this Lower Chamber by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, the political leader of the Barbados Labour Party, who reached out to her on a number of occasions. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member told her to run down Broad Street naked if she needed attention. Now, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West can come to this Honourable House asking for solutions and asking the Barbados Labour Party for a plan, but I always hear in the game of dominoes that when you are dealt a hand you do not expose it to your opponent.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying to you that if the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West and indeed the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South who is the head of the ship that is sinking and we have to apportion blame squarely in his seat. If the Honourable Member expects us to open our hands and show him what we have, then the Honourable Member is really asking too much from us. The Honourable Member has a mandate from the people of this country for the past nine years for him to govern but having said that Mr. Speaker, we have a duty to the people of this country to do what is best in their interest, that is why the Leader of the Opposition has over the past years addressed private sector, the Barbados Chamber of Commerce, the Barbados Medical Association of Practitioners and our political leader has offered solutions to the crisis that we continue to face in this country.

Mr. Speaker, further to that the Barbados Labour Party has produced a "Covenant of Hope" on how we intend to engage the people of this country to give them to them and to their families. Mr. Speaker, I do not know what else would the Democratic Labour Party want us to offer to them, we have offered them many solutions, the private sector has offered solutions. Mr. Speaker, I will go further, the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter has offered solutions on the current economic crisis that the Democratic Labour Party faces. Mr. Speaker, right in their backyard, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West has also offered many solutions on many occasions to the Right Honourable Prime Minister of the ruling party, who has failed to act on his recommendations. Mr. Speaker, what else can we do? Is the request for help from the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West a sincere request? Mr. Speaker, I do not think it is so, I think it is pure theatrical. Mr. Speaker, we have to safeguard the citizens of this country from the sport and the comical comments that come from the Members of the Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, what is common in the solutions of the Barbados Labour Party is the need to have bold, focused and decisive leadership, coupled with sound transparent accountable and disciplined governance, that is what has characterised Governments since Adult Suffrage for the past 65 years in this country, whether it was Barbados Labour Party or Democratic Labour Party Government, we had bold, focussed and decisive leadership and discipline governance. That is not what is being displayed now by the current Democratic Labour Party Government.

Mr. Speaker, in 2009, under the late Right Honourable Member David Thompson the revenue collapsed in this country but there were no measures employed by the Democratic Labour Party to stimulate growth in this country. All of the measures were about taxing and destroying the middleclass and making the poor poorer. We saw nothing to trigger growth in this country

from then until now. We saw a high level of taxation but we expected businesses to invest in this economy, and we know very well that most of the businesses were insolvent; they had no capital and no cash to invest or to stimulate this economy as a result of the Democratic Labour Party's policies. Coupled with that, there were no serious capital works by the Democratic Labour Party to stimulate growth either, so we had our debt growing but no growth in this country.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. Michael South Central in his usual style of theatrics spoke about a high level of debt left by the Barbados Labour Party Administration when we demitted office, and I wish this morning to set the record straight. It is okay to come into this Lower Chamber to tell the people of this country and to try to convince yourself -- you cannot convince the Members of the Barbados Labour Party because we know the true story -- that we left a high level of debt in this country. Let me go to the figures, Mr. Speaker. Asides.

Mr. D.G. SUTHERLAND: Mr. Speaker, I want to reference the Central Bank Report which shows the public debt outstanding in a Press release dated December 2012, and it showed it over five years. The Barbados Labour Party demitted office in 2008, in the first or second month of that year, and at the end of 2007 our external debt was \$1.9 billion, Mr. Speaker. Let us look at the external debt eight or nine years later, Mr. Speaker. At the end of 2016, our external debt was \$2.87 billion, so we moved from \$1.9 billion in 2007 to ten years later where it is \$2.87 billion. We see this debt. I do not know what is the current state as at the end of February. This debt has literally doubled, so how can the Member for St. Michael South Central blame the Barbados Labour Party for the state of the economy in 2017, having almost doubled its external debt from 2007? Let us go on further, Mr. Speaker. We need to set the record straight. The people must know the true story on the debt issue in this country, Mr. Speaker. At the end of 2007 our gross public debt stood at \$5.9 billion. At the end of 2016 our gross public debt is \$9.3 billion, so we moved from \$5.9 billion in 2007 to \$9.3 billion in 2016. Mr. Speaker, if you include debt held by National Insurance, this debt is close to what the Member for St. Michael North West would have quoted. He quoted \$13.3 billion but I have here \$12.7 billion at the end of 2016 if we include National Insurance debt. That is the real issue. The Democratic Labour Party has literally doubled the debt profile of this country within the last nine to ten years. Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. Michael North East also spoke about the \$1.7 billion needed to service our debt this year in 2017. I think it was \$1.6 billion to service our debt last year in 2016. She went on further to say that if we take every cent from personal Income Tax, Value-Added Tax and Property Taxes, we still would not have sufficient money to service our debt. Mr. Speaker, that speaks to the fact that this Government, the Democratic Labour Party, is

led by the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South; and I continue to mention him in everything that I say as it relates to the Democratic Labour Party because leadership matters. Do not let us “fool our foot”. If we look at how this Democratic Labour Party has been taxing and taxing in order to generate revenue, we recognise that we have more than a revenue problem. We have a debt problem. Mr. Speaker, we need to put the poor people and the middle class on the frontline while we extend the repayment and get a lower interest rate; that is called debt re-profiling. Mr. Speaker, I can speak to that because I went through a similar situation in the private sector. We have the right to engage in debt re-profiling, because when we are seeing high interest payments and when we are looking at the maturities and the high payments to be paid out to our creditors, then we ought to do something about it. These were the comments and these were the recommendations and solutions offered by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter and also the Member for St. Philip West. These were some of the solutions. They may be different in the approach but the real strategy is a strategy of debt re-profiling to ease the pain of this country. While we are doing that, we need to put our citizens at the frontline. We cannot continue to talk about cuts in healthcare and education and all of these areas. We have a more fundamental issue in this country that needs to be addressed, and that is our debt profile. In terms of the Democratic Labour Party asking for solutions from the Member for St. Michael North West, all the solutions are there in front of you, but you have failed to act on the solutions offered by -- I repeat this -- the Member for St. Michael North East, the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter and, in your backyard, the Member for St. Philip West. You are hard-ears, and there is a saying, “Hard-ears you would not hear, own way you will feel.” We will rescue this country. We are asking you the Democratic Labour Party to go back to the people for another mandate. They gave you a mandate in 2008 and in 2013. Go back to the people of this country for another mandate, and if they give you a third term, then that is it; but I think you owe this to the people of this country to go back to them and ask them for another mandate. Mr. Speaker, we do not only have a debt problem; we have a foreign reserve problem and I wish to turn my attention now to the foreign reserves issue. I will speak on the whole energy sector, because it is always good to remember when we left office what our foreign reserves were, Mr. Speaker. Our foreign reserves were over \$1.5 billion. Nine years later, our foreign reserves are hovering around \$640 million. This Government continues to suffer from inertia, apathy and laziness, especially in our energy sector. I will speak to the energy sector. Aside.

Mr. D.G. SUTHERLAND: At this time our fuel import bill is still relatively high. You may say the price of oil has dropped to some US\$49 a barrel, but our fuel import

bill is still relatively high. We are averaging over \$450 million down from the \$652 million when the oil price was around US\$51 per barrel. It is predicted that in two years' time the oil prices will rise to US\$120 per barrel. That is what we do; we look at forecasts and we try to manage our affairs in the best interests of the people of this country. That is not what is being done by the Democratic Labour Party, so let me go further into the energy sector. Mr. Speaker, against this background what has the Government done to reduce our fuel import bill instead of depending on the oil price movement in the world market?

While some work has been done in the renewable energy sector this Government is lagging because technology is changing and the pace at which we have develop ...

Let us talk about our energy policy. In 2008, the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) left this Government with an energy policy. Where are we right now? We are still at draft stage with a total energy policy. I am saying, Mr. Speaker, the pace has been slow and this Government, in the energy sector, is suffering from an implementation deficit. This describes the state of affairs in the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) led by the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South.

Let us look at the tourism sector. The Honourable Member,

Asides.

Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND: As it relates to energy. Focus Honourable Member for St. James South, through you, Mr. Speaker. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central came to this Chamber with a 10-point plan that he intended to implement and the items listed on the plan are as follows. The provision for a BDS\$10 million window for retrofitting of air conditioning and lighting systems in the tourism and the hospitality sector. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central noticed that it would be the first phase of a \$150 million energy efficiency and hotel refurbishing fund and further aspects of the fund would be rolled out over the upcoming months. I would like to ask him: where is this 10-point plan and what are the gains in energy efficiency within the tourism sector?

Let us look at it because, Mr. Speaker, there was a study done in 2012 called the CHENACT study. CHENACT is the Caribbean Hotel Energy Efficiency Action which is the umbrella body for the National Hotel Association in the private sector. This study was done in Barbados, we had a pilot project done and the aim was to improve the competitiveness of small- medium-size hotel with less than 400 rooms through the improvement of the use of energy with a direct emphasis on renewable energy.

They did detailed audits in 32 hotels, walk through assessments in 30 hotels, and results from the study show that the Barbados Hotel Industry use energy inefficiently and I guess this 10-point plan in 2103 probably hinged around the work done by the CHENACT study and to this day, Mr. Speaker, we have not seen any benefits from this study. Pure talk, Mr. Speaker, and let me say why. It was because the study shows that US\$20 million invested in the hotel industry on clean energy can yield some \$50 million in savings so when you invest US\$20 million you can yield \$20 million in savings. It cited the rooms up to 50 rooms, a hotel with rooms between 51 and 100, hotel with rooms between 100 and 200 and some greater than 200. This is a comprehensive study but to date we have not seen the benefits being realised in terms of energy efficiency in the hotel sector. We boast of a high fuel import bill but yet nothing has been done by the Minister of Tourism. The findings show too that air conditioning units is the largest user of energy in this case, electricity and it accounts for 50 per cent of the total energy consumed in the hotel. I am saying with small investment in the hotel sector we can reap tremendous benefits that can redound to savings in our fuel import bill. That is why, Mr. Speaker, I am saying that we are slow, we are suffering from and implementation deficit as it relates to the energy sector and I see why because it is under the guidance of the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South and just like any other thing in this country that is suffering from implementation deficit we do not expect anything better. Mr. Speaker, that is one of the issues as it relates to the energy sector and driving our fuel import bill down and freeing up some foreign exchange. We have a foreign exchange issue, but that is not all, Mr. Speaker.

Let me come to BNOC, the Barbados National Oil Company. I wish to draw your attention first to some of the rich oil nations or oil countries in this world like Qatar and Saudi Arabia who keep their crude oil in the ground and invest in renewable energy. That is what these rich oil nations are doing presently but we have BNOC which is Government which has failed to invest in renewable energy. They are still focussing on crude and if I have the time I will speak to this because no work has been done for the past eight years in the offshore or the onshore drilling sector in this Ministry of Energy. BNOC should see themselves as an energy company and take the lead not give the lead to the Barbados Light & Power Company Limited through EMERA. BNOC should take the lead and see themselves as an energy company and not a hydrocarbon company. BNOC should have been the leader in wind energy development in this country. Wind energy is the cheaper source of renewable energy, cheaper than biomass and I am saying that BNOC should be leading. If you are an energy company and there has been a shift from hydrocarbons to renewable energy you should be leading the country, not giving up that leadership. There is no reason why you should not have 100 megawatts in wind

energy and factored in storage and also this whole aspect of economic enfranchisement because once you have that 100 per cent megawatts in wind energy you can offer shares.

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

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

You can look at 50 per cent local investment, credit investing, utility companies, these are some of the things that you can do but Government is not really serious about reducing their fuel import bill and we have to cater because this study also shows that by 2030 or by 2036 the price of crude oil can reach US\$250 per barrel. These are some of the issues that we have to face. What is the transition strategy by this Government for companies like SOL, RUBIS and again BNOC as we move to renewable energy? The Barbados Light & Power Company Limited is looking to move to 100 per cent renewable and they are not focussing on hydrocarbons. We are asking BNOC to refocus, come up with a new strategy and I believe that you have the technical competence in that Ministry to deal with renewable energy from in front. We have some competent Civil Servants but when you have a driver that cannot driver or who fails to drive and who fails to lead that is what you get, inertia, apathy, laziness, implementation deficit, whatever you want to call it, these are some of the things that you get.

Mr. Speaker, I will end off by spending a little time by the regulations governing investment in renewable energy. We are still at the draft stage of the energy policy and I keep saying renewable energy policy because this draft energy policy focussed on crude oil, natural gas but we are not doing anything to win natural gas offshore/onshore, instead we have now become a net importer of natural gas in this country with foreign exchange going out at a time when we have foreign exchange issues. Mr. Speaker, we are still at the stage of a draft energy policy and I have a problem with that because the playing should be level. We are looking to offer Deltro Inc. a big solar photovoltaics plant but we do not have any regulations, no tariff structure, no clear policy or no tax regimes in place that govern or guide investors in this industry but yet we are talking about investment in this industry. Let us do it right first please. Let us create some regulations as it relate to a renewable energy policy before we begin to offer people, Deltro and others, these massive contracts. We need to focus on our regulations and our policy.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House and he really

must be corrected. One of the features of the renewable energy policy of this Government has been a publication of a full directory and regulatory document policy which tells all the sectors as to what their opportunities would be and the facilitation of the implementation of the renewable energy, so it is not correct to give the impression that there is no such policy. The Honourable Member must not mislead the Chamber and indeed he must not mislead himself.

Mr. SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Member for the elucidation. Honourable Member, please continue.

Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND: The Honourable Member for Christ Church South will get his chance to speak. Mr. Speaker, I maintain that we have to set the playing field level as it relates to tariff structures, a clear policy guideline on investment in renewable energy - I will repeat that anywhere, Mr. Speaker - and a tax regime as well to engage investors.

Mr. SPEAKER: Okay Honourable Member.

Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND: Stop this backroom dealing.

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

Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND: Mr. Speaker, I...

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

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

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

Her Honour Mrs. M-J. M. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise on this occasion to lend my support to this Appropriation Bill, 2017, but let me just start by saying a heartfelt warm good morning to the people of St. John as it is at their behest that I stand here.

Mr. Speaker, this year's Estimates comes against the backdrop of a new President within the United States of America and a wave of political thought referred to as "Trumpism". On Monday in the United Kingdom, the House of Lords gave final approval to a Bill empowering Prime Minister Theresa May to notify European Union leaders of Britain's intention to leave the European Union following the referendum of last year. Here in the region we saw unrest within the capital of Dominica. The issue in Dominica occurred after a political rally by the main

Opposition. The Opposition, just like the one sitting across from us, who if the people of Barbados believe the truth will continue to sit on that side, sought to delegitimise the sitting Prime Minister because of the arrest of a participant in Dominica's Sale of Passports Project.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, our country witnessed a spending spree on the heels of an Estimates debate that the Opposition Party have come here to beat down about high levels of expenditure while they themselves, without touching a foot in the Treasury, have already demonstrated to the public how they intend to spend the taxpayers dollars while we on this side, a responsible Government, seek to find ways of maintaining expenditure while repaying inherited debt. In all my years of witnessing Estimates debates in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, I have never seen the Democratic Labour Party march before an Estimates debate when really and truly they had more to march for. With the International Monetary Fund confirming the struggles Caribbean economies faced and also saying what they must do, it is no secret that we have said no in the past and have stuck to our philosophical belief that devaluation hurts and it erodes gains. I have seen the crocodile tears of Members from the Opposition about how they care for this beloved country yet a diet of untruths have been fed to this country on the belief that Barbados must burn before help is rendered.

The realities of the complexities of the modern-day global environment have led to a total relook at what is normal. Recent reports from the Central Bank of Barbados indicate that the economy has grown by 1.9 per cent and unemployment is now in single digits. Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge efforts to keep the international business sector afloat as we reduce taxes in that sector. This was in response to a very real call from our key trading partners that business should stay at home. Our revenue from taxes from that sector is down by \$200 million per year but our expenses remained the same. Barbadians expect to be paid every month, medicine have to be obtained for the sick, the elderly have to be cared for, the children have to be fed and Members of Parliament and the Opposition have to be paid. Let us look at a household, Mr. Speaker. When you have reduced revenue and expenses stay the same, something has to give so the head of the household can choose to reduce expenses, source a loan or seek to increase revenues. We have heard from our Cabinet and Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs that Barbados faces similar situations with much less resources at this country's disposal. We have tried our best to restore financial sanity in quarters of the Treasury where a group once ran wild believing the Treasury was a ward chest to be opened at the sound of an election bell. The measures taken formed part of the fiscal responsibility that this Government continues to demonstrate with regard to the purse of the taxpayers. We made cuts across the board. We are merely utilising the anticipated reduced revenues that can be apportioned. We

cannot expect in an attempt to restructure our economy and place us on a path of growth that allows for greater fiscal management to not experience a difference. Barbados must appreciate that this country, despite the times, has done extremely well, so I want to spend a few minutes to point out the work that the Minister of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, for example, has done over the last eight years.

On March 04 at our Facts Conference, this was a Conference organised by the General Secretary of the Democratic Labour Party which was aired to a live audience, I witnessed a long list of achievements rolled out under the banner of education. Barbados has done much with very little. We saw the construction of the Blackman Gollop Primary School, we saw the construction of an ultramodern school hall at the Daryl Jordan Secondary School, the expansion of Parkinson and the Thelma Berry Nursery and in collaboration of the Maria Holder Trust we saw three new nursery schools, Sixth Forms at Foundation, St. Michaels and Springer Memorial and the Lodge School, Oh the Lodge School, a total utter and complete remake, transformation. That reminds me of some years ago, many years ago, when my children were sitting the Common Entrance Exam, I had a friend whose son sat the Exam and he passed for the Lodge School. This lady actually told me that she did not want to send the child to the Lodge School because of some complaint about the buildings looking so drab and depressing. Well, what would she say today? Mine you, the young man is now well into his 20s. The new Lodge School is quite a transformation and a beautiful addition to the schools in Barbados.

Sir, it saddens me that a world could be given the impression that this administration began life in 2017, when for the last 8 years they were producing and ensuring that the people of this nation were not the subjects of experiments by international agencies that paddle their trade.

Now let me turn my attention to these rating agencies, Mr. Speaker. While there are those who have used these downgrades as a chance to score political points, the recent downgrade must be placed in the context of the performance of the economy. A downgrade is not a review of the economy. It signal to lenders or financiers the possibility of a country on the brink of defaulting. A default is a technical term. So any attempt to vary the repayment terms or paying a day late could amount to a default. Barbados has an impressive record of meeting payments, including a prison bill. Barbadians must know that the same measures the Opposition is marching for are the same policies the external agencies would want us to engage, destroying the social services and crashing families by slashing jobs. I challenge the Opposition to speak the facts.

The Democratic Labour Party must continue to distinguish itself from the other side by putting Barbados first. History will ultimately be our audience. As a Party we attend to make decisions in the interest of the country and its people and then suffer the wrath of the voters by the corrupted information which goes into the public space. On this occasion I want to associate myself with the recent initiative launched by the Democratic Labour Party called Facts. If it is going to take the truth to save Barbados from the axis of evil that is spinning out of control, then let the truth prevail.

On the other hand the clarion call of the Barbados Labour Party has been to put its Party first at the expense of the country and its people. The success accumulated to them over the years have come back to further corrupt the fabric of the Party. You start wrong, you end wrong.

I have lived to see this country and its leader shower praise on Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford, and on Errol Barrow on their attempt to steer this country from the jaws of the International Monetary Fund. However, in the face of those tough decisions they faced the fire. Let us be fair in this 2017/2018 Estimates debate and honestly accept that the Barbados of the past will not be recaptured in any form or fashion. The economic volatility of our global environment has rendered our boundaries very porous. Our Parliament needs to tell the nation so.

Our Estimates cannot be reduced to a debate about the size of the deficit or the increase in spending. We must have a debate on what matters for the future of our nation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn my attention now to matters of the people of St. John. I want to say how pleased the constituents of St. John are at the completion of the David Thompson Polyclinic and indeed of the whole Complex, the David Thompson Health and Social Services Complex, which serves the entire parish and beyond in so many different ways. They are pleased about the pretty new and refurbished post office at Four Roads, about the spanking new Lodge School, of which I just spoke, about the pavilion at Gall Hill Playing Field, about the gift of a parcel of land at Hothersal for the recreational use of the residents. However, Mr. Speaker, there are some matters about which the people of St. John are not pleased. The buses that do not come on time or do not come at all, namely the Sargeant Street bus and the Martins Bay bus. They are not pleased about the lack of action of acquiring the ground at College Savannah, the West Sussex Cricket Club plays cricket. I have written numerous letters. They are not pleased about the condition of the St. John's Primary School and the closure of Society Primary School, and they are as horrified as I am at being told that there is a new school to house the students of these two schools will be located at the site of the Out Patients Clinic, at Gall Hill, an absurd idea.

Sir, they have told me to say right here on the Floor of the house today that they will not permit this to happen and they are not pleased about the conditions of so many of the roads in St. John. Too many of the roads are in dreadful condition and are destroying vehicles. I can name them. Moores Land and Cheshire, Ashford, Pot House Hill, Stewart Hill, Martins Bay, Foster Hall, Oh gosh Foster Hall. When you drive along Foster Hall you feel as though the car is going to capsize, Gall Hill, New Castle, Welch -- as you take the hairpin bend out of Coach Hill and going to Welch it is just rough, potholes, bumps, craters, destruction of shocks, depreciation of car, angry constituents and an angry Member of Parliament. I have written numerous letters and spoken to the relevant Minister. The road from Clifton Hall to Sherbourne, I could go on and on, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you and I are aware that the pie of which all of us would like a piece is actually the size of a cupcake, but my point is whatever size the piece is St. John deserves and demands its share.

I thank you, Sir.

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

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party said they are not interested in debating the Estimates so I would speak out of turn.

Sir, let me first start by saying that the Honourable Member for St. John wrote me sometime last year about the ground at Sussex. Both the Ministry of Housing, Lands and Rural Development and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and News visited and they both agreed the land should be acquired. Once we get the necessary information we are quite prepared to acquire that land. At the same time we were up there we also visited the area where the old wind mill was at Lamberts Hill. We acknowledge that the land there is already owned by the Government of Barbados and we requested a letter from the sports department of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth so we can also give that to the people. For many years the people of Josey Hill/Rock Hall/ the Lamberts area/Alexander, did not have a proper playing field, even though it did not stop them from playing cricket. They used to play cricket among the rocks and in the pond bottom. When one considers such a large area, it was only fitting that if we are not using that land for the wind mill anymore, the land should be given to the good people of Josey Hill, Rock Hall and the surrounding areas, including Mount Gay and Alexander, Cottage and Oxford.

Mr. Speaker, this morning I came to this House to deal with some matters and to show that we as a Government are not reactive but we are very proactive.

Before one speaks on an issue one must know the history. It is the Democratic Labour Party which has always been the Government that was progressive, proactive and innovative. Every time we come to Government we are quite prepared to deal with certain issues. As soon as we correct the issues, as soon as we lay the foundation, it so happens we are punished by the people of Barbados and the destruction starts again.

Mr. Speaker, you might me ask what I mean by that? Between 1961 and 1970 we created not only a social revolution in this country, but we also created an economic revolution because we were able through innovative ways to take the country to a different level. Do not care how many years before. In 15 years we did to this country what the others could not do for over three hundred and more years. We lifted the masses of people from out of their slumber and we created not only a middle class, but we were able to allow some to elevate themselves to rub shoulders with the mercantile class, et cetera, in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I keep telling my comrades that anytime we have an idea, please implement it, and do not allow the Barbados Labour Party to touch it. We hear a lot about the Freehold Tenancies Act and so on. One would have got the impression that was something new by the Barbados Labour Party. It was not new. It was an idea Mr. Barrow espoused. It was idea he wanted to implement, but the problem was we did not have the number of land surveyors to carry out the work. Up to today we do not have the number of land surveyors we need in this country to carry out our progressive programme. That is why the Barbados Labour Party implemented what we had in the 1980s, up to today there are still many people who are desirous of owning those spots, who were not able to. Sir, so much so, I have said to the officers within the Ministry that if we cannot get the private sector lawyers, because they are some lawyers who believe there is no money in it. I want to repeat that. There are a lot lawyers who are holding up the transaction because of the quantum of their fees, and they are not interested in it.

I have asked that we look at the possibility of utilising our legal department considering it is a social programme we are carrying out, to see if we cannot use our legal department or seek to employ another lawyer to carry out the mandate to ensure that vision which the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow had that the masses of people were empowered by owning land, which was implemented by Tom Adams, that we finish it because we understood what had to be done. It was obvious because of the bad job done by the Barbados Labour Party, we would have to correct it.

Mr. Speaker, we are now having problem because of these programmes. If you look at the front page of the

Nation today you would see an old man on the front page of the Nation Newspaper crying out in the constituency of which I represent. One would get the impression that the Government was not doing anything about this gentleman. It so happened he was renting the house from the landlord and the landlord was not desirous of selling him. Had the landlord sold him the land, it meant that he would have been the fifth person and automatically it would have been turned into a tenantry.

Sir, we have to be very careful because we do social programmes and the social programmes can create more social problems than it resolved. If one studies, the intention of the Act was good. As a boy I know when you could have freely gone to people and ask them to rent you a piece of land to put your house on. Today nobody wants to rent anybody land because they believe that this Act would work against them. I am saying when we are doing social things like these, sometimes we need to look at a programme that is in the interest not only of the tenant but also in the interest of the landlord, so the landlord does not feel he is being disfranchised, or you are robbing the poor to give the poor.

In the initial stage what was thought, this land would have been only plantation land and the plantations could have afforded. Anybody who knew the social history would know that plantations put the workers on land that was not workable, land that was rab land and they were prepared to give it up, because they saw no economic value in it, so they were prepared to give up that land. So at 10 cents a square foot for the plantation, they were relieving themselves of a liability and passing it to the workers.

Sir, the Barbados Labour Party not understanding the social effect of what Mr. Barrow was thinking went ahead, and not only included the plantation, they also applied the Act to poor people. If they knew poor people in this country, they would have known that poor people saw land as an entitlement and as power. If you met an old man I St. Lucy and you ask to buy his land, he would say to you I am not selling land. I bought land because this is my empowerment. Sir, what they did was to deprive poor people to give the poor again. They did worse than Robin Hood did. It was said that Robin Hood took from the rich to give the poor, but the Barbados Labour Party took from the poor to give the poor.

Sir, when I came to Parliament this is one of the things I fought. I have said that if Government is going to make a decision like this, that instead of offering the people the money, they should offer them land. Let them have a choice. Let them decide whether they want land or whether they want money, but do not deprive a person in a country like Barbados of having an opportunity when that person would have gone and purchased the land as an

empowerment. Sir that is what we did between the 1960s and 1970s.

Another thing is, Mr. Barrow again -- that is why I keep telling my comrades. If there is one thing we have to do is to complete his mandate because his vision was so wide so far that it is going to take years to implement what he thought of, what he spoke about and what we need to do to complete that vision. Mr. Barrow was not shortsighted like the Barbados Labour Party, he was very much innovative, that is why I always laugh when I hear them taking about wanting another airport or seaport in North Point, St. Lucy. Mr. Speaker, that was not my vision, I am only carrying out the vision of the late Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow.

Mr. Speaker, so wide was that vision that far back during the 1970s he also bought a boat and called it the "North Point". He also ensured that that boat was capable of offloading material without necessarily going into ports. He even went further, during the 1970 he went to Spring Hall Plantation and Friendship Plantation and acquired those two plantations, then gave them to the small farmers because he understood the empowerment of giving people land to work and something that they can really call their own. He did not stop there, he went further to Hope Plantation after encouraging them to keep cows and such animals and designated a piece of land for the second airport for Barbados. Mr. Speaker, that is why when people pass by and see this lovely piece of land they always remark about that land for houses. I always make the remark to them, "over my dead body" because you can put a house anywhere but you cannot put an airport anywhere.

Mr. Speaker, to those people who are shortsighted and do not understand what an airport is for Barbados then I am sorry for them. I do understand it because the truth is, if you want real development you would build either a seaport or an airport. Let us think about it, you cannot simply build an airport and only erect the buildings to facilitate that airport for Customs and Immigration, put a runway and that is it, there are many other infrastructural items that must come with it. Mr. Speaker, whereas the Government will build an airport and would build the necessary structure such as runway, et cetera, if they spend \$500 million then the private sector would be forced to come and match that investment.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that when one looks at the economic value of an airport or seaport.... Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Minister of Tourism for demonstrating to the whole world that Barbados is ready for a second seaport. Mr. Speaker, when one looks especially at a time like now and sees the numbers of ships anchored off our port, when one looks see how competitive the shipping is, then one must ask ourselves if we are not depriving ourselves of more revenue whenever those ships have to be

anchored outside the port and not given the opportunity to have their goods cleared, especially when at a time when we are in the transshipment business, at a time when our location is so keyed.

Mr. Speaker, the problem with the Opposition especially is that they just do not appreciate Barbados, they see everything negative instead of positive when it comes to Barbados but others come here and do not want to leave but want to be part thereof. Mr. Speaker, it hurts me that we can have more than \$9 billion in the banking system and so many opportunities to invest in this country yet people are prepared and are being told by the Barbados Labour Party that instead of investing their money to keep it in their bank account only to get 0.15 per cent.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: On a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy is absolutely and totally misleading this House. Mr. Speaker, no one in the Barbados Labour Party, certainly the leadership or who have the honour to sit in this Parliament has ever told anyone anywhere, whether in Barbados or outside, to leave their money in the bank and not to invest it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member that is not a matter on which I can rule, the Honourable Member is entitled to his view. There is no point of order found. Please continue, Honourable Member.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, if one want so understand the position just look at their stance for the Hyatt Hotel. Sir, they have frustrated Bajans and local investors. Mr. Speaker, one would understand that whenever you come up with a project that can move the country forward they allow themselves or their neophytes to lodge some kind of judgment in the law courts. Mr. Speaker, they want to put a case for Hyatt, one for Andrews Sugar Factory and so every time you look to put a productive project that can change the economic fortunes of the country, some fly-by-night or politician-to-be would go and put a fly in the ointment as if they think they are interfering with the Democratic Labour Party. What they do not realise is that they are destroying the lives of the very people whom they asked to march them.

Mr. Speaker, it is not the 30 Honourable Members here who would suffer most, it is the masses of the people in Barbados who would suffer and so I do not understand why people would fight. If you want to fight me, do so but do not fight country Barbados. We now have a situation where the Barbados Labour Party has turned the fight away from the Democratic Labour Party and has not put that fight on Barbados. sir, if you doubt me, look at their response in the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure because yesterday as a people they had the opportunities but they said no, they were not going to debate the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, instead the country,

so they do not mind mashing up the country and everything.

Mr. Speaker, let me show you how shortsighted they are, we as a Democratic Labour Party recognised that in order to grow the country we have to ensure that we put the resources to the productive sector. instead they came here and quarrel that Minister of Housing, Lands and Rural Development has not built any houses, that the Honourable Member is not doing this or that, but all of a sudden they stopped quarrelling about the Minister of Housing not building houses and instead claimed that I was able to some house come down from heaven but that I was not allocating them. Mr. Speaker, if I was not building or finishing these houses then they would have to be dropping out of the sky. All of a sudden now they are not about building houses they are about allocation and they are accusing me of holding those houses for election time.

Mr. Speaker, they said the same thing about Lancaster Phase 1, but people went into those houses. They said the same thing about Lancaster Phase 2 but people went into those houses. They said the same thing about Constant but there are people going into those houses. Mr. Speaker, the same thing is happening at the Grotto and at Parish Land where people are going into those houses, yet they are saying that the houses I did not built or did not have any material to complete those houses that all of a sudden they appear on the scene and I am now using those houses as an election tool.

Mr. Speaker, you would have heard something in this Honourable House and would have gotten the impression that the first time that there was a talk about selling land to C.O. Williams was when the Honourable Member for St. Lucy came to this House and decided to do so. Mr. Speaker, I want you to know, I want the world to know that the first time that commercial land was spoken about at Lancaster was not under the Democratic Labour Party Government, it was a Board decision of the National Housing Corporation in 2004 and the only reason the land was not sold at that time was that C.O. Williams had said that he was not paying \$65 per square foot for that land.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North was not Minister, neither was I, so that when you hear people here giving the impression that we took poor people land... Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat this, the charge is that we took poor people land at Lancaster that should have been given to people to build houses to sell to C.O. Williams. Well, let me tell you something, we did not do that, we found what was being done by the Barbados Labour Party and they could not get him to buy at that price. Furthermore, we not only got someone to buy, we were able to get that person to get someone to build. Sir, that will start the building trend at Lancaster.

Mr. Speaker, the timing is so good that other persons are now lining up to build up there also, and by next month there is supposed to be another person looking to build up there. When the Honourable Member for St. George North accuses me in this House of taking poor people's land and giving it to the rich, it was the Honourable Member for St. George North as Minister who allocated that land to be commercial and wanted \$65 a square foot. It was not Denis Kellman, and it was not \$65 per square foot. At that time the land was going at a high price so when the Honourable Member came into the House and accused us at Lancaster of taking poor people's land and giving it to the rich, the Honourable Member knew what he did and was only covering his steps.

My comrades would tell you that I have always said to them, "Whenever they accuse you of something, go and look at the file." Mr. Speaker, last Tuesday when we were debating this issue and he got up and spoke, I went and called for the file because I smelled the rat. I saw the 'blue peter shark' in the camp, so I went for the file and I was able to bring the information, and received the information that the Honourable Member for St. George North was the person who first offered those lands to be commercial and also at a very high price. I laugh sometimes when I see people now spouting economics. They are now learning economics. I was taught economics since the 1970s and, so much so that, as the Honourable Member for St. James North said, all the economists in Barbados just talk and none of them were able to come up Yes, I was in Owen Arthur's time so we knew the old economics and we were able to practise the modern economics. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Members do not understand that in the old economics we were taught that Governments build capital projects but do not keep them; what they do is that they build them and they excite the private sector, and as soon as the private sector shows an interest, they offload them and then use the money, especially in hard economic times, to go and build another capital project. That is exactly what we do in the Democratic Labour Party; old economics. There are now these fly-by-night economists who do not understand economics, even though I am convinced that some of them do not even know what a diminishing return is. They expect us to continue doing the same old thing all the time, but we are not going to do that. That is why in Housing we have come up with some very innovative ways, and that is why while they were criticising me I was completing houses and ensuring that I was also creating the right impetus so that we would not have diminishing returns in housing and that, at least, we would have been able to help the Minister of Finance divert funds to the productive sectors. The Minister of Finance will tell you that the only thing he is paying for us at the present moment are the loans. Salaries we are paying, the other expenditure we are paying, but the Honourable Member for St. George North was getting wages paid, bills paid, getting overdraft, getting loans and everything, and does not have

the record to show for it. Do you hear what I tell you? Yet still, the Honourable Member and his friends are able to get the people to call into the call-in programme and give the impression that the Minister of Housing is sitting down doing nothing. The Honourable Member for St. James North is saying that is true but the truth is I have to ask myself, "What manner of man would know a man is doing nothing and would send him over a thousand letters for action? What manner of man?" MR. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Mr. E.G. HINKSON: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is misleading the House. Yes, I might have written him numerous letters and not one has been acted on. No house has been repaired for any old person, no roads repaired, no street lights repaired, nothing whatsoever. An absolute waste of time. MR. SPEAKER: No Point of Order found.

Hon. D.ST.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, now that the Honourable Member has said that, I hope he heard what he said. When I see the letters now, I must ask myself whether to take action or not, because whenever you are dealing with an ungrateful person, you cannot take action because they will say you are not taking action. MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have four minutes in which to conclude.

Hon. D.ST.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, what we have here is a situation where we are not increasing the revenue in this country as fast as we are increasing the expenditure, and as a Government we must ask ourselves a very serious question: Can we continue on the same route which we have been on or do we have to look at it? As I said, Sir, the diminishing returns can be seen in more than one aspect, and that is that the diminishing returns in our present taxation system are showing themselves -- you would know what "diminishing" is -- in a very negative way, and we need to look at it. If the expenditure is increasing faster than the revenue, then it means that we might have maxed the system in the revenue systems which we have been using, and we have to look at those revenue Heads which have the capacity to take the effect of an increase without reflecting negatively on the masses of people in Barbados. We also have to look to see if it is not better for us to bring in the gross aspect of the revenue and then let Trump follow us; because it was the Democratic Labour Party when VAT was introduced that offered the reverse tax credit. The reverse tax credit is not only for the wages aspect but it will be for all those who have been impacted by the imposition of VAT and so on, and who will not benefit if you have to make a shift in your taxation system. We also have to recognise, as I have recognised at Housing, that the diminishing return on building houses will be very great when it relates to the cash-flow; and if we are to allow the Minister of Finance to have more elbow room, it would be better for us to give housing solutions in

terms of lots rather than taking the scarce resources and trying to give a complete solution. You can better use your resources to get more solutions and not have the same impact on the Ministry of Finance. Mr. Speaker, we are not here to deprive the economy; we are here to help the economy, and we have demonstrated that by how we have been able to manage the Ministry of Housing, Lands and Rural Development. At this point I not only want to thank my constituents because it is not me but it is because of the people of St. Lucy that I have been able to achieve that, as well as the officers working within the Ministry and, most of all, the Right Honourable Freundel Jerome Stuart, Member of Parliament for St. Michael South -- you know in here you do not call names -- who has empowered me to have the opportunity to be able to deliver these deliverables to the people of Barbados. I want to thank the people of St. Lucy, I want to thank the Prime Minister, I want to thank the Cabinet, and I want to thank the people out there who, when people in here do not understand what I am saying, are able to understand and explain to me whenever I get to the bottom of the stairs. Sir, we are also looking.... MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I thought you had finished. Your time has expired. You have a minute to wind up.

Hon. D.St.E. KELLMAN: We are also looking to empower the people in the rural areas by using the land and the sea, because we have two golden opportunities and we have to use the land and the sea to make sure that, for the guys on the block and those small farmers who are not using the land, we take the land, compensate them and give them to the masses of people to work. Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your time and I want to tell the people in Barbados that there is hope with the Democratic Labour Party, but under the Barbados Labour Party they will march you to Hell.

Thank you.

SUSPENSION

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 11:15 this morning for a coffee break.

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

The question that the House do now suspend until 11.15 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Members, this Sitting is resumed. When the suspension was taken, we were on Order No. 20, and with that we shall continue.

ORDER No. 20 (RESUMED)

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, the Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central.

Hon. S. A. LASHLEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this Appropriation Bill before the House and in doing so I would like first of all to thank the constituents of Christ Church West Central who continued to repose confidence in me as their parliamentary representative. I would also like, Mr. Speaker, to thank the hardworking staff of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for continuing to provide yeomen service in relation to the mandate given to the Ministry as part of the overall policy framework of the Government of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, this debate so far has been focussed essentially on the performance of the Barbados economy and I think rightfully so. I have heard, Mr. Speaker, in this debate, particularly in the contributions from some of the Members of the Opposition, a picture which cast a framework of gloom and doom, a picture that places Barbados within the context of an economy that there is no hope and that the various performance indicators of the economy do not in any way inspire the confidence of the people of Barbados. While certainly indicating to not only this House that I believe that Barbados faces some economic challenges that require a focus and astute response, I want to say that these challenges, Mr. Speaker, are challenges that not only have we as a people confronted in the past but challenges that we certainly are capable of confronting and solving even now. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that we have to be careful as a country, certainly as Members of Parliament, to forget the need to inspire hope in our country. Even as we look at the issues that confront us we must not in doing so forget that there are so many aspects of our development that have been positive and that certainly have been inspiring to us as a country. We owe it in my view, Mr. Speaker, even as we make statements in relation to what we consider to be areas of concern to give the people, especially our young people, hope and remind them that Government is not only about who is in this place but that Government is about the people of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard the Honourable Member for St. George South continued the argument about the economy, that the Democratic Labour Party has doubled debt and in a sense he continued the dialogue and discourse which he has heard in the House. The Honourable Member said that we have to rescue the country and that we have a foreign reserves problem. Mr. Speaker, no one is denying that Barbados has a foreign reserves challenge. In fact, this challenge has confronted several administrations in the past. We just have to look at the various reports not only of the Central Bank of Barbados but also the International Monetary Fund Reports which would have repeatedly

warned respective governments of the need to restructure the Barbados economy. The statistics are there but I do not think that this debate warrants an exposé in statistics. In fact, I do not think that the people of Barbados want to listen to a debate that continues to rehash statistics. I think they know that the economy of Barbados is going through some challenges and what they wish to hear certainly from us as the leaders of Government and Opposition is an informed discourse on how we are going to position Barbados for the kind of restructuring that is needed.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition in her contribution made the point that you cannot keep this society together unless it is safe. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition talked about law and order and about the protection of the public health and so on. All of these issues, Mr. Speaker, are real and in fact are issues that we deal with on a day-to-day basis. We still expend a huge proportion of our national budget on our social safety net. Within the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, for example, we have continued a number of important programmes that have kept our young people safe. We have, for example, the Barbados Youth Service Programme. Mr. Speaker, because it is now part of the current news of the day, I want to congratulate the young Barbados Youth Service trainee Dre Browne, 17 years old who recently would have utilised his skills, which would have been harnessed within the Barbados Youth Service, to rescue a visitor by performing CPR on the beach at Browne's Beach only recently. This young man is one of the beneficiaries of a programme in the Barbados Youth Service in which we train thousands of young people on an annual basis. This is a programme which certainly has been continued between administrations. We in these Estimates, Mr. Speaker, have placed again at the disposal of the Government millions of dollars to continue this programme. In fact, we started the residential phase of the programme last year after a hiatus because of the unavailability of the facility in St. Lucy and I am proud to say that in these Estimates we have allocated funding in the capital account to start the construction of a home for the Barbados Youth Service at Paragon to ensure that they can continue and sustain the residential phase of that programme, and that is a positive, Mr. Speaker.

We are doing quite a bit in the Youth Division through programmes such as Endless Possibilities and the Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme that continues to train hundreds of young people in entrepreneurship. In relation to the wider youth development agenda we have confronted the issue of various matters pertaining to violence in our communities, we have gone into the city districts, we have used sports as an interventionist programme in many ways and we have gone on 'the block' through the block draughts programme and we have trained young people. In fact, working collaboratively with the Disaster Emergency Relief Organisation we have trained young people 'on the

block' as first responders to disasters and so on. Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on but the point is that we have started the process to address the issue which is confronting the Barbados economy in relation to the need to reposition our economy and restructure it but we have not done so in a way that has removed our emphasis on those critical social programmes that benefit our young people in particular, that benefit our cultural artistes, that benefit all of those persons who utilise the services within the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, the Archive Department and the National Library Service that continues to protect the literacy of our country by making available to our young people and our adults access to reading material.

Mr. Speaker, in all of this we have recognised that there is a need to restructure and re-purpose the Barbados economy and we have begun the work that is required in that regard. Mr. Speaker, as I speak, the Government would have articulated a strategy of focusing on our statutory corporations, that has been a big issue in relation to the quantum of transfers to statutory corporations that has dogged respective Administrations. We have mentioned it in these Estimates as being a challenge or an issue but we have started the process of addressing this particular concern. In fact, in my Ministry as I speak we have started the process of creating a merger under the National Sports Council of the Gymnasium and the Kensington Oval Management all within under the umbrella of the National Sports Council. We believe that is an avenue to creating the kinds of efficiencies that Central Bank of Barbados would have mentioned in its last report, stressing that there was need to create greater efficiencies within the public service, Mr. Speaker, unless we can have greater efficiencies within the public service much of the gains that we would have been able to amass would not be as effective as they ought to be. Mr. Speaker, our mission within the context of the National Petroleum Corporation, KOME and Gymnasium... We have already started an integration approach now that we have the Gymnasium under repairs to integrate what is happening within what is happening within the Gymnasium and KOME and by extension working along with the National Sports Council.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak to a number of things that are critical to the restructuring of the Barbados economy. Mr. Speaker, we started the restructuring process because we recognised that our economy needs to be further diversified. In that respect this Government would have put on the Statute books the Cultural Industries Development Act and we have done quite a bit of work in that regard. We have established the Cultural Industries Development Authority and I have to say that it is doing a tremendous job already in relation to the work that is required to focus our cultural industries and to position it towards being a significant player in terms of the economic development of Barbados. Indeed, they have also been looking at a number of effective business modelling for the

cultural and creative enterprises. Of course, we still have to look at how we could populate the Cultural Industry Development Fund but even in the absence of that we have seen the Cultural Industries Development Authority already creating the kind of focus that is necessary to develop the kind of market strategies to showcase and to give the kind of impetus to our local artistes. They have done so through the combination of pitched programmes such as the Cultural Industries Symposium. They have also embarked in the Cultural Industries Consultation Series and of course they have done some industry research visits in the marketplace towards the enhancement of the export capacity of the cultural entrepreneurs in Barbados. We have also embarked on a programme with the assistance of the European Union to provide assistance to the fashion and visual art sectors as key engines for potential growth for the Barbadian economy.

Mr. Speaker, that suggests that this Government is interested and is serious and have started the ball going in relation to ensuring that the cultural industries sector can be a force to be reckoned with in terms of repositioning the economy.

Mr. Speaker, I go further because we have lamented the whole idea of how we could strengthen our infrastructure in Barbados. Mr. Speaker, I must say that if you look at the International Monetary Fund Reports, certainly the Reports of the Central Bank of Barbados, I recall that the Honourable Member for St. George South lamented the whole question of foreign reserves and our economic activity. Mr. Speaker, you just have to look at the International Monetary Fund 2016 Article IV Consultation. They said that Barbados was moving forward in terms of the growth that had been going. I think it was 0.8 per cent growth but they recognised that the net inflows in capital and financial accounts fell driven by amortisation which of course is the debt payment.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs would have gone through all of the figures to show that his issue of meeting your debt obligation has been a problem for respective Governments. Therefore we have to get off the fence on this, we have to recognise that these are deep structural issues. We have determined that we will address and start to look at these structural issues in a manner that does not create mayhem and panic in the Barbados society. Mr. Speaker, I have always contended, even as I spoke before in relation to the claim and the clamour by the Barbados Labour Party Government, of course led at the time by the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, boasting of an average growth rate of 3.5 per cent every year. They were doing that while of course the International Monetary Fund reports were saying that they had to restructure the economy, do not be comfortable with growth rates of 3.5 per cent and relying on certain foreign direct inflows in a situation where the economy is not

resilient. Therefore it has always been the need to restructure the economy.

Mr. Speaker, we have boasted of 3.5 per cent average growth much to the consternation and neglect of key aspects of our infrastructure. Our water infrastructure was neglected, that is why we now have to face millions of dollars to have it corrected; our sporting infrastructure was neglected, that is why we do not have a functional National Stadium; we neglected to upgrade the Gymnasium for over a 20-yr period. Now, for example, I can say that even in difficult economic times and with the assistance of the People's Republic of China a grant of approximately BDS\$19 million the Gymnasium is under renovation and based on projections should be finished hopefully in time for CARIFESTA this year.

Mr. Speaker, the Gymnasium Renovation Project is not simply a Gymnasium Restoration Project, that Gymnasium is now being outfitted with a brand new international quality floor that will allow us to attract international sporting activities, including volleyball, netball, and basketball. These are all necessary that will create the impetus that will fuel further growth in our tourism sector, under the ambit of our sports tourism.

Mr. Speaker, this is key, because you cannot talk about restructuring an economy unless you talk about how you are going to develop new areas of growth by which we can attract foreign direct inflows. Mr. Speaker, there is no mystery about it, the fact is that Barbados needs to earn its keep and therefore we have been systematically planting the seed upon which we can invent and restructure the Barbados economy.

Mr. Speaker, we speak of how we are going to grow our heritage sector, about how we are going to grow our artistic sector, yet we had a situation where the Queen's Park buildings which house the Daphne Hackett Theater that facility was remodeled and reopened in 1981, a key facility for the development of our cultural sector. In fact had we paid attention to that, that facility would have been used as an engine by which we can attract foreign investment and foreign inflows of capital by means of the cultural industries that we are talking about, the things that the Barbados Labour Party has not imagined. They talked about a Cultural Industries Bill but never brought it to Parliament, so we are bringing it. I am happy to say to the House that even in difficult economic times, we have started the restoration of the Queen's Park Building and of the course the Daphne Joseph-Hackett Theatre to the tune of approximately \$6 million. We are hoping that facility can also be completed in time for CARIFESTA as well. Mr. Speaker, the National Sports Council (NSC) would have been in place for quite a number of years. They have to look after about 106 playing fields, 71 pavilions, 74 hard courts and the National Stadium and Netball Stadium, but

what has happened over the years? We are talking about our dream of transforming the sports in Barbados into a new economic frontier for development, which other economies are doing. They are utilising sports and the creative sector as emerging industries to reposition their economies and to restructure their economies. Mr. Speaker, it really is short of a disgrace that even when we were boasting of tremendous growth in the economy, we were also seeing significant neglect in our sporting infrastructure and even in our sporting programme. What we have had to do in these difficult times is to refocus the NSC in a way that will allow for us to reposition our sporting sector to be one of the avenues for creating economic activity.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to say that we have put in place a number of key private sector-public sector partnerships and initiatives, and those will be rolled out aggressively in the months ahead. We have started it in relation to sharing the burden of the upkeep of our facilities with the private sector, and I have to congratulate and thank the private sector partners for coming on board -- those who have come on board already -- in joining with the NSC in maintaining our facilities. I know that there are several Members of Parliament who complain to me about certain aspects of the care of the facilities in their areas. While we are looking at that within the context of our resources, we believe that a proactive way of dealing with that is to have private-public sector partnership community programmes which will help us in the maintenance of our facilities. We did the Holders Hill hard courts, for example, with the assistance of the Insurance Corporation of Barbados Limited (ICBL). MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have five minutes.

Hon. S.A. LASHLEY: I will have opportunity to come back in this Debate because there is so much to share. We have done the Rice's Pavilion along with the help of the Rubis gas station, and of course the Silver Hill hard courts with the assistance of Emera, and they will continue to partner with us in renovating several other facilities. I want to give the Member for St. John the assurance, as the Minister of Housing has, that we will look at the Sussex arrangement. My information is that the NSC is looking at that and gathering the information to allow for us to proceed towards the acquisition, so that this facility can be placed at the disposal of the constituents of St. John. Mr. Speaker, I also want to spend some time on CARIFESTA, because it is one of the things we see as a critical aspect of expansion of our cultural industries agenda and certainly our festival agenda. We have moved Crop Over from a festival where it had a number of events into perhaps being the largest festival there is in this part of the world. Certainly, we have grown that festival and we have had the very conservative estimates of Crop Over generating on or about US\$50 million every year in Barbados, and that has created an avenue for entrepreneurs to make money and so on. We have focused our attention on CARIFESTA. I

would have announced that Barbados will be hosting CARIFESTA from August 17 to 27, and we have allocated a budget of just about \$6 million for that. I have heard quite a bit of discussion in relation to whether we can afford to host CARIFESTA for \$6 million. In fact, Mr. Speaker, CARIFESTA as a mature Caribbean Festival of Arts is more than just a festival where countries in the Caribbean come to celebrate what they have to offer. Since, of course, this festival would have been rearranged and restructured through a number of studies commissioned by the CARICOM Secretariat, this festival is positioned to offer the region an avenue for the development and the enhancement of its cultural industries sector generally. Indeed, Barbados has taken the lead by ensuring that we will host a festival which will provide the impetus for the acceleration of the cultural industries in Barbados and the Caribbean. Mr. Speaker, there are a number of programme elements which will be used in this regard, and I want to say that there is going to be a significant amount of benefit for Barbados in relation to the hosting of CARIFESTA. In fact, we estimate that just over 3 000 artistes will be coming to Barbados, and that does not include the visitors who will come. Certainly, our hotels will benefit from that in terms of rooms, the provision of food, and taxis; and of course our artistes themselves will have the avenue to exhibit their cultural goods and services. Mr. Speaker, we are also going to introduce an innovative buyers' shopping mall for the first time in the history of CARIFESTA, in which we will be exposing to a number of international buyers from across Europe, North America and Central America, where they can identify cultural product for export. We expect that CARIFESTA will boost our export capacity in relation to the very rich array of cultural goods and products which the Caribbean has to offer the world. Mr. Speaker, we have seen a number of opportunities missed in relation to access to the European Partnership Agreement and the European market, and we intend to utilise our cultural industries to propel growth and to create inflows of foreign exchange through the cultural industries. CARIFESTA will be used for that. So far, Mr. Speaker, about 15 countries have already indicated their confirmation for attendance at CARIFESTA. We have also had interest from outside of the region as well, including Cuba, Brazil and certainly the United States and Canada. The Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) has accepted the task to be host country broadcaster, and we have already put in place a secretariat which has been in place since February, and it is housed downstairs from the Ministry of Culture at Sky Mall. We have received more than 50 applications for what we call fringe events. These are events outside of the calendar of CARIFESTA which will be hosted across the island. MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please wind up. Your time has expired.

Hon. S.A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, in fact the logo and jingle competitions have been concluded and of course

they are already in use and the website is live. In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I sought to give just a synoptical position in relation to what we should be proud of; that certainly in relation to what has been happening in culture, sports and youth development, we have an obligation even as we extrapolate the challenges of an economic nature which we face. Mr. Speaker, we have an obligation to provide the kind of hope which these initiatives provide for the young people of Barbados. MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I thank you.

Hon. S.A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I am satisfied that our programmes are moving in that direction and certainly I have no hesitation but to commend this particular Bill to the House.

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

Right Honourable O. S. ARTHUR: I thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am very much conscious of the fact that this Parliament is going to be dissolved in early March next year and that since the Estimates of Expenditure have to be approved before the end of the financial year this would most likely be the last occasion on which I will be speaking in an Estimates debate in this Parliament.

Sir, I begin my brief presentation couch in that way if only to provide context of what I have to say. I would have spent the last 36 years of my life in one capacity or another beginning as a Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, a Member of the Board of the Central Bank of Barbados when it was at the University, as a Shadow Minister to Finance and as the Minister of Finance. I would have spent 36 years of my life helping to build a Barbados economy and at the outset of this presentation just let me say that I have no vested interest in seeing the collapse of an economy that I have spent more than half of my life helping to build so that my comments on what is before us, Mr. Speaker, must take its direction from that particular ambition.

Having said that, Sir, I need also to say that in my 33 years in this Parliament I believe that this is the most important debate on the Barbados economy and that this House has a duty to recognise the significance of what it has to deal with and to not shirk from its responsibility for making sure that this economy continues to be a viable economy. Sir, I say that this is perhaps the most important economic debate in which I would be a party in my long political career because of the enormity of what faces this country.

Let us not make light of the downgrades of Barbados. Sir, the downgrades have implications not only for Government being able to borrow but also if this

country is really going to become a major international business centre where entities are going to have to do work and borrow on the international capital market then a rating of CCC would pre-empt many international business entities that have to function on the international capital market from ever being based in Barbados it is a threat.

As we debate what is before us, Sir, and it is a very serious matter, we are on the precipice. I believe this House needs to be clear as to what the mission is. When you set out to fight a battle the mission must be clear. The mission, Sir, is that this country is in danger of having a Government that has run out of financial options and is therefore likely to become insolvent and we have to change that.

We also have a situation, Mr. Speaker, where this country has seen its foreign exchange reserves plunged from \$1.5 billion to \$600 odd million, the trajectory is downward at a rapid rate and we have to change that. This country also, Mr. Speaker, is in danger of not having a viable economy. We cannot build a society with the standard of living that we want and an economy that is dependent on tourism and we have to change that but there is a forth aspect to the mission, Sir. Barbados must always be a society that stands for something positive and progressive in the eyes of the people of the world. We must be a society that cares. Sir, it cannot fall to this Parliament to be unmindful of the fact that there are countries that have, not found themselves in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights but were in the wilderness for 40 years and are now making "mock-sport" of this country. Guyana is not any longer accepting Barbadian currency and yesterday in Jamaica's Observer Barbados was described by the Jamaican Observer, belonging to a country that was in the wilderness for 40 years, as a fallen angel. In what is going to be my last speech of this kind to this Parliament I beg this Parliament to understand its obligations and it is not just to deal with the economy but to answer the question: What kind of society we must have? We must be a society that stands for something and a society that cares.

Sir, I want in this brief presentation to touch on a number of matters that I believe would enable us to fulfil the mission of which I spoke. I want to address issues of insolvency, address issues of an external position that is too weak, address issues of how we build a viable economy but also address issues of a Barbados that stands for something.

I believe, Sir, I start where there seems to be a consensus in this House. There is now appearing to be a consensus that the most important thing that can be done immediately is to address the debt situation. Both the Minister of Finance and the Shadow Minister of Finance have said that this is on the top of the agenda but having said that, Sir, I must also say that the presentation of the two persons who spoke was backward looking although

that is important. What is the immediate situation that would face this country if we do not only just look back but we look just immediately beyond the horizon? The fact is, Sir, that if we were to look at the maturity of Barbados debt stock, over the course of the next few years and over the life of the next Administration, and I will not be here, this country will have to redeem \$2 billion in debentures and find a way of rolling over \$1.3 billion in Treasury Bills over a period, I think, of between three and four years. Sir, that is a task that is of such massive undertaking that, of course, the sooner you fix the credit rating and get people willing to take back up the debt of the Government of Barbados the better. Sir, it is a massive undertaking to be able to address a \$3 billion debt refinancing situation in a short period of time therefore, I begin this presentation about what we have to do is by saying that a debt refinancing obligation of that order or magnitude cannot be accomplished without the help of the international financial community. There are countries like Guyana that had debt situations that were heavy and they benefitted from the HIPC Initiative under the Paris Club, the international community helped to make sure that dealing with the debt refinancing was not regarded as the route of a pariah nation unilaterally trying to offend its obligation to its creditors. Equally, all the Caribbean countries now that have engaged in debt refinancing or debt exchanges are doing so under the auspices of International Monetary Fund (IMF) programmes and Barbados is not going to be able to deal with the \$3.3 billion debt crisis that looms and that Both Sides says they want to deal with unless Barbados deals with it, not unilaterally but under the auspices of the credibility attached to it by multilateral institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (International Monetary Fund (IMF)). Sir, if these are powerful reasons for us to engage with the International Monetary Fund, we are not going to get over the matter which Both Sides of the House is most important such as the International Monetary Fund. I say this is a powerful reason for us to engage with the International Monetary Fund. We are not going to get over the matter which both sides of the House say is the most important unless it is under some institutional arrangement that gives credibility to the creditors of Barbados that the Government of Barbados is not acting unilaterally in the matter. I will come back later, Sir, to what I imagine should be this country's relationship to the international community and the International Monetary Fund.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that there is an emerging consensus now that privatisation has to be part of the solution. In fact, I have said already that this country would have an immoral intellectual environment if the two institutions in this country, both of which have practised privatisation, now want the people of Barbados to believe that there is something wrong with privatisation. May I for the record say, Mr. Speaker, that as Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs I presided over the privatisation of two institutions owned by the Government of Barbados.

When I became the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs a bank owned by the Government of Barbados was making losses, it could not underwrite large loans and it had a contaminated portfolio. The Government that I led decided that we were going to restructure the balance sheet of the bank. We did so by converting Government deposits in the bank into equity, we refinanced the sugar industry debt, we reviewed the portfolio of the bank and we wrote off the bad debt provision of the major creditors who had non-performing loans and then we privatised the bank. That bank that we privatised we ended up owning 20 per cent of the shares and that 20 per cent that we ended up owning was worth more than the value of the bank when we owned 100 per cent and the bank under privatisation doubled its employment.

Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed when I hear the Barbados Workers' Union coming out against privatisation because I seem to recall that as Prime Minister of Barbados I met with the Barbados Workers' Union and told them that the Transport Board has to focus on its core business and that it should not be running a mechanical workshop and that I was going to support them in privatising the mechanical workshop, give them \$2 million to let the workers own the mechanical workshop and have the Head of the Barbados Workers' Union as the Chairman of UCAL and I now am hearing that we cannot touch the Transport Board.

Sir, entities in this country that have to be privatised would be here. Privatisation simply mean that those things that can be in the private sector and can function in the private sector, let them function in the private sector and where we can use them to reduce Government transfers let us do so. All I am saying to the House is that if we have to privatise, two conditions will attach where I am concerned, that we use the proceeds to help work down the debt, that I say is going to reach \$3 billion in a few years, and that we use privatisation as a means of bringing people into the ownership of entities in this country, that let there be shareholder options so that people go to work in this country not just to earn a wage but also in the expectation to be able to earn a dividend. Mr. Speaker, I cannot think of anything that could yield to higher productivity in this country than people going to work in the expectation that their efforts will help them to participate in a dividend.

Mr. Speaker, I was very disappointed when I heard the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs saying that we cannot cut some of the transfers to statutory boards, that they are a holy grail. I believe Sir, that part of this approach to dealing with Barbados is for us to rationalise the process by which we provide services to our people. We have been ... in this country a long list of entitlements in the belief that there is some progressive intent served by telling everybody no matter their circumstances that they could have access to these services. When things are scarce, it is

our responsibility to ensure that the vulnerable and the weak have access to the services that we have difficulty in providing.

I believe, Sir, in the Aristotle principle of social justice, that as between equals equality, that as between unequals proportionality. This society followed that principle in relation to myself and my father and mother. My father and mother were not able to send me to university and this country gave me the benefit of a university education but I do not believe that it is now for me to tell this country that it must send my children to university education. As between equals, equality but as between unequals proportionality, and there are ways in which we can deal with this.

I believe that access to State services in health and education must be preserved for those at the bottom who cannot afford to pay but for those above the income threshold at which income tax is paid, and I tried to speak to this in the last election, let us have something called fiscal incentives for social transformation. As Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, and I am not now here being wise after the fact, I anticipated this day would come and in the mid-1990s I introduced something called a Registered Education Saving Plan that was intended to enable families to start saving for their children's tertiary education. Mr. Speaker, I made it too narrow, I only allowed the interest of withholding tax to be waived but I believe that we should now re-institute that and tell Barbadians who are above the threshold at which income tax is paid that they should save for their children's education too, and that allows us to give them a tax credit for so doing. I also believe that in the area of health that we should have a situation where if people are not going to be able to have access to State-funded healthcare that we give them a healthcare allowance that would enable them to offset any cost of health insurance or any cost of having to buy their healthcare on the private market. Sir, these things can enable us to allow the Government to come out of the some of the provision of social services and allow people to be empowered to be able to take more responsibility for their actions.

There must also be the rationalisation of State enterprises in this country. Barbados has 63 State enterprises and it is not possible for us in an economy under transition to be able to find the resources to pay for all, so not only must there be privatisation but there must be rationalisation of these that we have. Sir, I am going to speak later just briefly as to how best we can put financing partnerships in place to enable us, if there has to be loss of jobs through rationalisation of State enterprises, to be able to mitigate the pain that could come from increased unemployment.

Mr. Speaker, I also feel that part of the important restructuring that must take place and must take place now is that we must fix the VAT. I was the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs who introduced a Value Added Tax in Barbados. It was to replace indirect taxes some of which had higher rates of tax than the VAT and 44 fees. The purpose and the modality by which it was to be accomplished is that the VAT had to have a lower rate but a broad base. Now, when the Barbados Value Added Tax was introduced there were studies done that indicated it was to be a tax on consumption. It is a measure called the C-Efficiency Rate that determines whether the taxes fall in on consumption or not. In the early days of the VAT the VAT was falling on consumption but over a period of time, and I plead in part guilty too, every effort had been made to. Every effort has been made to reduce the base of the VAT by having our VAT convoluted with a larger number of zero-rated and exempt items than is standard in a VAT, therefore, the base has been narrowed. Mr. Speaker, the most recent study by the International Monetary Fund that I have seen indicates that while in the initial stages the VAT was covering 100 per cent of the consumption, it is only now covering 70 per cent, so that it has to be that at some stage the VAT has to be revisited in relation to its initial intent, drop the rate from 17.5 per cent to let us say, 16 per cent, remove most of the exemptions and zero rates that you do not normally have in a standard VAT, let the Reverse Tax Credit be the continual increase as the means by which we shield the VAT from having too big a burden on the poor.

Mr. Speaker, there is an aspect of it that has to be dealt with. If you had asked me what was on my mind when I was Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs and introduced a VAT in 1997, I introduced it in a climate of controversy. I was conscious then that I had a burden of responsibility to prove to the country quickly that the VAT could profit and benefit significant sections of the Barbadian society. Honourable Members could remember the hysteria that was created about it. We made a determination that we wanted to structure the VAT such that the leading sectors of the Barbados economy would benefit immediately from its introduction. How that was achieved? It was achieved by us causing there to be a difference between the tax on inputs 15 per cent and the VAT on outputs 7.5 per cent. If the tourism sector pays a higher tax on its inputs which it can claim back against the tax than it charges on its outputs then it must get a refund. By that means immediately on the introduction of a VAT in Barbados \$7 million was pumped back into the tourism sector, although they did not talk about it but they got \$7 million in refunds immediately because of the differential between the input tax and the output tax.

Mr. Speaker, this Government, however, has now put itself in a difficult situation by widening that differential between the input tax on tourism and the output

tax. The input tax is now 17 per cent while the output tax is 7.5 and so there is a 10 percentage point differential that is causing this massive buildup in refunds that you cannot pay back. All I am telling the Government is that they should accept the advice and even if the tourism people may not be please, but that you have to remove such a wide differential and standardise the rate between the two over a period of time. The intention of having to plunge that amount of money back into the sector can be accomplished by means other than perverting the purposes of a VAT.

Mr. Speaker, having said so I really want to come to the main point that I want to make today which has to deal with the exchange rate. I also want to say that if we are going to carry out a programme of rationalising State-owned enterprises, there has to be financial partnership built between the Government, the financial institutions, private sector in general to ease any burden of dislocation. There is excess liquidity in the financial system and if as a result of having to rationalise the number of State-owned enterprises and people have to go home, let us agree that the burden on them must be eased by our putting in place an arrangement for them to be able to find jobs for themselves outside the public sector as their own new entrepreneurs.

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

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, when the Minister comes back with the Budget I will have a chance to speak to that, but I want to speak to the exchange rate. Mr. Speaker, the debate devaluation in this country has been a false debate. Our currency is pegged to that of the United States of America dollar which is free to move up and down. When the United States of America dollar moves down against other currencies the Barbados dollar devalues against other currencies. What we need, Sir, is to find a way to having a stable currency against the range of currencies with which we do business with respect to goods, services and capital flows. This country, Sir, is now a country that its main relationship in respect of its services, tourism, is with the United Kingdom. In respect of international businesses it is with Canada. We have a lot of business relationships with Europe, but our currency is pegged to the United States of America dollar that is not going down in value but is going up in value and is making Barbadian exports more expensive, not because we want them to be more expensive but because of how our currency is pegged.

Mr. Speaker, our currency is also making it more expensive for investors coming largely from the United Kingdom and Germany to be able to make investments in Barbados. Mr. Speaker, some time back when John Galbraith became the Ambassador to India, John Steinbeck warned him of the allures of diplomatic service. He said

some men grow to love their chains and with time come to regard them as wings. Before we were pegged to the United States of America dollar we were pegged to the British Pound and that was changed. The United States of America dollar is not only increasing in value against all other currencies but if President Trump's economic policies are given a chance to work and he has massive deregulations and massive cuts in taxes, the currency of the United States of America is going to become stronger and stronger against all other currencies at a time when Europe is at large in relation to its exchange issues, China is beginning to have difficulties, so that this country must begin to have a debate on what should be an appropriate exchange rate policy that coincides with our contemporary goods, services and foreign capital flows in the context of what is likely to happen to the currency against which we are pegged, taking into account all of the other currencies of countries with which we do business.

Mr. Speaker, exchange rates can be a matter that is discussed. Sir, the Central Bank in 2003 put this on its own agenda when it asked what its options were, it came up then with the conclusion that 'de-dollarisation' is the second best option for small open economies. I am not sure that we have the reserves now for 'de-dollarisation' but I believe that as part of the discussion of where we are and where we have to go has to be can we not also look to peg our currency not to a dollar that is appreciating at a time when our reserves are falling but can we not have a basket of currencies that reflect the weight of respective countries in our trade in relation to goods, services and capital flows and for a while stabilise the Barbados dollar because it is not stabilised now, it is appreciating as President Trump and the American people cause their dollar to rise in value against all other countries in the world, thus making it difficult for us to sell our exports and making it difficult for people to invest in this country.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please wind up.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, I will wind up, Sir.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to move a Motion that the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, given that this may well be his last Estimates speech and given the subject matter the Honourable Member is addressing which is of utmost importance to the country, that the Honourable Member be given an additional 30 minutes or however long that the Honourable Member may want within that time to finish.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I do not understand the propriety of the Motion. Yes, Right Honourable Member.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: The Minister of Finance has pledged to me that he is coming here soon with the Budget so that I can talk some more, so I will hold him to that promise. Let me just say something, Sir, and I want to finish on this point. I am the only person in this Parliament who cannot say that Barbados should not have a relationship with the International Monetary Fund. In 1981, I wrote the Cabinet Paper for Tom Adams' Cabinet that took Barbados to the Fund; I did. Recently I spent a weekend with the officials of the Government of Grenada helping them to put together their package of policy measures to go to the Fund. We have had relationships with the Fund in the past. The Fund has changed its way of doing things. I am not saying a relationship with the Fund is going to be easy, but when I hear about all the things that we need to do, I say to Parliament that Barbados cannot turn its back on having its debt restructured under a Fund programme. It cannot turn its back under many of these things that need credibility other than under a Fund programme. It cannot turn its back under the \$750 million that it can borrow from the Fund at one per cent. If the House is not aware, there are things called policy-based loans for which Barbados can be eligible from the Inter-American Development Bank and Caribbean Development Bank and which can help us to restructure when we do not have money, and that can only be accessed if the country has a programme in place with the International Monetary Fund. Sir, it is not going to be easy. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy can come in the morning. I am obliged to you for the opportunity to avail myself of these remarks.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member for Christ Church South.

SUSPENSION

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

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

The question that the Sitting do now suspend until 1.45 p.m. for lunch was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and MR. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed. When the Suspension was taken we were on Order No. 20 and to that we shall revert. The Honourable Member for St. Michael Central.

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. Let me say at the outset that I stand and of course,

I support the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2017/2018 as was presented.

Let me start where the last speaker, the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter started. He cited a publication - I believe it originated in the northern part of the Caribbean - that referred to this wonderful country of ours, Barbados, as a fallen angel. I am not surprised at the language that emanated from wherever it was wherever it was emanated. That is the kind of pejorative and unpatriotic and deprecating language that has found its way into the political lexicon of the Barbados Labour Party (BLP). It is just an echo of what they hear coming from within certain corridors in this country of ours but I would want to say, Mr. Speaker, from the outset that the 270 000 proud Bajans that live in this country would not view this country as any fallen angel. The thousands upon thousands of people in our diaspora spread across the length and breadth of this planet, I do not think that if you quiz them, they would admit to anyone that Barbados is a fallen angel. The hundreds of scholarship winners every year, through the Ministry of Education, do not see Barbados as any fallen angel. The thousands of workers who find themselves on worksites all across Barbados earning a living for themselves do not see it as any fallen angel. The thousands of hotel workers who are now finding employment and are gainfully employed in the hotels across Barbados servicing the tourists that come to our island do not see this country as any fallen angel. Those people in Barbados who do not have to garbage dumps rummaging through garbage for food everyday do not see Barbados as any fallen angel and the thousands of people who turn up on all of our supermarkets and find the selves laden with all of kinds of goods at their disposal do not see Barbados as any fallen angel, Mr. Speaker. We are proud of this country and we hold it up for what it is worth.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say at the outset what must be reinforced to the average Barbadians is the fact that despite the challenges, you know macro-economic situation and the fiscal environment in which we now find ourselves, the pranks on which our society, this society are planted, undergirded are secured and well-fortified as far as we are concerned and despite the turbulence of our current storm, there are fail safe devices and mechanisms in place to ensure that this society of ours is insulated to a large extent, Mr. Speaker, and capable of riding out whatever circumstances we now find ourselves under. I say this, Mr. Speaker, because some of the economic indicators are not where we want them to be, we have to admit that. Most of the social service offerings are certainly reaching the persons for which they were intended and touching the lives of most of our people that require them during this period of readjustment.

Mr. Speaker, while we are fixing the economic fundamentals my Ministry, the Ministry of Social Care,

have that special responsibility to the people of Barbados as the foremost agency for social protection to roll out programmes which have a broad enough cover to first of all, strengthen our weak family units because we in Barbados have very weak family units. We are about reinforcing the fragile and exposed communities across Barbados. We intend to re-energise and re-equip our social care delivery, institutions and at the same time introduce programmes that will touch and positively change the lives of those captured in the social safety net. That is our mission. We can spend all day and all night talking about the macro-economic matters. We can discuss them in as much esoteric manner as we care. We can talk about fiscal deficits, whether they are 15, 10, 8 or 5 per cent. We can talk about it all night and all day. We can talk about the foreign reserves being 20, 15, 10 or 8 weeks cover. We can talk about downgrades whether we have 15, 12 or 10, how many we had under the Barbados Labour Party and how many we had under the Democratic Labour Party. We can talk about printing money, whether it is sustainable or it is not. We can spend all of our time talking about these macro-economic subjects. These particular subjects, Mr. Speaker, I dare submit, do not affect what Bajans see as priorities to make the quality of the conditions more comfortable and their lives more palatable.

We, as a Government, are determined to display that particular social conscious and responsibility and maintain those features of the expectations of the average person that we meet in every village, in every hamlet, in every community and in every constituency in the face of these harsh world economic factors. I submit, Mr. Speaker, what matters to the average person in St. Michael Central or in St. Michael North West or in St. Michael West and we have provided through the Estimates in this particular debate is to ensure that Civil Servants get their salaries every single month and that their increments, when they are due, are paid. We have to ensure, Mr. Speaker, that when they go to the banks on the 25th of the month that the money is there. We have to ensure that pensioners get their pensions when they are due, the unemployed get their benefits when they are due, that persons who fall ill and awaiting their sick leave moneys that they get them, that students when they turn up at the UWI that the institution is ready to teach them, that our schools are open every single day with teachers teaching their curriculum and the syllabus, that our school meals are delivered on a daily basis, that the water is running through our taps, that postal workers could deliver their mails every single day to every single household, that garbage is being collected regularly, that we have buses available and hospital and polyclinics can attend to the particular ailments of the persons who present themselves to those institutions on a daily basis. Some of these things, of course, have fallen short in recent time but this is not a Government that is standing idle and not addressing the needs to rectify the situations as they develop. We had problems with water and we addressed

our minds to it and thanks to the staff of the Barbados Water Authority and the Minister we have alleviated those problems to a large extent. We are working, Mr. Speaker, on making the bus service better. We are not spiteful vindictive wicked in the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) Administration who believe that we are not buying any buses and we are not doing anything about the buses. We are addressing our minds to the problems, but it is a question of money, resources, sharing resources, allocating and reallocating. I want Barbados to understand that we are not sitting idly by not doing anything about these situations. These are the bread and butter issues I submit, Mr. Speaker, Barbadians are interested in. The social comfort levels of our people. All of the other matters as far as I am concerned, Barbadians yes could adjust their minds to the economic matters, are extraneous to what the bread and butter issues are all about, and Government is committed to ensuring that these services are granted.

In his presentation, the Honourable Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs talked about reducing spending, cutting the deficit. Barbadians understand clearly what the deficit is: the difference between the revenue and the expenditure. We hear about cut this, cut that, cut the other. Mr. Speaker, I submit to you that we could eliminate the deficit overnight but what would be the consequences of the average persons living in your constituency down in Richmond's Gap and my constituents up in Leinster Road in Waterford. What would be the consequences, Mr. Speaker? We could cut them but what it means is that we would have to send home more public officers. What it means is that pensioners and children who ride on the school buses would not be able to ride on those buses anymore. It means that we would have to curtail funding to the Welfare Department which serves as a cushion to those people who are less fortunate in this society. We are talking about the \$19 million that we now give to the Welfare Department that we would have to cut back. The abused persons in Barbados where we find that we have to give some subventions to them on a yearly basis through the Barbados Professionals Women's Club to help out with the hostel where those persons can find some respite... Persons living with disabilities, they themselves too will have to find other alternative measures. This Administration, Mr. Speaker, I submit will resist in the face of all criticism to do the kinds of things that some in the Barbados Labour Party and their people would want us to do.

Mr. Speaker, we have in this country an opposition outside of the Opposition in this country. We have the media arm of the Barbados Labour Party: Barbados Today, Nation News and Starcom Network. They are now the extended media arm of the Barbados Labour Party. They are talking about wings and arms, Laugh It Off has now become the comedy wing of the Barbados Labour Party. We have moderators on call-in programmes day in and day out with Starcom Network providing a platform for them

washing their mouths on this party and this Government. The Barbados Labour Party is supporting that too. They are bringing in failed politicians and rejected politicians from all over the Caribbean into Barbados, that is why I started at the beginning by talking by fallen angels because the same rhetoric that you are hearing about fallen angels will emanate from the mouths of these same people that Starcom Network brings in to wash their mouth on Barbados their own country. How unpatriotic can they be? They are washing their mouths and comparing Barbados with countries like our friends in Venezuela. How can you compare Barbados with Venezuela? The social and domestic environment in this country is far superior to what is now in the oil-rich Republic of Venezuela, but you could lump Barbados together with Venezuela only because you want to score some political points and speak disparagingly and pejoratively of this country. Imagine that. You do not hear of Barbadians liming up in any lines at the Airport or the Seaport to get out of Barbados. This country Barbados is a place of choice to live, work and do business. I do not see anybody lining up begging to go into Trinidad, Jamaica or any other countries in the Caribbean to live, work or do business.

Last week I read in the newspaper because I am avid reader of the newspaper, although our Prime Minister has warned us not to expose our eye sights or our ear drums to some of the rubbish that comes out of those media houses, but I must admit to the Honourable Prime Minister that sometimes I am tempted to listen and to read what emanates from them, of a local political scientist who has the temerity to say that this Government should be delegitimised as if we got here by some rigged election. The people in Barbados in their wisdom went to the polls and gave us 16 seats and gave the Barbados Labour Party 14 seats of which they are now down to 12. The people in Barbados in their wisdom gave them 14 seats and in half of the time they were in office they are now down to 12 and that is a party that wants to win the Government. They cannot even hold on to the seats that the people gave them but they want more seats. The people of Barbados should punish them by giving them half of the amount they now have, I feel so. This political scientist believes that this is some renegade despotic Government running roughshod over the people. This is one of the most humane Government ever to govern this country.

I want to say that we have as our leader, Mr. Speaker, because we have it in our leader and we have to say this more often, a decent respectable gentleman in any day of the week. We had previous leaders in this country that civil servants used to scatter when they appear. You hear about the Estimates meetings where some public servants who used to take salts so that they would not go to the Estimates meetings but when we came to office in 2008 there was a different environment, people used to wake up and wish they could come to the Estimates meetings. There

was no more cursing and ridiculing of people. We have a Prime Minister in this country, we have to talk about it as I said, who is a gentleman and we have people walking about trying to compare themselves with him, it cannot be. This Barbados Labour Party is goading on these kinds of people.

I say that this Barbados Labour Party as in institution, I spoke about them already and I will speak about them again, is a nuisance institution, and that is what they should be seen as. They are a nuisance institution, a leaking festering ulcer in the body politics of Barbados. This Barbados Labour Party is an unyielding life-sore. They are a life-sore. They have become so infested that they now beginning to gangrene and poison the whole body politics of Barbados. The Barbados Labour Party is a stubborn life threatening cancer. They are now metastasized and in every single avenue that they go with their cancerous tentacles sticking out here and there they are poisoning Barbados and Barbadians. All they are interested in right now is counting down the weeks. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, has a big calendar in her office counting down the weeks, ticking them off, we now down to 51 weeks.

Asides.

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: Yes, she is now counting down the weeks but they can march, they can april or they can may, they are still in opposition and so they will remain for a long time.

I have a case to report to the Child Care Board because I understand that at their meeting on Saturday they had a young man 13 years old parading across the stage with or without the permission of his parents in full glare of all, exploiting that young man. That is equivalent as far as I am concerned to sexual abuse or physical abuse.

Mr. Speaker, I will talk a little bit more about the disabled community who they are exploiting. I will get to it shortly. I want Bajans to examine carefully what they have because what is waiting for them in the Barbados Labour Party, I tell you, I do not know if Barbadians are going to have the stomach for it. Mr. Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party is painting Barbados in the worst possible light, pulling the country down, cursing white business people, spreading hate, racism and division and encouraging envy, jealousy and spite, and I say encouraging civil strife, commotion and acrimony.

Mr. Speaker, I have always said that the day in Barbados in politics that I suspect that there is going to be bloodshed or loss of life in our politics in or outside of a general election that is the day I will make my exit. It is coming to that, all encouraged and coerced by the Barbados

Labour Party. I am going to warn today that based on what I see from the Barbados Labour Party and how they are behaving with this division, this encouraging of hate and racism, that bloodshed will occur in the next general election in this country. I pray it does not, I wish, Mr. Speaker, I pray that every single Christian, Muslim, Hindu would get on their knees and pray for this country because the Barbados Labour Party is heading this country down into a particular avenue that will cause bloodshed in this country based on how they are behaving and how they are conducting themselves in public life in Barbados. They are a wicked bunch of people and if we are not careful blood will run in the gutters of Barbados in the next general election, based on how they are dividing this country, they are on the brink of causing civil strife with a lot of irresponsible talk.

Mr. Speaker, what is this suffering about in the country that the Barbados Labour Party is promoting, this 270 000-odd people in this country who are suffering? I have said before that there are 4 000 people who go through the doors of the Welfare Department who cannot help themselves, that is why a Government is in office to help those who cannot help themselves. We have

266 000-odd people in this country who are busy bettering their lives and bettering themselves, pulling themselves up by their own boot straps and showing thrift and enterprise.

Mr. Speaker, we heard from the Honourable Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth the programmes that he and his staff are offering where young people are busy bettering themselves in other fields of endeavour. They are people who raise livestock, some who organise meeting turns or su-su, they are not doing what the Barbados Labour Party is talking about, they are not feeling sorry for themselves, they are not falling down and not able to pull themselves up, people all over this country have opened small businesses such as hair, nail, clothing, barbering, food. During Cropover there is a plethora of young men and women who are exploiting every single avenue of thrift and enterprise, organising promotions, fetes, party events. My son is now one of the young entrepreneurs in Barbados, he has his own Foreday Morning band and there are other young people like himself who organise Kadooment Bands and are lifting themselves up and are busy making good for themselves in this country. They are not feeling sorry, neither are they falling into the picture that is being painted by the Barbados Labour Party as if this is some sorry country that has fallen on bad and hard times and cannot get out of it.

Mr. Speaker, these people whom I talk about here, the barbers, hairdressers, nail salons, clothing and the Cropover young men and women who are involving themselves in business are not in any disgusting march.

What are they marching for? Mr. Speaker, while we are busy trying to better the economic conditions, along with our social responsibilities to the people of Barbados, the Barbados Labour Party is busy pulling people down and talking disparagingly of Barbadians.

Mr. Speaker, those who cannot help themselves my Ministry is opening avenues by developing programmes that have the overall capacity to provide the highest quality social services that will support, develop and empower the poor, the vulnerable, as well as others who are experiencing some crisis one way or the other.

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

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: Mr. Speaker, this is done through the Welfare Department, through our Poverty Alleviation Programme, our Identification, Stabilisation, Enhancement and Empowerment-Bridge programme and the latest programme in our array of programmes to address the poor and deprived in this country, the Inter-American Development Bank Strengthening Human and Social Development programme. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Welfare Department and those who are on the frontline, some of whom are spoken of disparagingly of in some circle, but I am not going to be joining anybody to speak disparagingly of my staff. I want to say that if there are not any members of staff who are not offering the kind of service that is required, those persons need to pull up their socks but I am not going to be lambasting and lampooning them in the public because I believe that overall they are good social workers with the best of intentions and I want them to continue to do a good job for the public of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about this programme, it is a programme with the objective of being able to contribute towards the reduction of extreme poverty and unemployment in Barbados. That programme consists of three components each with a specific objective, the first component aims to reduce extreme poverty through the expansion and consolidation of the Identification, Stabilisation, Enhancement and Empowerment-Bridge programme. This particular programme will widen the offering from 30 families to 250 households. Mr. Speaker, in addition to addressing the unique needs of each individual family, it is our distinct hope that we would be able to break the cycle of what we now term intergenerational poverty for some of those families. Mr. Speaker, I will get an opportunity probably when we go into Committee to speak more on that programme.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned the disabled community that the Barbados Labour Party is trying also to exploit. I addressed a service two Sundays ago and said then and will say now that when it comes to the disabled community that

no partisan considerations whatsoever should engulf or envelope what we do for them. The disabled should not be mired in or subjected to any political one-upmanship. I keep hearing certain speakers on the Barbados Opposition who believe that they can use this community and pit them against us in Government. I beg them, Mr. Speaker, to avoid doing this to these valuable people, there should be no partisan consideration.

Mr. Speaker, the Democratic Labour Party has a policy of full integration for people living with disabilities in this society. In 2008 we signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People Living with Disabilities and we ratified in 2013 while we were in office. The National Disabilities Unit provides facilitation, advocacy and promotion of the advancement and the empowerment of people with disabilities. We are also rolling out very shortly with the assistance of the Ministry of Housing, Lands and Rural Development to get “Maxwelton” right so that we can move the headquarters. This is something that if it is the last thing I do before I demit office as Minister of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Community Development would be to get the headquarters for the National Disabilities Unit.

Mr. Speaker, in the Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Community Development we facilitated agencies with \$182 000 that we give every year to agencies such as the Barbados Paralympic Association, the Barbados Association for the Blind and Deaf, the Organisation of Parents of the Disabled, the Autism Association of Barbados and the Barbados Blind Cricket Association. It is \$182 000 that we distribute among those people, and every year we give \$2 million to the National Disability Unit and, in particular \$350 000 to the Barbados Council for the Disabled. That is what we do, along of course with all the thousands of dollars that the Ministry of Finance gives in terms of duty waivers and tax exemptions. Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I have every confidence in these Estimates that are presented here in this House. They are sensible, well thought-out, contemplated with a social conscience, and mindful of the economic realities of Barbados, Mr. Speaker. Barbadians should hear the Barbados Labour Party because they are not deaf; they should do that. They want us to perform radical surgery with a sickle. We are not doing it with a sickle. We will try our best to do it with a scalpel, without throwing this country into turmoil overnight. This Democratic Labour Party Administration is not about that, especially observing our social democratic grounding as a philosophy of this party.

Mr. Speaker, as I said before, divine providence is not on the side of the Barbados Labour Party. It is on this side. The manifestation of God’s foresight and ‘foresight-full’ care is enjoyed by this Government, because our

hearts are in the right place. Mr. Speaker, I support these 2017-2018 Estimates and I am obliged to you.

MR. SPEAKER: I am obliged. The Honourable Member for St. James North.

Mr. E.G. HINKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to thank the great people of St. James North for giving me this, now my fourth opportunity, to speak in the Estimates on their behalf. I wish to start by commending the presentation yesterday by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. It was delivered in a statesman-like, mature manner and showed that she is ready and fit to take up the mantle of Prime Minister of this country whenever the Election is called. The Honourable Minister of Finance said yesterday that Cabinet has not lost faith in the people of Barbados. However, I can assure him, Mr. Speaker, that Barbadians have lost faith in the Cabinet. These Estimates confirm that this Cabinet has continued incompetence, ineptness and an inability to properly manage the affairs of this Government.

Our country is now the third most indebted country globally, with a debt-to-GDP ratio in the region of 150 per cent. This Government has more than doubled Barbados’ public sector debt, and it has almost doubled its external debt, as my parliamentary colleague, the Honourable Member for St. George South, said this morning. Additionally, this Government presently owes individual Barbadians, businesses and companies approximately \$1 billion in VAT and Income Tax returns, in some cases for four years, which it is unable to pay, or neglects or refuses to pay. In addition, Government owes contract fees to many companies, businesses and private individuals. It would not pay. This has been the height of economic mismanagement by any Government in this country; not only in this country but in the region and globally. Before this Democratic Labour Party took the reins of office of this country nine years ago, we were the leading developing country in the world, realistically aiming to reach First World status by the year 2025. In the wake of the 18th and 19th successive downgrade, in terms of our credit ratings within the last two weeks, our nation is being categorised -- can you imagine -- by international financial credit rating experts, with such countries as Venezuela, Greece, Iraq, war-torn Congo and Mozambique, Mr. Speaker. That is where we are now finding ourselves. That is where the Barbados Brand has now descended under this Government, under this Cabinet.

After six failed economic pathways to progress in nine years, we now have less than \$700 million in foreign reserves; ten weeks’ import cover, down from \$2.7 billion when the Democratic Labour Party took office. The economic management by this Government has been more disastrous for our country than all the hurricanes which have passed through Barbados together. The situation is

compounded by the fact that this Administration continues, led by none other than the Right Honourable Prime Minister, to dismiss the warnings of Standard & Poor's and Moody's and all the other institutions. Mr. Speaker, I realise that about 99 per cent of Barbadians do not know this: These are institutions which the Barbados Government pays to do these assessments. It is not that Standard & Poor's and Moody's come like a thief in the night and say, "Let me up and do an assessment of Barbados today." We pay them to do these assessments, because we are part of the international financial community, part of the International Monetary Fund, part of the World Bank, and they pay. They have no brief for the Barbados Labour Party or any axe to grind against the Democratic Labour Party, to compound now a catastrophic situation. Our economic outlook is viewed as negative. Mr. Speaker, in other words, going down the line for the next six months if they do not see any improvement, it will get worse. We are now six categories below investment grade in this country. The Right Honourable Prime Minister, whose lack of understanding of the economic realities which face our nation is, quite frankly, frightening, continues to rubbish these assessments and says that they are of no real consequence since Government does not intend to borrow externally.

Of course, as is usual, the Honourable Member for St. James South has contradicted what he has said, as he does every week on some issue or another, by saying today that you have to pay attention to this. International people who are looking to invest in Barbados look at these credit ratings. Barbadian companies, when they want to invest in the bonds and Treasury bills and debentures which the Barbados Government issues, pay credence to these credit ratings. The Honourable Member for St. James South is just as correct as the Right Honourable Prime Minister is wrong. The truth is that each of these downgrades results in millions of additional Barbadian taxpayers' dollars having to be found to pay interest on our external loans. The Credit Suisse loan alone, which this Administration entered into in 2015, will now cost us about \$4.5 million more in additional interest every six months; not coming out of the Cabinet of Barbados' pocket but out of the poor, suffering people; the taxpayers of Barbados. It will now be more difficult to entice international companies to home-base on our shores, since Barbados' poor credit rating will affect their credit rating.

In reference to the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, who totally misunderstood as he misunderstands virtually everything else on economics, we saw the repercussions of this two years ago when Sagcor removed one of its headquarters out of our country. I think they had to write to the Right Honourable Prime Minister about the Honourable Member for St. Lucy for the political foolishness he went on radio and spoke about. We are clearly not going to be able to get out of this economic melee which this

Government has placed us in unless we deal with our public debt. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition said so yesterday. The Right Honourable Member for St. Peter has said so on many occasions, as recently as two hours in here in this Parliament; and in their own camp the frustrated Honourable Member for St. Philip West says so all the time, twice within the last two weeks. Yet, they ignore all of these Honourable Members. As my parliamentary colleague, the Honourable Member for St. George South, said this morning, we need to re-profile our debt in order to lengthen our maturity dates for their repayment, and lower our interest payments in a fair and equitable manner. It is not going to go away. It is no use ignoring it as the Democratic Labour Party Cabinet obviously feels it could do. Tomorrow morning when we wake up it will still be there. This Government is incapable of managing this absolutely necessary task since it now has no creditability whatsoever with our creditors whether local or foreign. We have no choice on this issue where those three Members that I mentioned, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter and the Honourable Member for St. Philip West may differ in terms of the details of the need to re-profile our debt. They all agree with this on principle. Last year alone, Government spent \$1.6 billion on debt servicing. This was double what it spent on education and social protection of our people. We spent 6 per cent less, in other words, Mr. Speaker, on social protection during this current financial year than what we spent during the previous financial year. The Honourable Member who just spoke, the Honourable Member for St. Michael Central, spoke about how that party is seeking to protect the most vulnerable and spending more on debt servicing than on social protection and education? This Government in the immediate aftermath of the last General Elections furthermore, knifed, a 12 per cent cut across all the social services sectors in this country including the Ministry of Social Care and Welfare. The Honourable Minister of Finance yesterday said we now have to be brutally frank with Barbadians. A lot of political rhetoric because this Democratic Labour Party Government has proved incapable of doing that. Last election they brought an old woman on a bus, the most absurd political advertisement I have ever seen anywhere in the world to talk about how the Barbados Labour Party is going to send home 10 000, cut school meals and all kinds of things to win an election but yet the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West talks about being brutally frank with Barbadians. Never will the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) do that on the eve of another election. The people, the simple fact is, have no trust or confidence in this Democratic Labour Party Cabinet anymore. This is the same Democratic Labour Party that is now asking for help from the Opposition and from other stakeholders when on many occasions in here, the Honourable Minister of Environment and the Honourable Minister of Culture would tell you that they do not want to hear anything from the Barbados Labour Party, how the people handed them a

mandate and how we cannot tell them what to do and we are only making a lot of noise and we could only make a lot of noise, according to the Honourable Minister of Education and this in spite of the fact that the Members on That Side, Mr. Speaker, are only sitting over there by virtue of a minibus load of votes in St. Michael Central. That is all that separated election victory and defeat here and the Honourable Member for St. Michael Central, the beneficiary of the minibus load of votes, just delivered himself of what has to be, one of the most pathetic speeches ever in this Parliament, criticising freedom of the press, something that is enshrined in the laws of Barbados just because the press starting to criticise the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) he criticising the press. He does not understand the first thing about governance and systems when the soul Government station that does not report anything from the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) in this country is in debt \$115 million. Why do you not deal with that? They have it \$115 million in debt of taxpayers money. The only solution to the diminishing of the Barbados brand is a fresh mandate being given to a new Government. We are not going anywhere in these final days, whether it is a year, a few months, whatever, of this Democratic Labour Party (DLP) Cabinet. These Estimates like all the recent Estimates presented by this Administration to this Parliament are a fairy tale. This legislature, for example, last year approved \$68 million for road network services, yet numerous roads throughout the length and breadth of this country today remain unrepaired and full of potholes. Certainly none of the 12 roads in my constituency which I wrote the Minister of Transport and Works on for repairs within 50 days of my becoming an Honourable Member of Parliament have been repaired and in fact, eight of those 12 roads on which I wrote, that Honourable Member are in a previous Democratic Labour Party (DLP) stronghold of The Whim and Ashton Hall yet not one pothole there fixed far less roads. Professor Winston Moore of the University of the West Indies (UWI) has stated the irrefutable true when he receives that the economy of Barbados has grown on average 2.2 per cent more over the last 14 years under a Barbados Labour Party (BLP) Administration than it has under a Democratic Labour Party (DLP) Government. That is irrefutable, you cannot debate that. The Honourable Minister of Finance himself has recognised that his Administration cannot hope to win the next General Elections on the basis of superior economic management. He therefore stated a few months ago that the next General Elections will be fought on morality and now on economics. Jeremy Bentham, a British Philosopher, regarded as the founder of modern utilitarianism stated in the 18th century that the greatest happiness of the greatest number is the foundation of morals and legislation. The greatest number of Barbadians, at the present moment, are the unhappiness that they have been in the 50 years of independence. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, is it moral for Cabinet to pay themselves an 11 month retroactive increase in their salary from what it was last

month resulting in a pay package of over \$35 000 this month alone to each of the Cabinet Ministers sitting over there and over \$40 000 to the Right Honourable Prime Minister, when over 25 000 public workers have not received a salary increase in eight years? Is it moral for this backdated increase to also apply to their Personal Assistants and their fellow Parliamentarians both in here and in The Senate and their political operatives and their 50 odd consultants in various statutory boards and ministries many of whom are unsuccessful failed DLP candidates? Given this, is it moral for these Estimates not to make any provision whatsoever for any salary increase for the public workers in all of the harsh realities of life in Barbados today?

Hon. S. A. LASHLEY: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading the House by suggesting that Members of Cabinet received a salary increase and retroactive pay. That is totally untrue and I would challenge the Honourable Member to produce the evidence in this House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Very well, Honourable Member.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: Mr. Speaker, the order that was signed by the Honourable Minister of Finance on 14th February, 2016 and which was brought before this Parliament two months ago clearly says that the 10 per

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Hon. S. A. LASHLEY: On a point of Order. Again, the Honourable Member in his totality of his presentation is misleading the House. On the one hand he is saying that the Members of Cabinet and of course including himself were the beneficiaries of a salary increase but then on the other hand he is talking about a restoration of salary. Which one is it he is talking about?

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member, please continue.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that this month Cabinet Ministers, their political assistants, operatives, and fellow parliamentarians, because the Barbados Labour Party is not taking the 10 per cent, will get 10 per cent more money in their salary than what they got last month, that is an increase.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: The Honourable Member knows that you cannot anticipate in this House, that there is a rule against anticipation.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: Mr. Speaker, they will get 10 per cent more money in their salary than what they got last month, that is an increase. The people of Barbados understand that. It is simple English.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Hon. S. A. LASHLEY: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. A restoration of salary is not an increase in salary, and that is a fact. The Honourable Member cannot be stating to the House something that is not a fact.

Mr. SPEAKER: This thing has been coming up time and time again. They called it a restoration. The Honourable Members of Government have explained time and time again that it is not a salary increase. I think everybody knows what it is so I am not really going to get involved in the semantics every day that it comes up. Honourable Member, please continue. Call it what you want to call it.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is it moral for a Right Honourable Prime Minister to promise a few months before elections not to lay off a single Government employee but within a year after the elections presided over the dismissal of almost 4 000 such employees such as the Drainage workers?

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, just a minute, there is another point of order. Yes, please.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House because in no way can the Honourable Member prove that any 4 000 persons were dismissed, it is not even 2 000 and the Honourable Member knows that.

Mr. SPEAKER: That is not something I can rule on either. Honourable Member, please continue.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: Employees such as Drainage workers were unceremoniously dismissed, some of whom are my constituents and who the Right Honourable Prime Minister himself publicly said were treated very, very, very, very badly.

Is it moral for Government to dismiss Beautify Barbados employees over three years ago, again some of them my constituents, without paying them any compensation beyond one week's wages up to the present day? Is it moral for a Right Honourable Prime Minister to allow his Minister of Environment carte blanche to preside over the unfair dismissal of 200 National Conservation Commission workers, again some of them my constituents? They were treated worse than indentured servants of the 19th Century, with the taxpayers of this country then

having to find over \$3 million to compensate these Barbadians. Were it not have been moral for the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South to request that Honourable Member to himself to repay the Treasury this money as the Caribbean Court of Justice case arising on appeal from Belize says he should do since those dismissals were unfair and were tainted with malfeasance?

Is it moral for a Government to legislate and enforce 36 new taxes or increase taxes on the backs of the people of Barbados including the 2.5 per cent increase in VAT and the 2 per cent Social Responsibility Levy, that is not even the law of the land because the four months period after which it should have been brought before this Parliament to get the validation by law has gone since December last year and the Government is still collecting this 2 per cent Social Responsibility Levy on the backs of the poor people of this country without legislative authority to do that?

In addition, among the 36 new or increase taxes on the backs of the people of this country is a cell phone tax, increased land taxes, a 60 per cent increase in water rates, a tipping fee, increased road taxes, a consolidation tax, a Municipal Solid Waste Tax, a bank's assets tax, imposed tuition fees on University of the West Indies students, taxation of entertainment allowance, taxation on travel allowance, removal of tax concessions on donations to charities and churches except for one; fees charged to file annual limited liability companies returns; a drug dispensary fee and most recently now the enforcement of VAT on over the counter medicine.

Is it moral for Cabinet under these circumstances where over 55 000 Barbadians including a significant number of people with disabilities are living below the poverty line according to the last Caribbean Development Bank Poverty Report to preside over the decline in welfare benefits to the most vulnerable in our society as well as over the decline in the provision of the social services including water, sewerage elimination and garbage collection with garbage a few months ago only being collected once in every three weeks in some areas? All of these social services which Barbadians have come accustomed to as a matter of course are being totally taken away from us in spite of the 36 new taxes or increase in taxes and a Government still is overseeing a 40 per cent increase in the cost of living in the nine years they have been in office after promising a reduction in the cost of living to win the 2008 election?

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

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: Is it moral for a political Administration which in 2008 promised that at least 40 per cent of all Government procurement requests for goods and services would be reserved for sourcing from the

economically disadvantaged classes to instead continue to enrich two or three big conglomerates with serious implications for campaign financing with so far over 500 million in untendered Government contracts going to one man whose initial spells the same as the Opposition's Leader?

Is it moral for the Honourable Prime Minister to refuse to take the Prevention of Corruption Act passed in this Parliament in the last session in 2012 for its assent saying that the Government cannot afford the cost of establishing an eight-member commission and token staff but could instead afford an initial 420 constituency councils membership for partisan purposes? The Chair of Transparency International said that corruption denies education, health, housing and better conditions of life for millions of people around the world. It is a tax paid by the poorest?

Is it moral, Mr. Speaker, for the Prime Minister to refuse to bring to Parliament integrity in public life legislation which the Democratic Labour Party promised to enact forthwith in its 2008 elections campaign?

Is it moral, Mr. Speaker, to allow the Democratic Labour Party affiliated lawyers retained by statutory corporations and other Government agencies to charge fees routinely in excess of \$1 million on legal transactions invariably five and six times more than what they should charge on the scale of legal fees? What repercussions does this have for campaign financing which is regulated under the same Prevention of Corruption legislation which the Government has steadfastly refused to bring into law?

Is it moral, Mr. Speaker, for an individual to receive a part protection from the justice system when he had presided over the financial destruction of over 30 000 Barbados policyholders who innocently invested in CLICO and BAICO and when the Honourable Prime Minister had referred to him as my pal?

Mr. Speaker, I challenge the various churches to join us and speak out against this type of political behaviour. The Leader of the Opposition has outlined in her speech to the Barbados Chamber of Commerce four months ago, "Rebuilding Investors' Confidence in Brand Barbados" which I will make a document of this Honourable House. The Honourable Member has outlined the course of a new Barbados Labour Party Government that we will take to transform our country. Mr. Speaker, we need:

- a. to address our fiscal governance;
- b. to stop the Central Bank of Barbados from printing money;
- c. to stimulate and facilitate economic growth;

d. to ease the process for citizens and for investors alike who would want to do business in what is now an increasingly harsh economic business environment in this country and which has made Barbados one of the most uncompetitive countries in the world;

e. to have zero tolerance for corruption, zero tolerance for bribery, zero tolerance for thievery in high places;

f. to strengthen our critical institutions and deepen the involvement of our people."

Mr. Speaker, our "Covenant for Hope" outlines all of these things, including:

- a. the primary goals of the Barbados Labour Party;
- b. the protection of our children and the most vulnerable of our citizens;
- c. the alleviation of poverty;
- d. the empowerment of our young people, the elderly and people with disabilities;
- e. The strengthening of our family and communities.

Mr. Speaker, morality is not about one's ability to quote the Corinthians at will, the Democratic Labour Party has lost its moral authority to govern Barbadians anymore. These Estimates will do nothing to improve the standard of living of Barbadians who do not belong to the Democratic Labour Party fatted calf and will do nothing to restore the confidence which is necessary for our country to be upgraded again. I am obliged to you, Sir.

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

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak in what we traditionally call the Estimates debates, more correctly referred to as the Second Reading of the Appropriation Bill, 2017. Mr. Speaker, I want to start by expressing my appreciation to the people of Christ Church South who would have engaged me for two sessions now as Parliamentary representative for that constituency, a task which I thoroughly enjoy doing on their behalf. Indeed, I was reminded yesterday that in about 51 weeks' time I may be asked, if approved by the Executive General Council of the Democratic Labour Party, to continue and to offer my services to these very fine folks once more. Mr. Speaker, I am happy that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East is smiling on this occasion. The Honourable Member has not smiled for the morning and the Honourable Member is so much nicer when she smiles, rather than try to look annoyed.

Mr. Speaker, we are into a very important debate at that time and I think that the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs has characterised it as such when the Honourable Member introduced this Bill yesterday. Consecutive speakers since then have in their own ways characterised this budget but not many of them have attempted to demonstrate or to answer the question that the Honourable Member has asked. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, not because the Honourable Member does not recognise it is his duty through the Cabinet of Barbados to take the important steps that are required at this critical time in terms of the trajectory, the direction of our economy but because we want to engage in a 'conversation' with the people of Barbados to allow them to hear from this Government some of the challenges and the real answers that must be provided.

Mr. Speaker, the main topic for discussion has been the Barbados economy and there are those who would take one index of an economy, for example, a debt to Gross Domestic Product ratio and would compare it with others around the world and would say, well, we have the same ratio as the Republic of Congo and so you are like the Republic of Congo; or that you have the same ratio as Venezuela so that you are like Venezuela. I do not operate in that way, these indices are specific performance areas of the economy, it is a different matter when we look over the entire social structure of the country.

Mr. Speaker, this Administration has been at pains to share with Barbadians our view that Barbados is not just an economy but that it is also a society and we are wedded to that belief. Therefore the Minister of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Community Development was able to stand up in this Honourable Chamber this afternoon and to share with the public of Barbados the kinds of programmes which still exist in his very important area of operation in the Government of Barbados. Mr. Speaker, I want to take sides with the Honourable Member who made the point to congratulate his staff at the Welfare Department for the work that they do. Mr. Speaker, I have said it before and would want to say it again, I do not talk based on a piece of paper that I have in front of me, or a report which was written by this or that director in a particular department, I walk into these areas and I sit in the waiting room like anybody else and ask to see the responsible person and I get to share some of the experience. Mr. Speaker, I am satisfied that the Director and her staff at the Welfare Department are trying their best to hold together that strata of our society who needs their constant attention. Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the Minister for the attention that he is obviously paying to this very important institution.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs was at pains to demonstrate where our difficulties most lie and we have settled on the management of the debt as one of the critical areas going forward. Mr. Speaker, as to how that matter is being managed, I will share the discussions whenever either at the level of the Ministry or at the level of any other institution in Barbados, be it Cabinet or here in this Honourable House. Mr. Speaker, what is for sure and what we have demonstrated before and I am not going to dwell on it, is that this is not a position that has occurred this afternoon or yesterday. As a matter of fact, we have heard recitation after recitation of the responsibility of successive ministers and decisions of Governments in respect to the building of Barbados' debt. I have been around long enough, I heard Honourable Members speaking as to who has been "in town" longest but I have been around long too and I have heard this question about printing money back in the 1970s. Were they making sport then or was it real? These are actions which are required in the economic environment. I was relating to the Right Honourable Prime Minister. The truth is that my radio is often tuned to the BBC World Service, so I love to listen to the programmes. They can be a little repetitive, but they had a long discussion last night, while on my way home, on the whole question of quantitative easing. For those who do not know, quantitative easing is the term used in some of the international economic environments to describe the same thing we familiarly call "printing money". There are very few central banks in the world now which are not acting to prop up the economic affairs of their countries, and the United States and United Kingdom probably lead the group in this regard. This is not to create any excuses, but the treatment by investors in the US economy or the UK economy is obviously going to be different to that in Barbados. We have to remain attractive to investors, and we recognise that absolutely because we recognise that it is a fundamental aspect of the recovery of this economy if we can attract investors to our country.

The truth is -- and it has been hinted at by speakers before -- left to the Barbados Labour Party and their operatives, they would want to put obstacles in the way of every project contemplated by this Administration at whatever level they can. There will come a time when these things will be spoken about in detail to make sure they do not happen. The only Honourable Member over there who has successively and unrelentingly supported the Hyatt project is the Honourable Member for the City. All the others have found moments to criticise and to confuse this project with some kind of shenanigan and some kind of reference to corruption, as was done yesterday by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, who clearly stated....

MR. SPEAKER: Just a minute, Honourable Member.

Asides.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, do not do that, please. If you are getting up to address the Point of Order, address it, please.

Mr. E.G. HINKSON: Yes, Sir. The Honourable Member is misleading the House, Sir. I have heard no-one on this side of the House criticise any Hyatt project. I have heard no-one. We have asked for the laws of the land to be complied with, as is the duty legally of any Cabinet of Barbados and of any of us in here.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, no Point of Order found, please. Please continue, Honourable Member.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East yesterday boasted that her initials were M.A.M. too, or also, so I do not know what kind of innuendo this is. "I carry the initials M.A.M too so I got to like those initials. It is nothing I hate." I live in Christ Church, Sir, so I remember when we used to enjoy calypso tents.

Aside.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I live in Christ Church and I knew when we used to enjoy the benefits of the Dover Convention Centre, and Plastic Bag, Gabby, the Mighty Grynner, Mac Fingall and all of those entertainers used to come down there. That was the hot tent of the era. That had to give way, Sir; not yesterday, not in 2008, way back in about 2003-2004, to the Sapphire Beach project. Who are the developers involved in the Sapphire Beach Condominium project? A 99-year lease for peppercorn, so what is wrong with the thousand and more zero-lot-line houses being developed and occupied at Coverley today by Barbadians, Sir? These were provided by the same developer without a cent out of the Government's coffers of Barbados. It was all right then, Sir. It was clean and honest and upfront then, but there is something wrong now. That is the kind of obstruction that I want Barbadians to be aware of, Sir. There are many, many more projects that we can mention, such as down on the West Coast, including Port Ferdinand and Port St. Charles. There are about three of them now in Road View. I cannot even remember all of the names, Sir. The same developers. Some of them started in the days of the Barbados Labour Party and the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East. Remember, she was Senior Minister and Deputy Prime Minister and Attorney General, and all kinds of things in the Administration.

Mr. Speaker, all I am asking for is that this Chamber looks at the entire developmental programme as we try to associate some kind of incorrect behaviour on the part of one Administration or another. They talk about old sayings.

I heard them with this old saying; I think it was the Member for St. George South who spoke to it this morning. I do not even remember exactly what he said, but as they say, what goes around comes around, and the Honourable Members on that side need to take stock of their attempts to disrupt and discontinue honest, developmental projects in this country, and if they are good corporate citizens, throw their weight behind these projects. It is only through growth - that has been the conclusion -- measured and careful growth in the sectors that will be most effective by which this country can work its way out of the difficulties we face.

The Honourable Minister of Finance has made its clear how we do our business. We pay our debts first; we do not want to default on any debts, whether they were created by the Barbados Labour Party or the Democratic Labour Party. All of it has to be serviced. We pay our salaries. None of us would want to work for a month and then find that we cannot get a salary at the end of the month. Indeed, it happens all of the time, and even when mistakes are made and the arrangements are not properly completed by the Ministries responsible, I take it upon myself with the Permanent Secretary to make sure that these honest workers are paid for their work. Again, Sir?

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Mr. E.G. HINKSON: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading the House. On a Point of Order, Sir. He speaks about Cabinet Members doing without their salary for a month, but what about the thousands of people who they laid off and who now have no salary, Mr. Speaker?

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

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Sometimes you are glad for the distraction because it puts you back onto the main area of responsibility. Barbadians are who I am trying to share a few thoughts with, and I know that they did not hear me say anything like that, but be that as it may, we know how the Honourable Member for St. James North operates. It is just that I have never paid him any attention. Even when I used to play tennis, I used to beat him and walk off the court. I still do not pay any attention here in the House of Assembly, and he finds that very uncomfortable because I would beat him in tennis and go along home, and similarly here. Mr. Speaker, I have responsibility at the request of the Right Honourable Prime Minister for the Health portfolio in Barbados, and let me say first of all that this is a portfolio which has taught me so much but at the same time has allowed me the satisfaction of seeing a team of workers at the Ministry of Health, and spreading our different areas in Barbados, share their expertise with this island in a way that has continued to maintain a health

service of which we are unrelentingly proud. We offer a healthcare service in Barbados that is second to none in the region and, indeed, starts to even peep ahead of much of what is offered in the Americas generally. We offer this care in a very quiet way and when one listens to the kind of discussion that is going on in the United States of America (USA) over the provision of care for the American citizens. The debate, the infighting and the grandiose promises being made by one or the other over what has been familiarly known as the Obama Healthcare Bill and now being restructured and renamed under some other name, the American Health Bill now instead of ObamaCare. We have gotten to the stage where a President who has been trumpeting all kinds of promises about how they will dismantle this healthcare system and create something new and less costly to Americans has come to the conclusion that it is one of the most difficult and challenging areas to get a handle on and to provide some level of equity in.

I am glad that so far, we have not heard anyone on That Side say anything about the amount that is provided in these Estimates, the \$151 million for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH). At least that message has gotten through. We have made the point consistently that money is provided in the Estimates, a \$146 for the ordinary running of the Hospital and \$5 million for the Medical Aid Scheme. At around October or November the Hospital Board, in discussion with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Finance will submit for approval a supplementary which would be considered by the Ministry of Finance and the Cabinet and if approved then for the House of Assembly to approve the additional moneys. That, in a way, helps us to be able to manage the resources that are provided to the Hospital and to carefully try to make sure that all the services are provided. We have continued to improve in the Hospital so that even today I can report of the fact that we have once again restarted kidney transplants in Barbados. It is a programme which would have existed before so it is not new but this group of surgeons have now taken it on to themselves in conjunction with a team from the United Kingdom and, of course, with the assistance of the Republic Bank (Barbados) Limited to make that option available again for Barbadians and indeed we are in the advance stages of discussing within the planning unit of the Ministry of Health a complete and wide ranging transportation regime, regulations and legislation to allow these kinds of organ transplants to proceed smoothly in Barbados. This is an attempt in the case of the kidney, of course, to try to manage some of the symptoms associated with the prevalent diabetes condition among Barbadians.

That leads me to the whole question of non-communicable diseases and we continue to put that message out there. I think Barbadians are fully aware of these implications but we have now reached the stage in the Ministry of Health where we are putting together some regulations which we want to take to the authorities for

discussion in respect to saying to Barbadians, this is what we allow, this is what you should do, this is what we are going to support and indeed that is to allow us even outside of the primary legislation that may be needed, allow us to strength our message especially with our young children and to schools and in deed with our providers of food in our country because we believe that especially the fast food providers need to get on board with us in a much more structured way in making sure that Barbadians understand the benefits of eating healthy and that they would be on board in way that where necessary we can help them to change and vary their diets and their offerings so as to achieve that overall objective. We are saying that in Barbados some 80 per cent of our population is suffering from one kind of non-communicable disease or the other. Mr. Speaker, I submit to you that this is an impractical and unreasonable condition to perpetuate. It would start if you want to take the discussion to its fullest. It would start to explain the chronic diseases we have reported in some of our organisation of absenteeism because remember a couple of years ago, I am sure, we had a report which spoke to the fact that absenteeism, in fact, in the public service was around 30 per cent, but truth be told it was not much better in the private sector either so we indeed have a very severe problem. I believe that the message around the whole question of a healthy lifestyle, non-communicable diseases and the way we can help to prevent their onset by practicing healthy living and healthy eating, by practicing exercise on a regular basis, I believe that message has essentially gone through and has allowed us to see Barbadians begin to turn around in this regard.

Sir, I must spend a few words on the whole question of the non-Government organisations, their contribution to our healthcare service and I have said before that the kind of automatic way in which now the non-Government organisations are rolling out their activities almost on a weekly basis in support of this kind of approach to healthcare is truly encouraging and I want to certainly make sure that from this position here in the House of Assembly, I express our heartfelt thanks in the Ministry of Health to all those non-Government organisations who provide for us in this manner. Those who we support by way of subsidies and those who may not be on the list of support but continue to give of their service. Indeed, Sir, that leads us too to the question of charitable donations. The Hospital has been able to boast of the fact that today, we have enjoyed something like \$13 million of charitable donations to the operations of the institution. I keep making the point, it is not about begging or it is not about holding out a bowl for people to drop coins in but I keep saying to Barbadians that all members of this society from the smallest and the poorest to the very richest have been coming forward and giving what they can afford in this entire programme and we want to thank all of them for their contribution whether it be the Sandy Lane Trust or Rihanna or Broadway to Barbados or whether it be that

gentleman in Atlantic Shores who met me and said he had \$500 he wanted to give to the Hospital and he wanted to know how could it be done. I made sure that he was pointed in the correct direction. I spoke to healthcare financing already and indeed I think that this is an area where we hope we can work with the Ministry of Finance in working out some way in which a contribution, some kind of collection can be made or more funds can be made available for the Hospital without impacting on the already very tight conditions expenditure wise in the country. I think that the task now that the Ministry of Health is to try to demonstrate to Barbadians the urgency of these considerations and to share with them how best we can achieve the objective. Members have referred to, at different occasions and maybe not even always in here to things like user fees, et cetera. We have, for the time being, and I see no reason for change in this regard so far -- not to recommend user fees. As I have demonstrated with a throughput of something like 25 000 people at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) annually, a user fee that would raise \$1 million would be \$40.

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

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: We do not believe that user fees is an attractive way of dealing with it. It is a much more comprehensive contributory health financing insurance policy arrangement where the working population participates in building that fund. A managed fund, a fund that invests its money very similar I suppose to how the National Insurance Scheme is operated, is the kind of approach which I hope that Barbadians will help us to shape and develop to its final stages.

Mr. Speaker, like everyone else has said there will be opportunities during the consideration of the Heads to come back in this debate. I know we have planned to deal with health after education so in that respect we will be able to pull out special areas for mention.

Sir, before I sit and before we take advantage of that opportunity I want to speak to one area though and that is the decision to construct and outfit a residential child and adolescent facility at the Psychiatric Hospital because I like everyone else reads the media too and I saw the contribution of one Member who spoke about the location. Let me say first of all that we do not run a 'Jenkins' in Black Rock anymore. The operation in Black Rock is referred to and has been for some time as the Psychiatric Hospital. We believe in health that mental illness is like any other illness or disease we may suffer from and we are happy to report that there are cures for many of the situations which we encounter. I am not an expert but I know from the information shared with me what we are talking about. Mr. Speaker, I want to share that in keeping with the Objectives of the Mental Health Policy the

Psychiatric Hospital has determined that a combined effort should be made to enhance the healthcare services provided to the children and adolescents. We are not happy with the conditions at present. Currently, there is a lack of a facility within the existing physical structure of the hospital and its environs to accommodate children and adolescents who require in-patient care for mental health related problems. Such a deficit undermines the level of service delivery necessary to produce optimum outcomes for children and adolescents. The numbers in terms of young children 16 years and younger is something like 174 cases that we tend to have to deal with per year, so you can see it is important. The establishment of a dedicated facility for children and adolescents will provide direct benefits at different levels. These include benefits to patients as they will have greater access to child-centred treatment services and care that is sensitive to the psychological, developmental and rehabilitative needs of this population and greater flexibility and comfort afforded to children and adolescents undergoing treatments under the guidance of professional staff and with direct involvement of their families.

Additionally, the Unit will cater to the social, educational and other developmental needs of the patients through a comprehensive range of services, therapies and programme. It will also provide more flexible engaging in attractive surroundings with supporting amenities such as parent rooms, activity interview rooms, examination, relaxation, conference and day rooms and an enclosed courtyard. Those are the plans, and let me end this way.

The Sandy Lane Charitable Trust will meet the capital cost of the construction and equipping of the facility. An estimated BDS\$2.335 million has been projected for the physical construction as well as the purchase and installation of the requisite tools and equipment. The Trust has also indicated that it will require exemptions from duties and taxes associated with the construction and outfitting of the facility, which is a regular requirement.

Sir, I hope in these few brief words as I spoke at this second reading stage of the consideration of the Bill that I have been able to share with the Barbadian public some of the challenges which we face and are fully aware of and have been articulated by all of the Honourable Members who spoke: The challenges in terms of our economic realities in Barbados and the fact that we have to do something about it. It is not about talk about it, it is not about the need only to do something about it, it is about what are you going to do about it.

Certainly Sir, I want to thank all those who can be so readily associated with the successes which we enjoy. I am very grateful to you, Sir.

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

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, permit me first of all to extend my infinite and eternal gratitude to the people of The Ivy. Whatever I am, I have said before, they are the people who shaped me. Whatever I say that makes sense or do not make sense, St. Giles Boys' School more so than any other school across Barbados has shaped me as well. All of the people who I interact with in Tichbourne, Licorish Village, Martinique Road, St. Barnabas, Haggatt Hall, Hothersal Turning, parts of The Pine and all of the areas within the embodiment of the St. Michael East constituency I am what I am because of you and I will be eternally grateful.

I also had the privilege of serving 14 years in this House of Assembly and there is nothing more important to me than the fact that the people that I grew up with and who understand the difficulties that I face and they face that they felt that I was suitable to come to the House of Assembly on three occasions. It is nothing to do with the accumulation of wealth or the elevation of high office or even public ostentation. That is just an aside, Sir, and it kind of interrupt me.

Sir, I think that in this debate, especially when an aggregate of over \$4.5 billion is going to be spent in the geography of Barbados, that my rather primary responsibility is to see how some of that money would reflect itself in the quality of life that the people of St. Michael East would be able to enjoy. I know some people would go for the big national picture and also for the even the regional picture and believe that if they get involved in matters of that global tide it would manifest itself as something that is so esoteric that it would kind of build their image and also their egos. I do not want to build any ego, I want the record to show that for the 14 years which I served... I do not have to point at the symbols or the realities across St. Michael North East in the physical facilities of St. Michael North East whether it is housing, or the complexes, even jobs and doing the good for the people of St. Michael North East. I want to really continue to make a contribution and see that all of this these mathematical constructs which I truly do not believe hold any logical or theoretical basis especially when I see manifested in this document \$21 million repeating itself as a subsidy for the Transport Board, and so I ask myself how can these dynamics be changing, all of these variables, and every year a bureaucrat will take this matter to the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs under the goodwill of offering subsidies to the Transport Board and it is the same exact figure down to the last cent. What could be the rationale for arriving at this, that you have the same figures and then we are engaged in a deep debate, so to speak, on trying to relate these figures to reality? I cannot get it understand. Where is the research? If there was research

and you have extrapolate anything meaningful from the research, you cannot get back the same figure again. You cannot just come and say that you have fixed an amount for you for eternity, you have to be able to reason that out if you are contributing anything of any substances to the Minister with responsibility for executing the programme.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know who chopped but every time these people chop and I can probably on more than one occasion in the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure itself, every time they chop they come back to the same figure. Sir, I know that is not true, therefore I prefer to look at how the programmes are implemented, I do not want to say how the ones that have failed because unfortunately, sometimes you become so 'acculturised' to using these approaches that you begin to, in a genuine sense, believe that you will be able to execute the programme with the limited funds that are available to you, only then to discover that six months will elapse and you have to come back to the House of Assembly for more money in the form of Supplementary, so that there are many ways outside the ceiling that will allow you to probably attempt to correct the false representations that sometimes can mirror itself inside Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure every year. Mr. Speaker, that is the reality.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes we talk long and some people say that we should not need that amount of money, while some may say that we need more, but if you get more money sometimes the value of money, although it may not be referred to as a devaluation, it can really buy lesser goods and services because of what is happening in the arena itself, both at home and abroad. Therefore you have the same amount of money, which can either be more or less, but the goods and services that you enjoy are less that is why I said that there is no real mathematical construct of a logical basis that is responsible. Sir, it is a theory, not an original, you have to find something coming out of the research in order to justify the figures. Therefore, if you cannot justify the figures when they are put here, then it does not make sense.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to get into that, that is for people of a higher understanding of these different methods of calculating what is required in order to bring about the transformation. Mr. Speaker, I am more concerned that as a people we have done our best and regardless to how difficult the times are, we show the required resilience but we still have to ensure that some levels of amelioration be applied in the system from time to time. Sir, I am very concerned with what I call "western" thoughts and the constant arguments about privatisation, with people not even being conscious that it is this kind of system in its more vulgar traditional form that is responsible for where we are today and because of the new challenges nobody is defending the socialist agenda.

Mr. Speaker, there is an abandonment on the socialist agenda, although in my view the socialist agenda is more related to human-beings than to institutions and states. I am concerned about the quality of life that my people in St. Michael East enjoy and therefore my focus is on what is happening there in relation to housing, employment, roads and the challenges that we are facing in the lower pockets. Mr. Speaker, this has haunt many representatives in St. Michael East and every one in St. Michael East who comes as a representative, the people who do not fully understand the challenges that we face, conclude that nobody is solving this problem.

Mr. Speaker, I have actually committed myself to fight this cause from the time I entered this Honourable House. Mr. Speaker, in terms of electoral support the pocket in that geography has probably the largest numbers. There are many people still in that community who cannot enjoy modern utility services that is so important to their health and to their general comfort as human beings. We are living in a modern society and there are many things that people would love to enjoy but a lot of people in that pocket cannot enjoy it. It is also very difficult sometimes to really understand which units live on Zone One pocket and would not be allowed to stay there had the Town Planning Department had its way, against the ones who can stay. There is a small pocket that has on it many houses now but over the years the Town Planning Department has allowed C.O. Williams to dig a large hole in the land and to fill in that hole with a lot of debris over the years and it was not a concern of the State at that time with what that businessman was doing. Mr. Speaker, what was dumped into that hole is equally as threatening to human existence, or was far more severe to the threat of human existence than people who had no choice, because they want to live in a house like any civilised person, but to rake up \$6 000 or \$7 000 only to build some place in which they can shelter, not one with the luxuries that we as a people in this Honourable House enjoy but small homes which from time to time they do extend and they continue to live on that pocket. Mr. Speaker, that has always been a challenge and the more and more houses that are constructed, I would love to hear that the policy is. Sir, I keep asking what is the policy.

Mr. Speaker, you can let them stay but it is so important for them to know that this Government has no intention... Mr. Speaker, only about two weeks ago the Town Planning Department was echoing the same nonsense that he has been echoing for considerable time, they were still threatening the people who live in the Belle.

Asides.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Your last representative accompanied the police and the Town Planning Department to the Belle to remove the people from those

lands. He was the representative for St. Michael East and I know that we are not supposed to call names but to give even greater clarity, Mr. Kenny Best. He took officers there and although these people caused him to be their representative, the same people who gave him the job of being their representative, he accompanied the Chief Town Planner and the police to the site.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please be careful how you are going down that route. I remind you of the rule that you are not supposed to attack persons, except in their professional capacity. If you are going to do that, you should issue to the Speaker before your intentions of what you intend to say. Honourable Member, you have not done that so please move forward.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD: I do not know his name, but the representative before me. I do not know, and I believe the dictionary interpretation will hold a different view in this context, but that is not the argument. The argument I am trying to make is that we need people who understand the importance of the development of small communities and must be sensitive to the challenges which the people who live in these communities are experiencing. I will go a little further. My friend -- probably that should be unparliamentary too -- the Minister of Finance, I also have a clipping from a newspaper here. I know I cannot call his name, but I have a clipping from a newspaper here, where in a formal forum in the company of a representative of the High Commission of Canada, the officer felt so concerned about what was happening in that Zone 1 pocket that the question was asked, "Why, after offering this Government \$40 million from a Canadian bank, of which the Canadian Government was fully supportive?" I would have to have an explanation. I believe I deserve an explanation. I believe it is only also civil to give me an explanation on why \$40 million would be offered to you to resolve the problem in the Belle so that you would not have to bulldoze the people there. Somebody would be sleeping at five o' clock in the morning and you could hear the sound of bulldozers and trucks coming to dismantle people's houses. This matter is of importance to me equally as much as a service related to those who functioned in B.C (before Christ) about disciples and prophets in the Bible. This matter is equally as important to me, because this is a second-half 20th Century reality that I believe ought to be resolved by this.

Twenty million dollars was offered to the Barbados Government, and it was said in the discussion that all that was required was the signature of the Minister of Finance, and that the \$40 million would have been disbursed and we would have been able to construct the reverse osmosis plant in the Belle. Consequently, people would have been able to enjoy all the modern facilities; toilet facilities like anybody else. They would have been able to access a mortgage because the people are not asking for the land free. As long as you regularise the situation, the people

there are prepared to pay rent or purchase the land. What the Town Planning ought to be doing is working along with other officers who are involved in this matter, which is the Water Works Department (Barbados Water Authority) and probably the Ministry of the Environment in order to bring a practical, sensible, humane conclusion to the settlement of this exercise across St. Michael East. I am concerned about that.

Sir, the other aspect of great concern to these parochial matters relates to the harassment in recent times of the Urban Development Commission (UDC). I have been trying to make contact with them over and over again, because officers are going.... I am not speculating. I am not trying to damage the image of any institution or any Prime Minister. Officers from the UDC are going into my community and telling people who live in UDC units that these units are not theirs. I had to go to a house, and I sat in the front house because I told the owner, "Tell me when the officer is coming. I want to be inside when he opens the front door." I read the Riot Act on arrival. These are poor people who did not ask UDC for any house. UDC officers went into communities, saw the state of the houses -- this was before this Government's time -- and decided not to use the provisions in the UDC Act but use the provisions in the Ministry of Health Act, so that they could make claims that the nature of the house itself was so bad that it would have affected the quality of health of the people who were living in the houses. This therefore gave them a justification, a legal grounding, for taking action in demolishing the houses. People had to live at their families, rent places to put them in; and then when the houses were completed, people came back into them.

People took the responsibility and the insurance companies responded favourably to insuring units in the name of the people, because the people were of the opinion -- in some cases without a written agreement -- that the houses belonged to them. Just like how the present Government gave the houses in the National Housing Corporation to the tenants -- we will talk about that too -- the people felt that this was a form of ownership for them. They did not know that they were living in the houses under some licence in which they did not pay a cent to stay in the houses, and now they cannot insure the houses, and yet the State is not paying the insurance for the houses. People are living in the UDC houses willing to pay the insurance for the houses, and the corporation is saying "you cannot pay". Can you imagine the discomfort these people are experiencing; calling me to their houses to reason this thing out? I believe that some level of clarity needs to be brought to what the status is of the people who live in those houses. Are they tenants? Are they owners? Are they licencees? We need to know exactly what the legal status of those people is. It is very uncomfortable.

I will say this to you based on my knowledge and the history behind it. This issue with those houses was not an issue in the initial stages; not until a house was constructed and a family member decided that he or she would now live in the house which a senior person had been living in before. It was in the same location, and as a consequence of the person living in the new house and putting the family member in an old house, a written agreement was made. My view was that, as a result of the written agreement, people were allowed to live in the houses at a ten per cent depreciation of the value of the houses, with the house reverting to the original owner in full after ten years. That was the arrangement. That was the arrangement agreed on by the Board of the Urban Development Commission and it is something that we need to put to rest. That is what I am saying that my discussions on this one is multidimensional, it has a socialist view because you have to focus your attention on what I call an eternal mandate for me and it should be an eternal mandate for all of us if you know your history. We need know how we are going to resolve these problems. Our people must be able to live and enjoy a comfortable life like anybody else.

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

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Thank you, Sir. The issue of transport is also obviously one in my constituency but it is a big one and it not going to be one that is going to be resolved easily because while it would opening up the debate because I want to at least give you my perspective and hopefully the perspective of this party on the whole concept of what is economic enfranchisement against the definition of privatisation and I personally believe that privatisation would also be interpreted within the context of our historic journey and always will be. When people hear about privatisation and people believe it is an easy solution to something, whenever I hear privatisation my skin crawls because as I told the Honourable Member for St. George South recently, when I hear privatisation I remember Sir James Drax, I remember the Lascelles family so my skin crawls. I am not interested in that, I do not even like to hear the word. I am concerned about where is the view that was once expressed by both parties on nationalisation and that marriage of a socialist perspective of how we nationalise? Go back at the history of the debate surrounding the nationalisation of the Barbados Transport Board and let me hear what the voices were saying then against what I am now hearing about the Barbados Transport Board. Everybody seems to be disguising or camouflaging this gradual transition into what they call privatisation even if it means it is as a consequence of an increasing offer of licenses to the private sector. Yes, the private sector was always involved and we always had both but I also know a time when that Transport Board was controlled exclusively by the private sector with the Damien buses and Blades Hill buses and I know about that because the owners of the

Blades Hill buses are my cousins so I would know about that. I remember the Rocklyn bus and there was a view in Barbados then that the private owners were not demonstrating a social conscious and many of the workers could not get to work in time and could not get to work at all especially after about 6:00 o'clock when they feel that the routes no longer provided a profit. Profitability was not there. These people withdrew and therefore Ms Alice from St. Lucy could not get to work on the south coast. People had to walk to get to work and beg for drops to get to work. I want to hear a perspective that if some level of absolutism is given to the private sector what ... This debate has to not only be about institutions, about the Barbados Transport Board, the private sector, Sagicor and Simpson Motors, this debate has to come ultimately to the quality of life that people enjoy whether it is in education, housing or roads. What are you going to do when the private sector makes it profitable and you enrich them, which I would love to see, but then the most vulnerable people on both the social and economic rims of the society cannot get to work on time. Nobody does not want you anymore. I would hope that sometime we can come back to talk about people in tenancies in the rural communities across Barbados about if we shift to this classical perspective of privatisation. I want to hear the definition of what modern privatisation is all about. We would also extend that debate to the consult of economic enfranchisement in the paradigm that manifest itself in what is happening at UCAL.

Sir I want to thank you very much again. You have always been very lenient with me even when you tell me two more minutes sometimes you allow me two or three more. I would hope in the future you would always treat me that way, Sir. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak.

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

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Mr. Speaker, I rise to participate in this debate

I want to first of all begin by thanking the constituents of St. Michael West Central for allowing me the opportunity to reflect their concerns and their aspirations at a time when certainly Barbados is facing tremendous challenges. Many of us when we look and we observe the current situation that we are faced with that is reflected, of course, in the Estimates which we are discussing, we have to say that despite what you might hear coming from the Other Side really the Estimates in total is not just what we want inside here, it is really what the country as a whole wants to reflect in terms of the goals that it wishes to achieve over the next financial year.

The other point too, Mr. Speaker, I wish to say is that the fact that the Minister of Finance indicated that we

should enter into a discussion with the country on the way forward, I believe, is timely because you hear the Opposition saying or spouting that the time for that has gone, that it makes no sense doing it now, but very often when we look back at the involvement of the Opposition in past debates of this nature, clearly to have even try to engage in the discussion before would have been an attempt at futility in terms of bringing the attention of the nation the real challenges that this country faces. When I listened to the Honourable Member for St. Peter this morning and I saw Honourable Members from the Opposition going ahead to shake his hands I wonder if this is the same Opposition that has been debating with the Government over the past eight or so years on the solutions of what needs to be done and whether or not they have taken into consideration that the Government has been deliberately trying to prepare the country to face up to the challenges that they need to face because the solutions are not altogether what we as a country would desire.

When I hear Members from the Opposition hold up countries in the region, for instance Jamaica, which is the latest they are holding up, let us understand where Jamaica is at this point in time today. If an ordinary Barbadian was living in Jamaica the standard of housing that would obtain would be far less to what we have become accustomed to in Barbados. There is no Urban Development Commission or no Rural Development Commission in Jamaica to help the people to upgrade their standard of housing. If that is not true, why is it that they still have in Jamaica the shanty towns? If you go out into Kingston it is populated with shanty towns. I understand the anguish of the Honourable Member for St. James Central, he cannot face the truth.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Mr. K. D. SYMMONDS: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I heard the Honourable Member referred to the Honourable Member for St. James Central and I have not spoken in this debate as yet but I do know that the Honourable Member is misleading the House because the first place in the Caribbean with an Urban Development Commission was Jamaica.

Mr. SPEAKER: Well, I do not know that and that is something that I cannot rule on. Thanks for the elucidation. Honourable Member, please continue.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Mr. Speaker, if the Honourable Member for St. James Central was paying attention and not hear what he wanted to hear he would have heard that I did not say that they were not the first people to have a Urban Development Commission. I am saying that in Jamaica you can still find people living in housing way below the standards than what we are accustomed to in Barbados, and I am saying that the Barbados Labour Party is holding up

Jamaica as something that we must emulate and that we must aspire to, that is all I am saying.

What I therefore wish to point out, Sir, is that this Administration has tried to ensure that we keep the social contract in respect of health, education and housing to the extent that its resources permitted it to keep. We have to admit that and we should not mislead Barbadians into thinking that this is an Administration that does not care about them, we do. Why else, Mr. Speaker, would we have spent \$160 500 000 on health in 2015-2016? Why else would we seek to ensure that we spend \$41 million on the Transport Board? Why else would we seek to spend \$55 million on the Sanitation Services Authority?

The point I am trying to make is that we do recognise the challenges that we are facing. What is more important for us to recognise is that the challenges changes that would have to come about cannot be done without a new social contract in a sense being arranged that recognises the realities of what we face today and the fact that we need to go out there and speak to ordinary Barbadians as to the way forward.

I also want to say that we heard the concept of privatisation being spouted loudly as being the cure for everything. It is useful that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East when he was making his presentation just now pointed out the benefits of the State being involved in transportation largely because it enables those members of our society who do not have the benefit of private transport to be able to get to their workplaces. We do not appreciate that it is only Government that is prepared to take on that slack when a route is not profitable, and we have to ask ourselves to what extent can we maintain that social contract and in that regard how can we do it in the most efficient manner, and that is precisely what we need to do. We also need then to involve the social actors in that discussion to come to some common consensus as to the way forward.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to make the point that when we examine neighbourhoods even in St. Michael West Central we recognise that if we do not maintain or find a way to maintain the current system of benefits that people enjoy at the moment that it could compromise the quality of life, and I do agree with the Honourable Member for St. Michael East when he made that point. Mr. Speaker, very often when we hear the discussion on the way forward, because this is where we are at now, there are some people who would like to penalise Barbadians for the success that Barbados has achieved over the past 50 years and going onward. I listened to the discussion very carefully. People do not understand that. Even our Caribbean neighbours would sometimes like to think that we have gone too far too quickly. I heard the discussion about Barbados punching above its weight and on reflection I wonder

whether the person who made that statement was actually congratulating us or sending us a warning at the time that maybe we are out of our league and they would pull us down because when I listen to the discussion on the whole question of the rating agencies we see that attitude. Who does the rating agencies in this world serve? The rating agencies in the world serve the owners of capital in the world. The owners of capital in the world want the best possible returns and if they have to bring a country to their knees to get it they will do it and if they have to enlist people from within the respective countries to do so they will do it hence it is no surprise that we hear the Opposition taking the stances that they took today where it seems to me that they feel that the ordinary working class people in this country must bear the pains of some of their transgressions in the past.

Asides.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Mr. Speaker, I heard them speaking about the Hyatt Hotel and about us not wanting to play by the rule and all kinds of things. Mr. Speaker, clearly this Administration is sitting down and is listening to stakeholders on the way forward. Can you remember when that Administration had to deal with Greenland? Sir, despite the best advice coming from the professional agriculturalists in the land at the time they went ahead and did what they wanted to do. Is that a sense of a caring party?

Mr. Speaker, let us compare that to the approach of the Democratic Labour Party to the point where they themselves spun around and accused us of being too hesitant and asked why do we not go ahead and do it, that we were delaying projects. Mr. Speaker, we are delaying projects in order to do due diligence. In the past they never did that, they did irrespective of who said what, it had to go. Let us look at the prison, they did it irrespective of who felt anyway, despite the fact that the prison had not been completely burned down, they still went ahead and build a new prison, no matter who said what. Let us look at Kensington Oval, despite the fact that we have stakeholders telling them not to go ahead, that it was too expensive, that it be done differently... Mr. Speaker, they talked about legacy and about all kinds of things and this country is bearing the weight of it today. Mr. Speaker, those are the debts that we now in these Estimates are looking at, how we should repay, so that when you hear them going about telling Barbadians about this thing about we have gone too far and that we cannot do anything. Mr. Speaker, they know what they have created and they are going about this country trying to make Barbadians feel that they are at the edge of the cliff, that any further they will fall off.

Mr. Speaker, Barbadians must not be fooled. I am saying that, yes, we need to look at new ways in which we do things in which we deliver to Barbadians the benefits

that a developed country can afford to give its citizens, not to step back, not to say to our people who do not have transportation that they cannot get to work on time and that if they have to get to work that they have to pay between \$5 and \$7 per trip. That is not what we should be doing, we need to hold hands with Barbadians at this point in time and try to find a way so that this country can continue to progress and that irrespective of class, creed or race, that we can still have our people in this country being able to rise to the top like anybody else.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say also that we have to provide for the fact that we need to ensure that those talented Barbadians who to date have been deprived of making a contribution to the economic development of this country they should be allowed to do so once they have the necessary skills. Mr. Speaker, if we listen to the debate we hear talk about privatisation. Who do we want to benefit from the process? How do we ensure that even if we privatise that we have also the democratization of investments in this country where more of our masses can have stake in our country benefiting from the developments that we would see going forward at the same time. These are the hard questions that we need to answer, not the narrow-minded ones where the Opposition is telling Barbadians today that they are at the edge of the cliff. We were at the edge of the cliff in 2008 when we came to office because we were not supposed to be here at this time.

Mr. Speaker, in at every budget speech coming from the mouths of the Opposition was that the Government was going fail the next year, in every budget speech it was that this Government only had six more months, but we succeeded and despite what the Opposition is doing by trying to discourage persons about investing in this country we will succeed despite their efforts because this party represents ordinary Barbadians.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading this House, it cannot be that the Democratic Labour Party represents ordinary people when it gives all contracts to two or three rich conglomerates.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please take your seat. No point of order found. Please continue, Honourable Member.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Mr. Speaker, I know that small contractors in my constituency whose names I do not have to call, who have been paid.

Asides.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: I see you all running about the place down there, you would not keep out of Belfield? They are going to run you out.

Asides.

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

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, we have to ensure that the productive sectors in this whole transformation of this economy that needs to happen, they need to play a useful role in terms of the transformation of this economy. We have spent a lot. Mr. Speaker, I want to say this and I know that the Honourable Member for St. Michael East will agree with me, that Governments in the past have invested a lot in our people in terms of education, health and welfare. That is indisputable and has become even more necessary now that we invest in those resources, largely because the threats have not declined, they are still there. What has now happened is that the resources that are available to our people to deal with those threats are even greater.

Asides.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. James Central could make fun, the Honourable Member would not know about that, the Honourable Member was to the manor born and does not understand that, the Honourable Member could make sport of the best efforts of working-class people because the Honourable Member does not know what it is like, the Honourable Member did not have a mother who had to walk for four or five miles before she can get to work. I want the Honourable Member to understand that, so I feel it and I know it.

Mr. Speaker, the other point I wish to make is that the productive sectors need to be given the opportunity...

Asides.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: I know that you would go back to the working-class, I know that you do not respect them and that you use them.

Asides.

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

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Mr. Speaker, I want to say that at the same time we need to enlist the strengths of our working-class people in an effort to rebuild a new Barbados at this point in time because one of the things that we have not done is that we have not engaged our

productive sectors enough in the effort to create a new and more viable economy in this country, that is why sometimes when I listen to some members of the private sector who sometimes do not even appear to understand what Government is trying to do. Sir, I listened very carefully to some of the arguments coming from the private sector, and we do not understand that in many cases the problem that we have as a country is how we earn foreign exchange. Sir, the thing about earning foreign exchange is this: We can do it in two ways. We either earn it directly or we save foreign exchange. Sir, I also want to say that one of the things which we may need to do is to find resources so that we can help the businesses in the productive sectors which have foreign exchange-earning or saving projects. We need to find a way to fast-track their efforts in the effort to stabilise our foreign exchange reserves. I really think that in a sense it is clear that there are many Barbadians who have good and novel ideas which we can actually export, but they need assistance and a helping hand. Due to the way in which we construct our Budgets and our Estimates, it means then that because we are spending so much -- whether it be in education, health or welfare in general -- sometimes we are constrained to find the necessary resources to help those people in order to help carry their ideas a little further. I really think this is one of the ways in which we should be able to survive this particular period, and be able to at least improve the lives of ordinary Barbadians, Sir. I also want to say this: It is important that we do not discount the contributions of ordinary people, because one of the prejudices or the constant things which we see happening is that we have a tendency to look to foreign direct investment in order to pull us out totally.

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

Mr. J.D. PAUL: Thank you very much, Sir. I am not saying that foreign direct investment does not have an important role in terms of helping this economy to recover, but at the same time we cannot ignore the fact that sitting down in our country on the banks are thousands of dollars of cash. It is sitting there and nothing is being done with it, and getting the kinds of returns which are 'next kin' to nothing. How do we challenge our businesses? All of this money is not just earned by our businesses or businesses led by ordinary people. How do we mobilise the savings of ordinary people in the service of the nation? We have, for instance, our domestic financial institutions; the credit unions. How do we encourage credit unions to get more involved in helping to come up with projects in the productive sectors which can create jobs and foreign exchange? Sir, these are the kinds of things which we need to apply ourselves to.

I believe that if we make that type of transformation, in terms of how we view people and how we view actors

within the Barbadian economic landscape, what we will do is that we will therefore encourage more participation. We do not want to make the mistake of doing what the Opposition is suggesting and at the same time leaving out the contribution that ordinary Barbadians can make in terms of ensuring that we put Barbados on a more stable and sustainable economic path for the future. With that, Sir, I thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: I am obliged. Yes, the Honourable Member for St. Thomas.

Miss C.Y. FORDE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too wish to add my contribution to this Appropriation Bill and to indicate that I am beginning to understand better why the Democratic Labour Party is behaving the way it does. I know it is riled by what has taken place over the last few weeks, but more importantly what transpired on Saturday, March 11. I want at the outset to express my gratitude to the people of Barbados, because there are people from all parts of this country who make contact with me and indeed make contact with some of my colleagues, to discuss issues they have which I believe this Government does not understand or fails to understand what is impacting on the lives of Barbadians, who have grown accustomed to a better quality of life than what they had experienced growing up, especially those of my age group and a little younger. I feel extremely distressed at the 19 downgrades that have occurred. Sir, their information has been made available to us, and indeed I find it extremely difficult to understand why 15 of whom I consider to be mature and well-educated men -- they have all taken advantage of the free education, although they have put stumbling blocks in the way of ordinary people now -- and one well-educated female would want to sit and preside over a country that is going downhill by the minute, and watch people suffer, and seem not to be able to address the issues to stymie the process of decay which we see every day.

Sir, I just want to make brief mention of the Auditor General's Report of 2014, because if one would have listened to what transpired before January 2008, there were the mouthings, the insults, the criticisms and the disrespect that came from the Democratic Labour Party. All of those persons, no less than ten of them, on the call-in programmes on radio stations every day, were tearing down the Barbados Labour Party in a country that I, too, will reiterate was a country punching above its weight, according to the United Nations (UN) Secretary General when he opened the UN facility here. It is a fact, because Barbadians at all levels were able to go home with food in their stomachs and they had food in their stomachs at night, rather than going to bed hungry as they do now. Ordinary Barbadians got access to buying land or renting land and constructing a place.

In 1994, the Barbados Labour Party determined that “Job No. 1 was Jobs”, and we saw 32 000-odd people gaining employment. That is the reason why people’s quality of life was so much better, so that they were able to buy a motorcycle or a little car, and we had no choice but to extend our highways. Thank God the Labour Party did the Highway 2A Project that has made a tremendous difference with the over 100 000 vehicles that run on the road daily. It is said that when this Government came in, however, most of that highway plan was scrapped because of the fly-overs and so on, and extensions have gone as far as Redman’s Village. Mr. Speaker, to this day nine years later, nothing else has happened. Redman’s Village is the most dangerous part of the Highway 2A that anybody can travel going in either direction. Millions of dollars pumped in that project cost overruns and that is the reason why that too has contributed to the sad state that Barbados is in today. Mr. Speaker, the cost overruns that I looked at from the 2014 was to do with some breaches of the Audit and Financial Rules where the Barbados Transport Board, the Ministry of Transport and Works overpaid for supplies to the tune of \$1.3 million and that can be found at page 76 of the 2014 Auditor General’s Report and no proper justification, Sir, to this day, has been given. The Barbados Water Authority where participants in a utilities best practice United Kingdom study tour for July 2010 the money was paid to the tune of \$31,500 the ticket value being \$10,708 and there is no evidence of the tour even taking place. I am showing how small amount will accumulate to large amounts if these projects are not properly monitored and accountability put in place. I try as best as I can, Mr. Speaker, with my own limited resources to work within the budget I receive because I understand that if I go over the credit cards would put me in trouble, if I trust, my name would go into the newspaper and if I borrow I have to repay people so I cannot walk the road properly. A Government has to practice its affairs in a similar way. Then it goes to goods ordered from a firm totally \$462 786.26 that were not delivered. That was Barbados Water Authority again. There was no due diligence done, nothing was conducted and the firm was based in the United States of America (USA). Then there were good for the Barbados Water Authority, quotation 1027916 in June 11, 2010. An amount was quoted for the supply of good to the tune of BDS\$61 000 but instead, US\$61 000 was paid and still no services for the money. When the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) came in they spoke as though the Auditor General’s Reports that came before their time, under us, would have been the last ever that would be heard of and that things would go wrong. We are not saying that our Civil Servants are doing wrong, we are saying that when these wrong things happen, they must be corrected and things brought to book.

Mr. Speaker, we know of the water woes in the northern, the east west and the eastern parts of Barbados in 2015 when all of this madness would have gone on before

and people are talking about water mains not being replaced. The ones in St. Thomas were replaced by we were without water for one year and to this day the Honourable Minister has not said a word to us. The General Manager has not said a word to us or the people in the north. We have had some improvements but we are still having water outages and we can understand that but have communication with us that is all. It is like the MPC that has gone and dug up more than a mile and a half of road going across Canewood Road in Cane Garden and not one single word to the residents who have to suffer the noise pollution, the dust pollution, the inconveniences of travelling on that road and the property that they are aiming towards is a big conglomerate again, over in Lear’s but the poor people that run the stretch from the steel donkey roundabout in Jackson all the way up can get no natural gas. They have been bypassed to go all over to Lear’s and persons have to be running about with a gas cylinder in buses that are the most dangerous in Barbados, the ZRs that are on that Jackson route. That is what we have been saddled with by this Government that say that they care about people, DLP meaning “Dear Loving People”. I do not know where the love is, I do not know where their dearliness is going, but Barbados has been brought to its knees.

The final one on that on, Mr. Speaker, was works that were affected by the Barbados Water Authority locating leaks and they affected repairs to the west coast main, laid by a private contractor, the work was not quantified and the Barbados Water Authority did not recover cost to the tune of \$76 000. There are business people in Barbados today, Mr. Speaker, who own the Barbados Water Authority more than \$1 million for water but when a poor man has his pipe and he cannot pay because he has been put out of work by this Administration the pipes are turned off within a month and a half or two if arrangement cannot be made to be able to pay that water bill even if it is \$60 that pipe is turned off. What is the Government doing to recover the money in the million owned by big business people, hotels and all to make sure that money is in the kitty for our health services, our schools’ improvements, our hospital, our transport system that has gone to the gutter and the other social services? What is the Government doing about it? The small people are carrying all of the weight and being treated very unkindly all of the time but this Government that says it cares.

Mr. Speaker, the other one is at page 74, suppliers paid twice for work related to electrical renovations at Country Road School Meals Centre overpayment by \$65 671.92 and the funds have not been recovered yet. We heard about overdrawn salaries in 2016 Report from the Ministry of Education to the tune of \$498 000 odd. As of 31st March, 2014 approximately 176 accounts some of which were substantially including \$80 000. Eighteen new

persons were added to the list between September 2013 and March 2014 indicating that this issue has become more widespread and no answer for the Auditor General.

Then the indebtedness to the University. I would like to know through the Honourable Minister of Education later what is the status, what money is due to the University of the West Indies (UWI) from the Government although this amount of \$131 974 000 would have been up to July 2014. I know that there are thousands of young people who aspire going to the University and many of them will meet the qualification bar. Unfortunately, they cannot even think of applying because their parents cannot pay the tuition fees as a result of their parents being sent home and the Honourable Minister in the Ministry of Transport and Works, the Honourable Minister of Environment and Drainage, the Honourable Minister of Health, the Honourable Minister of Education, I cannot speak of agriculture with any boldness but most of the Honourable Members in here have had people sent home from their ministries and it hurts when ordinary people who have come through the same kind of environs as we did in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s and they have had their dreams and their ambitions crushed by this Government because they cannot go to access tertiary education at the University of the West Indies (University of the West Indies (UWI)). Many of them cannot even go to the Barbados Community College or to the Hospitality Unit. We saw over 98 individuals who came in from Africa for the hospitality training and that was chaotic but we have Barbadians here who could not get an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to pursue that course even though they met the qualifications required to do the studying then one or two other persons in the Democratic Labour Party (DLP), I would not mention them by name now, name meaning the position they hold in Government, said the next time a ??? like that is going to happen the Minister of education should inform them. The Minister of Education did not even seem to know that those Africans were coming here and they were so poorly treated up in St. Philip and all kinds of confusion with their money that was to be paid to this Government, over a million dollars. What is happening with the management of the affairs of this country under this Democratic Labour Party? It is sad. I am not going into any depth to do with the Grotto and Valery, except to say that the Housing Credit Fund was designed for low income housing for the on-lending to come through the Mortgage Finance Company as well as credit unions and that money, \$30 million it is said, was spent on the development of The Grotto that is still lying empty where we are hearing that the water pressure is so low it does not even go up to the highest floor and that tiles are lifting up off of the ground and that what should have been built for poor people or ordinary working class people who could meet the criteria of the cost \$125 000 to \$195 000 now would cost \$300 000 or \$450 000 per unit. What is happening, Mr. Speaker?

The General Workers' Credit Fund served poor people - I am going to say it over and over again - and gave them a hope at least for a waterborne toilet. This is not happening now. Mr. Speaker, it is amazing that if you sit down and look at all of what took place with the overspending with interests so high at The Grotto and at Valery Development, over \$1 million in interest was accrued, \$240 000 for Valery and \$784 746 at The Grotto, because the submission certificates of the practical completion as required by the contractor was not adhered to and paid and the Corporation incurred that kind of penalty. Something is definitely wrong with this Government and the management of the affairs of this country.

I come a little closer, Mr. Speaker, to speak to the office complex at the Schools Meals Department that was refurbished in 2006/2007 and completed in 2008 because I have a serious problem with the rentals that this Government is incurring in moving offices from one place to the next sometimes without any problem. I am one of the firm believers that employers and employees should have the best working conditions and environs in which to function. I know and the Honourable Member for St. Lucy and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West know of what I am speaking because the Rural Development Commission was moved from a rural community paying a few thousand dollars per month and taken into urban Barbados on Bridge Street to pay thousands of dollars per month on a rental.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. The Honourable Member was in Cabinet when the Rural Development Commission paid the same landlord to be housed up at where Sky Mall is and not only did they agree but they have cheques and payments showing that money was paid to the Sky Mall owners for the Rural Development Commission to move there.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member just a minute, no point found though because I treat that as a point of clarification. You go ahead.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Yes, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member cannot clarify it for me I have said so four times and this is the first time he can answer.

The point is that is that I sent correspondence to the Rural Development Commission almost every week because I have poor suffering people in St. Thomas who require assistance with their houses or assistance with repairs or a waterborne facility because that is the way I think Barbados should continue to go, empowering poor people and providing them with the facilities that make

them have the pride and joy to be proud Barbadians... The Honourable Member knows that the Omnacentre in Speightstown is where the Rural Development Commission was before he and his team relocated it to Bridge Street. The Urban Development Commission was on Roebuck Street and that now is in the same facility with the tiles reaching up to the roof. I do not know what that represents. The Honourable Minister of Youth Affairs was facilitated at the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation at Constitution Road where they were only required to pay for the utilities, the light, the water, the telephone and so on, and that too has been moved to Sky Mall now. It is same story. Sky Mall looks like the residence of new President of the United States of America. I like it for people to work in for the ambiance and to make them happy but when we look, Mr. Speaker, you are talking more than \$1 million in rent yearly.

Asides.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Bring the file from Moon Town where you are frying the chicken and then weighing it, that is unhealthy and the Ministry of Health should see that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the School Meals Department that had an upgraded office facility at Country Road next to the Schools Meals Department where they are preparing the lunches was renovated by some \$100 000 and to this day nobody has gone into it, it is still in Cole's Buildings, more rental again. I have a difficulty in understanding it because that is adding to the millions that we want to help us to put this economy on a more productive and even keel, and that is point I want to make.

Sir, when I look at the walk over in The Pine that is \$2.5 million that hardly anybody goes over and boys or women are up on it throwing down stones and hitting people's cars sometimes at night, more money gone down the drain. When I look at the 72 guard huts that were built by the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation and not a single person has gone into them, not a guard has been hired to work, another \$1 million has gone down the drain. The Rock Hall Freedom Village Project where over \$1 million was spent to build those six shops is still shut up. For me, that is wastage. The fire station over at Arch Hall has been shut down for five going on six years. If we have serious fires and challenges in St. Thomas and on that highway with massive accidents bad accidents, fatalities... The contractor is still owed millions of dollars and that is why it is not reopen. More money gone down the drain again. We had summer camps for six to seven consecutive years at approximately \$5 million per year which is, 7 by 5, \$35 million whereas in the past it was only \$900-and-something thousand dollars under us per year for more than 14 years. Something is wrong with the management of those affairs. The football matches under the late Honourable Member for St. John is about \$8

million in there. The constituency councils is about \$5 million. The Independence launch was \$2 million, that is my assessment, on January 6, 2016 with fireworks and all kinds of nonsense that was unnecessary and then \$7 million in November just gone. There are cost overruns at the polyclinic in St. John. It should have been \$20 million and it ended up being \$39 million, another \$19 million there. CLICO was given \$10 million by the Central Bank of Barbados, and I want to know if that has been returned because CLICO is in big trouble and the Honourable Prime Minister said that the leader of CLICO is his pal, that he is an estimable man, meaning the person who was in charge of CLICO.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: On a point of order. I hate to interrupt the Honourable Member but unfortunately the Honourable Member is misleading the House, but I am not surprised on this occasion because I have heard this before from some Opposition Members, I have also heard in the past, stating that the Central Bank of Barbados gave some company associated with CLICO, Colonial Life Insurance Limited, \$10 million but that is not true. The record will clearly show that when the crisis hit that particular organisation or the situation hit that particular company that the Central Bank of Barbados as is its fiduciary responsibility provided a back-stop of \$10 million in a facility at the Central Bank of Barbados to be drawn upon by the then company, which name I cannot recall, which was eventually taken over by the credit union to be made available if necessary to be used. Those resources were never transferred and they were never required by the company.

Mr. SPEAKER: Thank you for the clarification, Honourable Member. Honourable Member, please continue.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I got some clarification there from the Honourable Member but I cannot always trust his judgment when it comes to explaining because when we investigate it is not always right but I know that I saw the then former female Governor of the Central Bank of Barbados with the late Prime Minister saying that CLICO was safe and so on and therefore we are investing this \$10 million in it.

Asides.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: I am a layperson, I can only go, I cannot even control my few coppers now unless I sit and calculate at the supermarket too, so I accept what the Honourable Member is saying but I would want better clarification as it does not really satisfy me to the little ability that I have.

Mr. Speaker, I smiled this morning when I heard the Honourable Member for St. John making her contribution. The Honourable Member though does not really seem to be in lived contact with what is happening in Barbados generally and I had a chance in St. John within recent times to be up there to hear the people suffering and to see them coming down last Saturday in large numbers because they too are fed up with what is happening in this country. Mr. Speaker, when I heard the Honourable Member saying that there is access to medicine and to services and that the elderly are getting their pensions and that salaries are paid. Mr. Speaker, salaries are paid but when the Democratic Labour Party came to office in 2008 Barbadians were taxed to the 'max' in the very first budget to the tune of \$100 million and that taxing went from the womb to the tomb.

Mr. Speaker, I was advised by those who were doing the investigations, coordinating and doing the research that we should really put water at 100 per cent. The Honourable Member deferred that and then came back and said that water would go to 60 per cent, and senior citizens are out there suffering. In the following year we saw another \$100 million in taxes to undertakers and different kinds of people. Mr. Speaker, I am not saying that Barbadians are not to pay taxes but I have a problem when some people are earning large sums of money, some of whom are practising attorneys and are not paying one single cent for PAYE. We had a system where the salaries of some ordinary people were so small and we felt that they were unable to pay that amount of tax towards the PAYE system, who got Reversed Tax Credit. Some time later this Government cut that down to only \$650. Now those people, maids, gas station attendants and others of that kind who were looking for that money to help pay their little dues and so on to help them to buy school things in August, et cetera, they no longer get that anymore.

Mr. Speaker, pensioners have grown accustomed to getting a little something extra every year but that has not been happening with the cost of living so high, with people now paying handling fees. Sometimes people cannot get the medication at the hospital or at the polyclinics and have to go to the private pharmacies. Mr. Speaker, it is hard on them. I have constituents whose partners, either husband or wife has died and who are still waiting for survival pension's benefit. Mr. Speaker, up to yesterday evening at minutes passed eight one of them called, this is four years now that her partner for more than 50 years has died and she has not received even one cent in benefit paid to her. I have officially written to the Director of the National Insurance Board because it is not fair, the lady is not a breadwinner, she has never worked, her partner was the one who maintained that household but there is no money coming to her.

Mr. Speaker, I have persons in the welfare system who has disabled children, some of whom will never walk,

talk, lift a spoon or go anywhere even to school, who have gone under a review by the Welfare Department and there has been no maintenance to those persons because it has been stopped at that point in time. Mr. Speaker, to the Honourable Member's credit, I will call and ask him to look at it for me, as that is the only credit I will give him now but I did not like the Honourable Member's performance today, but we will get a chance because in here is not to do the dingy politics, we will deal with that outside when we have to, but we still have poor women out there.

Mr. Speaker, while I will extend thanks to the staff of the Welfare Department, because I would say that 98 per cent of those whom I have met and know do behave professionally, but that 2 per cent is like politicians where one or two of them would play the fool and do silly things but then every politician would get lumped into that. If an attorney-at-law or priest does something stupid then every attorney or priest gets lumped into it.

Mr. Speaker, I have got some experiences that hurt my heart, with the dirty insulting comments that some Welfare Officers, as I said the small percentage, are saying to those poor people.

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

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, I would want better to be done, if there is need for training, as I saw in one of the dailies only yesterday that there are new changes, I would want for proper training to be given to those officers who talk down to people, who tell women to go look for the men, who tell them that the men should give them something. Mr. Speaker, most of our men are not criminals but when they cannot pay the child's maintenance for between two to eight months they are taken to prison. We have men in prison who deserve not to be there, they are only there because they cannot maintain the children. Mr. Speaker, if only men would follow the example of many of us and would make sure that they cover up, because in these Estimates we are seeing a limited amount and sometimes none going in for HIV/AIDS training which is critical.

Mr. Speaker, as I close let me please say that it is not only a St. Thomas problem now, when the Honourable Member for St. John spoke this morning I cringed in my seat when the Honourable Member chastised those on her side who seemed to be overlooking the other critical needs that the people of St. John have. Sir, all the time I was saying that it was bias, that there was no equity but I did not know that the Honourable Member for St. John was feeling the same pain, anguish and hurt that I too was feeling because the Honourable Member's roads are not getting fixed, her bus service is bad, her garbage perhaps is

getting picked up, while mine is not. Mr. Speaker, the people of St. Thomas are suffering in a different way and I am happy to have been a part of a Barbados Labour Party, despite what others on the other side are saying, that look for equity, to make sure that when roads were being built that they were built across Barbados; that trucks were bought for the Sanitation Service Authority to collect the garbage; that buses were bought and proper systems put in place to be able to have those buses repaired; that services were offered to people across Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, when you come to St. Thomas to visit your extended family, I believe that some of them are still in the area, make sure that you drive a mini-moke or a Land Rover, as every single artery leading into St. Thomas is in a state and we are having to face the various agencies to buy car parts and so on because of the bad road network in the parish. Mr. Speaker, our schools are not getting the benefits and so I would want the Honourable Member to tell me what is being done for the schools in St. Thomas and I will start with the Lester Vaughan School. The school is in such a deplorable state for maintenance, meaning repairs and painting more than anything else. Mr. Speaker, I blame parents who allow their children to go to school and write up the walls and so on but this maintenance relates now to tiling and cleaning up because of the heavy used of that facility. I want to hear from the Honourable Minister.

Mr. Speaker, I close by saying that I would like for the people of Barbados to be told what is going to happen to the arable land in St. Thomas that is lying fallow when we know that there has been a policy for land for the landless. Barbadians want to work, all cannot be vendors, all cannot be carpenters, all cannot be cosmetologists and so on but Barbadians want to work. Mr. Speaker, the land is lying fallow, it is in the hands of big businesses and I want to know what policy there is that the Government is following. I want to know through the Honourable Member for St. Philip North what is going to happen with the road infrastructure. I want to know about our 3 500 youths who are coming out of school every year but the ones in St. Thomas cannot get into “Endless Impossibilities” because the Honourable Member cannot say how many people have found work but the people in St. Thomas want to do training, they want to be able to go to the Barbados Vocational Training Board. There are no opportunities for them to be able to do so, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to advise the people of Barbados that we still have hope in a better future and therefore thousands of them came out on Saturday and sent a strong signal to the Democratic Labour Party that has it so rattled that they are trying ‘FACTS’ to be able to say to Barbadians what the Democratic Labour Party has done and will do. We do not see the evidence there at all, Mr. Speaker. We want them to continue to “stead up” because

they are fed up, and to be able to hold onto hope and make sure that next Election -- since the Right Honourable Prime Minister had promised to investigate vote-buying or vote-selling -- they take the money, eat them out, drink them out, spill it out and vote otherwise. The people of Barbados have been given a raw deal by this Democratic Labour Party that came in with a nice, glossy Manifesto in 2008 and came back in 2013 and worked its way in and won. We had no problem; the people had spoken, but this time around they are feeling it in their bellies, Mr. Speaker. Every minute you are hearing of a breakfast club. Every minute you hear of the vagrancy group and others feeding people in National Heroes Square. Are we talking about Heritage Barbados, Mr. Speaker? Something is wrong with the Democratic Labour Party; and with the madness that goes through their heads sometimes, it would seem that they want to make people feel “we are doing it all good for you”. In reality, according to the Honourable Member for St. John, we are not feeling the good that should be permeating through our veins as a result of what you are feeding us.

The Right Honourable Prime Minister would have sent his letter for Independence to give us assurances: “We must continue to make the transition to real Independence. We must take the lead in shaping our own future. It requires us to realise that what Barbados becomes over the next 50 years will depend on how we are prepared to work, what sacrifices we are prepared to make, what standards we are prepared to set, and what core values we are prepared to subscribe to.” I agree with the Right Honourable Member, Sir, but I just want to say there is no hope from the Democratic Labour Party in respect of this because we will not have a proper future for our children with all the challenges which have been impacting upon us as a result of the poor management and governance of the Democratic Labour Party and all of the wrongdoing which we see, but which nobody seems to want to arrest.

Mr. Speaker, with those words I wish to thank you and trust that the Government will take advice on how to make a difference, because at the end of the day it is one Barbados. The poor, the working class, the middle class and all of us have to live here.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, thank you.

SUSPENSION

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 5:30 this evening.

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

The question that the Sitting do now suspend until 5.30 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without

division and MR. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, this Sitting is resumed. When the suspension was taken we were on Order No. 20.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of a Bill to provide for the Validation of the Excise Tax levied and collected on Motor Sports and Diesel by the Barbados Revenue Authority from the 1st day of April, 2014 to the date of the commencements of this Act, the Excise Tax Validation of Tax Bill 2017.

FIRST READINGS OF BILLS

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the first reading of the Excise Tax Validation of Tax (Amendment) Bill 2017.

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

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS (CONT'D)

ORDER NO. 20 (CONT'D)

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

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of this Bill.

I would like to begin my presentation by asking us if we recall: what is the real purpose of having Estimates or what is the real purpose of having an Appropriation Bill? This is a time really, Mr. Speaker, when as a Parliament, Parliament gets to hold the Executive accountable for how they purpose to spend the people's money. It is, in fact, supposed to be the most important function in the process of the Parliamentary life. In other words, Sir, the Executive, that is the Cabinet, comes to Parliament and says this is how we plan to spend the people's money for the next year and it is in derogated and in many countries, Sir, there are Committees that actually examine the Estimates. In fact, I remember reading it about South Australia for example, there are two committees that their jobs separately is to interrogate certain Heads of the Estimates. It is the most serious of processes and if we are to take ourselves seriously as a Parliament then we must take this process seriously but what I have been hearing over the last day or so is a rehash of speeches from time

gone by. Indeed, Sir, I am serious about this because we must take our Parliamentary responsibility seriously and every once in a while we would hear a call for Parliamentary reform but this goes through the window because we have this spirit of one-upmanship and we hear that there are 51 more weeks to go before Parliament is prorogue. What we were subjected to, for example, from the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is a rehash of her speech from last year, the same limit of unpreparedness. In fact, the only difference in her presentation this year from last year is that the Honourable Member for St. James Central is yet to curse her because last year I believe he walked down the stairs cursing her but the night is yet young. That is the only difference from what I heard and saw last year. We must indeed take this process seriously. We heard we will not be even dealing with the Estimates. That is what I heard from Her Majesty's Leader of the Opposition. I will not even be touching on the Estimates, I just want to talk about debt. Sir, you cannot have a discussion even on our debt without discussing how we got there and how we propose to move forward as a country because at the end of the day, the country still has to run. At the end of the day we still need money for education, we still need money for health, we still need money for sports and social care, all the things that, as Members of Parliament, that we come here to represent our constituents so that these things can be made available. This is what we are supposed to be discussing. On one hand you do not want to discuss the Estimates but on the other hand you want to make calls for all the roads in St. Thomas to be fixed but you do not want to discuss how do we provide the resources or how do you hold the Minister of Transport and Works accountable for what he says he is going to do with the moneys that he came to Parliament asking this Parliament to vote in support of his Estimate. There are the only two points I am going to deal with really because I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East says that in their Covenant of Hope that they have already identified two of the areas that they will address, 1) law and order and 2) corruption. Let me deal with corruption first.

We have this thing as politicians and if there is one true thing the Honourable Member for St. Thomas said today is that when you paint one person with a dirty brush - not her words, but more or less it is that - you paint all of us so the Honourable Member for St. James North from the day he walked into this Parliament he began speaking about corruption. He never says a word in this Parliament on any subject without raising the issue of corruption. He followed his leader from yesterday. Sir, over the last couple of years I have not heard on the ground the voice and the issue of corruption like I did pre-2008 but I am not going to raise the issue of corruption. Suffice it to say, Sir, this is why the public of Barbados no matter you pretend you are or if you walk in and you are a priest and a politician it does not matter because we have told them that he is

corrupt and he is corrupt and he is corrupt and she is corrupt, et cetera, and then go into the public domain and expect the public to think any different of you but luckily there are international agencies that look behind the vale and can look beyond the politics because, in fact, if you look at the last review in terms of the corruption index, Barbados is doing better than it was before the year before, et cetera, in spite of the noises that you hear from the Other Side. I call on us and I urge us to please move away from this because we are not doing ourselves as politicians any good at all. When I look into the mirror as I do from time-to-time, I question whether or not the person that I think I am, if the public of Barbados sees me differently because of the noises that we ourselves keep in terms of the issue of corruption and that politicians are the worst people in the world. I do not think of myself like that. I do not think of the Honourable Member for The City of Bridgetown like that but we do ourselves no good. Sir, as I said, the Estimates allow us to examine our Heads and examine what the Government of Barbados propose to do in terms of its finances for the next fiscal year.

Let me begin, therefore, by saying, and I am dealing with law and order in particular, that when my team and I went into Government Headquarters to discuss the Office of the Attorney-General that the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs began by asking the Commissioner of Police why exactly was he there because we had already said that we will not cut anything to do with law and order or defence and security. That is the first thing that the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs said and Mr. Griffith and his team said thank you Sir and walked and went down the stairs. My next remark, therefore, to the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs was: Given the fact that the Police takes up most of our budget why exactly am I here with the rest of the team, and we were told that we were free to go. Mr. Speaker, you will therefore see that in fact that in this year's Estimates that not only did we get what we asked for but there were no cuts whatsoever, such is the seriousness that as a Government we have been taking with respect to law and order in this country.

Law and order is fundamental to how we live as a country. If persons do not feel safe that they can go to school and return home safely or that they can go to work or go out playing and return home safely, then all that we are doing comes to nought because we cannot have a society that lives in fear. Even then, out of mischievousness or out of pure spite or for whatever ill feeling that these individuals have towards this country, up to a couple days ago I saw on WhatsApp a news report out of Toronto with a chap saying that he was shot in Barbados, et cetera, and I said to myself that looks familiar so I said to the Minister of Tourism was this not from about two or three or four years ago. For some reason something that happened four years ago begins circulating across Barbados again so the

impression is that another tourist gets shot. I am firmly of the belief that these are deliberate acts of wickedness to create the impression in this country that we have a crisis in terms of law and order and in particular in terms of crime, and that is far from the truth.

Mr. Speaker, look, if I look at my department, and I will go through them, the Forensic Services Centre is still functioning and still providing services for us not only here in Barbados but for the British Virgin Islands and Dominica. It is not functioning to its optimum because there are still some issues that we have to face and some challenges in terms of equipment but they are working. Indeed, what they asked for this year in the Estimates they have received, and I dare say it is a bit more than they got the year before.

The Police Complaints Authority is still functioning and is still receiving complaints about police officers in terms of their conduct, but you would hear me say, as I am going to say now, that in fact in most situations the complaints are more like boyfriend/girlfriend break up, et cetera than serious allegations against the Police that needs intervention and stuff, so I am heartened in that regard. What we are doing is that we are, however, amending the legislation to give the Police Complaints Authority more teeth so that in fact that when and if they have serious complaints that they have the ability to investigate and investigate independently because right now in most cases we have to depend on the Police to investigate themselves and provide us with the information and we want to move away from that. In that regard, the Chairman went off to Trinidad and had a look at how they function and we are going to make some changes.

Moneys have been provided for the Criminal Justice Research and Planning Unit for them to function in the next financial year. They are working on a few projects that are especially important to me. For example, they are doing a study in terms of the criminality of our young people between ages 14 to 16 as to why are they getting involved in crime, and that is important to us because we want to be able to respond. They recently completed a survey in terms of customer satisfaction for the Royal Barbados Police Force. We are interrogating that because the Royal Barbados Police Force wants to look at itself and determine what does the public think about them and more importantly what does their own internal people think about them in terms of how they are operating. We are interrogating that information and once that is completed we are going to look to see what changes, if any, we need to address in that regard. One thing that springs to mind is that I think that we need to look at our Personnel Department to expand and professionalise it because we have a Personnel Department that manages a force of 1 200 or 1 300 persons, and I do not believe that at this point in time it fits its purpose and stuff. They have completed a

gang study that again we need to interrogate because we have been hearing from time to time in Barbados about whether or not there were gangs in Barbados and to the extent that we do have gangs in Barbados how are they operating, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, I can say to you that the Regional Security System (RSS) has also completed a study recently on Barbados and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States. Again we are going to look at both those studies along with the Criminal Justice Research and Planning Unit and determine what response, if any, we have to do as a country. Moneys are being made available to ensure that these persons can function because their role is important. You cannot create policy in a vacuum so the necessary research has to be done and they are doing it.

One of the things as a country that have been said from time to time is that in fact that we do not spend enough time, money and resources in doing research on criminality and crime generally so that we would be able to respond better as a Government, and we are doing that, Sir.

Again, moneys have been made available for the Project Office, which is a bit more than was made available for 2016-2017. The Project Office, as you know Sir, has responsibility for managing projects for the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Office of the Attorney-General. I will probably touch more in terms of the projects that they are working on a bit later.

The Solicitor-General's Chamber, as you know Sir, is still working. We believe that we are short of staff given the level of litigation that we are seeing. If you look at the last Reports from the Judicial Council you would see that in fact that litigations have increased. I have the Reports for between 2008 and 2015 and you can see the increased amount of litigations and indeed the increased number of criminal cases, et cetera, so we need to be able to ensure that we can respond.

The Parliamentary Counsel's Office, the CPC as it is normally called, is still working well notwithstanding the fact that every time we bring legislation here we hear criticisms from the Opposition in terms of the quality of their services and stuff. Mr. Speaker, let me say that we have an excellent team of draughtsmen in the Chief Parliamentary Counsel's Office, some very dedicated officers who understand their roles and understand their roles very well. We are presently working on our Law Reform Bill and in that regard we actually have moneys in the Estimates for that because we have agreed to position for a Law Reform Commissioner so that we can have that. We have actually looked at all the laws on our Statute Books up to 2008. Those have been proof read. I believe that Parliament would be the repository. We have only done the proofreading up to 2008 which means that we still

have an issue in terms of another eight years, so that we need to have some resources to get those Laws on line and to have them proofread. Moreover, in proofreading the Laws up to 2008 we have found that there are some gaps, errors, et cetera, that is why it is important for us to have a Law Revision Section up and working so that those gaps that have been discovered we would have a dedicated set of personnel to address them.

Mr. Speaker, the Law Reform Commissioner's salary is about \$2, you then have the support staff, et cetera. Mr. Speaker, the point I am making is that there is a cost attached to everything that you do, this is why it is important to have the kind of discussion in terms of why you are doing what you are doing because you need to account to the people of Barbados in terms of how you are going to spend their money.

Mr. Speaker, there are still some issues in relation to the Supreme Court in terms of the physical surroundings. This goes back, I believe, to 2007-2008, even though from time to time we do the cleaning, et cetera, right now one of the chillers is down and we have to replace that. We are looking at replacing the present maintenance contract that we have because from time to time we have complaints from the staff there. Mr. Speaker, I say continuously that you spend more time at work than you do at home, most of us do, and therefore your work environment should be as friendly as possible and so we have to ensure that whatever issues that they have at the Supreme Court are addressed.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the court processes are not perfect, we are trying our best to see how we could speed up the times, not only at the criminal level in terms of having matters adjudicated but certainly at the civil level. Mr. Speaker, you would know that preliminary inquiries were abolished earlier this year, what we need to do is to ensure that we do not move the backlog issue from the Magistrate Court up to the High Court. We have accepted that we need to address that issue in terms of examining whether or not we need additional resources in that regard. It is my intention -- and the Right Honourable Prime Minister will forgive me for raising it here -- for us to look at the jurisdiction of the magistrates and to increase their jurisdiction so that they can address more issues. I think presently that magistrates have ownership of matters of about up to about \$10 000 and I think we need to move that probably up to about \$50 000 so that that time that they now should have they can take some of these smaller matters out of the High Court. Sir, I look forward to bringing that Paper and I know, the Right Honourable Prime Minister, that that will meet with your support.

Mr. Speaker, we have gone ahead, hopefully by the end of April we should have a Practice Direction with respect to plea bargaining. We believe that there are many individuals who will accept a guilty plea. My last

information is that once we have comments from a few more of the judges then that Practice Direction can be issued and we can move ahead with plea bargaining as another tool to reduce the backlog but certainly, if individuals accept it, move more of our young men from being on remand into the prison section which in some ways may redound to their benefit because the time they spend on remand will be considered. Of course, we are encouraging more litigants to go towards mediation. Of course, we have been holding more discussions in terms of conflict resolution, not only from the judicial perspective but even from the community perspective. We will be training community practitioners in terms of conflict resolution because we recognised that much of the violence we are seeing in our communities is as a result of the individuals not being able to solve conflict among themselves and so, for example, you might have two next door neighbours fighting over a land mark. Sir, we are placing the resources there.

Mr. Speaker, you know as a practising attorney that Barbados is not alone in terms of the challenges that we have in terms of the reduction of our backlog. It is a challenge that we have had for as long as I have been practising. I was called to the Bar in 1987, so that is almost 30 years now, but it predates that. It is a challenge not singular to Barbados, the last time I attended a Commonwealth Law Ministers Meeting I sat and listened and almost every law minister from across the Commonwealth complained about this issue as well. Mr. Speaker, I am not saying that as an excuse but that it is a problem that is not generic to Barbados but that we are doing our best in terms of the tools that are available.

Mr. Speaker, we have even spent additional resources in terms of the training of judges, not only in terms of the delivery of judgment but in terms of even delivering over judgments. Therefore it is not only in terms of the writing of judgments but being able to deliver an oral judgment because more often than not what litigants want is a decision so that they can move on with their lives.

Mr. Speaker, some of us in this country when every time the Caribbean Court of Justice makes a comment about Barbados you normally hear about now slow the system is, how inefficient it is, et cetera. Mr. Speaker, the Caribbean Court of Justice, for those of us who read, they do not adjudicate on matters out of Trinidad and Tobago where they are resident but if you were to read some of the cases out of Trinidad and Tobago or in the newspapers you would hear or read about cases that were in the system for 14, 20 or 24 years, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, a couple of days ago, if not this morning, I read a comment about the fact that we need to look at the cost of the administration of justice in Barbados. There was no comparison to what happens in other

countries. There was no analysis in terms of what salaries we pay, neither to the fact that our Supreme Court Building is a new building and that it is far superior to anywhere across the Eastern Caribbean. There was no analysis in terms of our staffing or of what we have available, but we have been told that the Inter-American Development Bank has done a study and that all of a sudden we must examine it. Mr. Speaker, we have been doing that, in fact, this process that we are doing is all part of that. We are doing an analysis in terms of what moneys we are utilising and whether or not we are best utilising them where they are located.

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

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Speaker, finally in terms of the Supreme Court, one of the things that the Caribbean Court of Justice contacted the region about, in fact, those who are signatories to the Caribbean Court of Justice, is the enforcement of judgments, whether we needed to do additional training in terms of bailiff, et cetera. We need to examine why it is that judgments are either not being enforced or are taking too long to be enforced, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, let me deal quickly with the police. As you know and as I said earlier, most of our resources will be made available to the Royal Barbados Police Force. From time to time I hear from the other side that we are not making resources available, that policemen are complaining about not having vehicles, not having uniforms, et cetera. This year, for example, we have allocated, I believe, about \$1.8 million for a fleet replacement. The last time I had a discussion with the management of the Police Force, the simple question I asked them, for example, was, "Why is it that you have money allocated to you and I am hearing officers complaining about not having uniforms?" The issue is not the Government, as people like to say. The issue is not that the resources are not made available. The issue was that somewhere along the line whoever was supposed to ensure that the processes were followed and that the tendering was done and so on, did not do it. You would hear that the Government is not making resources available. That is far from the truth. I will end in that regard by saying that, like all governments, but more so we have placed particular emphasis.... I go back to what I said about spending more time at work than you do at home, and police officers in particular spend an inordinate amount of time, especially those in the Criminal Investigations Department (CID), away from home. We are doing our best to ensure that we provide them with the best of facilities.

Down by the old Barbados Tourism Authority building we are doing some renovations there because the CID has been separated into different areas. We want to

have it housed in one location. We are doing the work there. We have done maintenance in almost every police station across Barbados. In fact, no, let me correct that, Sir. We have a continuing maintenance programme; there is no police station in Barbados that has not been touched by the Project Office in spite of our challenges. Sir, that is why I say you have to make the connection between our debt and how the money is being spent. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition in this regard; because law and order is important. Law and order is the bedrock of us continuing to live our lives like we do in this society. Law and order is the bedrock of why I, for example, Sir, as you very well know, can drive myself to Oistins on Thursday or Friday or Sunday nights and sit down and get back home safely.

Aside.

Hon. A.D. BRATHWAITE: This country has never been as bad as some commentators make it out to be, and under our watch, under the Democratic Labour Party, will not be ever close to what some commentators on the other side would like to create in the minds of the international community. Sir, I am sure that I will have the opportunity to come back, because there is more to be told about what we are doing for the good men and women of the Royal Barbados Police Force, but more important, what we are doing in terms of law and order in this country. I am obliged.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, the Honourable Member for the City.

Lt. Col. J.D. BOSTIC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me start first of all by complimenting the Honourable Leader of the Opposition for her presentation yesterday. It was shorter than normal, as the Honourable Member said, and that is because the Opposition really intended to get into the nitty-gritty by going to as many Heads as possible and to limit the Second Reading speeches; but obviously this was not supported by the Government and so we are in a position now where all of us are here speaking at this point in time.

I do agree with the previous speaker that sometimes we as parliamentarians are our biggest enemies in terms of public perception by the way we treat to each other, and I say that, for example, because of some statements which were made in this Honourable Chamber today and which have really disappointed me. Before I go into my presentation, I need to speak to one or two of these statements. Blood will run in the gutters of Barbados in the next General Election because of activities attributed to the Opposition Barbados Labour Party. Those were words, or words to that effect, spoken by the Honourable Member for St. Michael Central, and I find that statement, in all honesty, to be very disappointing, very unbecoming of the Honourable Member, and I am sure that it is one that he

probably is regretting having made even at this time. Mr. Speaker, I say that because I want to say to the Honourable Member that a march was held on Saturday where 9 000, 10 000 - however many you want to say -- Barbadians expressed their democratic right to voice their dissatisfaction with the Government of Barbados. The outcome of that march was similar to the outcome of every single final meeting that is held in this country on the night before General Elections, where less than a mile separates the final meeting of the Democratic Labour Party from the final meeting of the Barbados Labour Party and those meetings are conducted in a peaceful and civilised manner. That was the outcome of the march, and those activities are supervised by a competent, professional Police Force; one that operates in a firm, friendly and fair manner when it comes to these matters. This is how Barbados has been for several years.

When we talk about the Barbados Labour Party sending signals overseas that will paint this country in a bad light, I want to suggest that those remarks by the Honourable Member certainly paint this country in a bad and false light, Mr. Speaker. I also want to say to the Honourable Member for St. Michael Central that I and all the other Members on this side are proud Members of the Barbados Labour Party in the same way that tens of thousands of Barbadians are proud of this party, and in the same way that tens of thousands of Barbadians are proud of the Democratic Labour Party, and that there were certainly members of the Democratic Labour Party who also marched on Saturday. Mr. Speaker, I hope that in my time in this Honourable Chamber I will not hear any Members on this side speak so disparagingly about the Democratic Labour Party, as was spoken about the Barbados Labour Party today. Mr. Speaker, I also want to say for the record that contrary to the suggestions which were made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael Central, that the young 13-year-old Barbadian of Indian descent who went on stage on Saturday was not asked by the Barbados Labour Party to do so and was not requested to speak; but the family of the youngster, with both mother and father standing behind him, made the determination that he was the one to speak on behalf of the family. Let me just make those points very clearly.

I also agree with the Honourable Member who spoke last, that we have been hearing a lot of repeats within this Honourable Chamber during this Estimates Debate. I want to say early in my speech that I was extremely disappointed with the presentation made by the Honourable Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, and I say so not because of any exchanges that might have occurred between the Honourable Member and myself -- those are political -- but I say so because of the gravity of the situation that confronts this country and the enormity of the challenge that is required to dig us out of the hole which we are in.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just quote two extracts from the 2015 and 2016 Financial Statements made by the Honourable Member. At page 5 of 2015 I quote:

“It is said that the longest journey begins with the first step and as the evidence that we will put forward over the next three days will demonstrate we have begun that walk to a new beginning in Barbados where high deficits are no more, neither high debt, nor high unemployment but balanced, sustainable and inclusive growth that contribute to the expansion of opportunity the boasting of productivity and the reduction of poverty across this fair land or ours.”

The second one which refers to, this is a 2016 statement which says to us that the need to deal with any core elements in our economic condition that even if transient could cause long term complications to our foreign exchange anchor and then it speaks to what the principles concern for the Government were at that time. 1) Our debt levels are way too high and still climbing, 2) our fiscal deficit is still too large and must be better controlled, 3) as a result of the two variables above our growth levels are being seriously restricted as we cannot find the fiscal space to assist in further unleashing growth.

Mr. Speaker, I started with those two because honestly in these debates I really expected that there would have been a lot of focus on the economy. Contrary to the opinion of the last speaker, I believe that whether we discuss housing, tourism or any of the other ministries the important fact of the underlying problem here is that the economic conditions are those that are at the centre of all of these other things and the one that is perhaps most in need of discussion and discourse at this time. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition made the point yesterday about debt profiling and we also heard from the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter earlier today as he gave his presentation regarding the state of the economy and some directions that he thought we should go in. In my view, Mr. Speaker, we have not really had any serious debate or discussion on those issues and I believe that is one of the things perhaps that is lacking in the debates for this 2017 Appropriations Bill. I was disappointed really in the presentation by the Honourable Minister with responsibility for Finance and Economic Affairs because for me when I went back to those two Budgetary Statements and before it became apparent to me before a shadow of a doubt that the Honourable Minister really knows exactly what the difficulties are confronting the economy and certainly, at this stage, it should not be a repeat of the same things every year as we have these debates in this House of Assembly. I really believe that the Honourable Minister missed the opportunity to really instill some confidence in the general population of Barbados that I believe that his presentation unlike other presentations seem to be fairly lacklustre and lack the necessary confidence that we require at this point in time. What I

heard yesterday, Mr. Speaker, was a bolo pitching some, what I would call political half volleys outside the off stump hoping that the batsmen from the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) would be inducing to driving at everything so that you get the edges to be caught in the slips by the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) fielders. That is what I saw and heard yesterday. I say that because asking all the time for the Opposition to say what to do, what to cut, when I am certain that the Honourable Minister knows exactly what he has to do given the situation that confronts him. To be asking those questions to me really was playing political cricket. I believe that yesterday the presentation by the Honourable Minister really and truly was not serious enough given the situation that we face in this country and we, Barbadians, expected to hear a lot more from the Honourable Minister and also from those Members of Cabinet who had the opportunity to speak thus far in relation to their various ministries.

I believe that we ought to be going in a new direction in terms of our thinking when it comes to the Barbados economy and I am not an economist by certainly I am not a fool. This Government came in here, for example, with the Cultural Industries Bill which became the Cultural Industries Act, a good thing. We also heard about various aspects of tourism, cultural tourism, heritage tourism and we also heard about greening the economy and energy. Those were the things that were debated over the last several months in this Parliament and I believe the time has come, Mr. Speaker, where, for example, in tourism that we must be able by now to isolate the spending that is derived from heritage tourism so that we can quantify that aspect of the tourist industry to see if we are maximising the benefits of Bridgetown and its Historic Garrison being a world heritage site. Are we getting maximum benefit from this? Have we been able to say what this has been able to bring into the economy in terms of spend? Those are the things that concern me, Mr. Speaker. When we look, for example, at the fact that the BTMI has been allocated \$87 million and BTPA \$8.6 million, yes we have to market our tourism product but without going, I do not want to steal the thunder of the Shadow Minister for Tourism but these are things that have a significant impact, I believe, in terms of Bridgetown being revived and I think that certainly interacting with a lot visitors to this country especially those who come on cruises our attractions really and truly need a lot of money spent on them and also if we are going to market Barbados in the way that we are marketing Barbados and we do not spend anything in terms of what it is the visitors do when they come here then I think that is an area that we really need to improve on in terms of generating revenue in this country because when you speak to the visitors you will see that you get a better response. They say when the visit like Dominica and other countries because of what they have to offer. Our attractions really need a lot of work, they are tired.

I also believe to quote the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter who told me some time last year that if a country wants to develop a country should be looking at new economic frontiers and I do not think that we are doing that in this country and when you look at the Estimates you are not seeing any direction where that is concern. I believe for example, I mean it was said in a Budget or two ago about duty free zones and nothing has been said since. We do not know where we are with those. When we look at trying to have specialised areas of tourism, I spoke to heritage tourism. I will repeat something that I have said in here before which is the fact that we need to be able to maximise on the opportunity. Barbados is a highly aging population, we are in the top tier in the world but I believe that we should use this to our advantage in terms of creating a hub in Barbados for retired visitors in the same way that you hear about Dubai Health City I believe that we can create something within this country that can attract senior visitors who have money to spend and it will bring in foreign exchange and also help us to build out what has to be built out in terms of our capacity to house and accommodate our seniors because Barbados is a country that is at the high-end of ageing in this world.

Housing is an area that I shadow but to be honest with you, Mr. Speaker, there is very little that one can say about housing and that is why I have not been speaking to this issue in recent times not because of the great work that is being done in his opinion by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy but because the Honourable Member for St. Lucy who is responsible for housing comes to these Chambers and do not say very much in terms of what is happening within that ministry.

There are several questions that have been asked in this Chamber by myself and others in relation to the conveyances and a whole set of things but not one of these questions have ever been answered by the Honourable Minister. I am on record as suggesting that last year - they say that we do not make suggestions - that in the current economic climate instead of trying to acquire all sorts of land for the construction of housing, not that housing is not required... For example, we heard about the Exmouth project which has not gotten off the ground and land was acquired in Mason Hall Street, Kings' Village and in other places but the financial situation does not allow for the construction of these estates. In my view, and I would have expected to see this reflected in the Estimates, when you are faced with a situation where you do not have the wherewithal to build in the way that you would like you should have focussed on a very solid and strong maintenance programme to correct issues in relation to the existing stock which is an ageing stock, in particular those first sets of estates that were constructed many, many years ago that have electrical problems and all kinds of problems,

instead of trying to acquire this and acquire that and then you are not building anything at all.

I would also like to suggest, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Housing, Lands and Rural Development that something is required to be done within The City of Bridgetown so that those residents of The City would not continue to think of themselves as second-class citizens of this country. I say that because you had the Inter-American Development Bank project but nothing at all was done for the people of The City of Bridgetown and nothing has happened with the urban tenancies programme. Mason Hall Street and Kings' Village were identified for housing and nothing has been done there as well. Mr. Speaker, to support what was said yesterday by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, throughout not only The City but in the urban corridors, certainly within the four or five constituencies that I have had the opportunity to rub shoulders with the Barbados Labour Party, the state of housing is something that is really, really a serious concern. It is a vexing problem for the residents and we need to be able to do something about this as a matter of urgency.

I support the Honourable Leader of the Opposition in calling for collateral developments to be taking place whenever and wherever major projects are being done within the urban corridor in order to provide some relief for those people who live within the St. Michael communities in particular.

I would also like to posit, Mr. Speaker, that we cannot be having a serious discourse about transforming the economy if we do not address the problems associated with the educational and training systems in this country. I know that education is down for debate in the Heads and I am looking forward to that because I firmly believe that if we do not have the framework for the kinds and the new types of developments that we are anticipating in this country we would be doing an injustice to the country and to its people. I remember that, for example, I think it is 2010, a Report was done from a study on Jamaica and Barbados and in Barbados, according to the Report, 60 per cent of the people, I believe, who were employed within our clerical and technical fields were over educated and that suggests to me that there is a serious disconnect between the job market, I said so before, and the educational things that we are doing in this country, that is according to that Report.

Asides.

Lt. Col. J. D. BOSTIC: No, more highly skilled and more educated. The term was highly educated. They were over educated seriously speaking. That is what was said, that is what the Report was based on. I believe that what they were trying to say is that those persons were able to find jobs only in those areas and not the areas that they

were educated properly in because there were no jobs so they had to take the jobs that were available. There is no crime in it but the problem associated with that is that that creates... That is a problem certainly in the urban corridor, the problem of underemployment, where people are unable to sustain themselves even though they are working, and that is an issue that needs to be addressed going forward because that will also assist in getting people off of the poverty line and out of welfare and as a result of that that would also reduce the amount of funding that is required to look after those vulnerable persons.

Mr. Speaker, what I am hoping for the remainder of this debate is that we would be able to really deal with the issues that are central to the Barbados economy. I say so because as a Barbadian I do not feel good hearing the things that I am hearing and reading what I am reading about our economy and the downgrades and so on. It does not benefit us as the Barbados Labour Party Opposition for the country to continue to slide to get deeper in the hole because at the end of the day whoever assumes office in this country after the next general elections will have the responsibility and the mandate for taking Barbados out of the hole, so it is in all of our interest to be able to stem this slide and to get Barbados back on a positive path of growth.

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

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

SUSPENSION

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until Wednesday, March 15, 2017 at 9.30 a.m.

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

The question that the Sitting do now suspend until Wednesday, March 15, 2017 at 9.30 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

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HINKSON, Mr. E. G. (St. James North)

JONES, Hon. R. D. (Christ Church East Central)

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

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

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

PAUL, Mr. J. D. (St. Michael West Central)

PRESCOD, Mr. T. A. (St. Michael East)

SINCKLER, Hon. C. P. (St. Michael North West)

STUART, Hon. F.J. (St. Michael South)

SUTHERLAND, Mr. D. G. (St. George South)

SYMMONDS, Mr. K. D. (St. James Central)

THOMPSON, Her Honour Mrs. M-J. M. (St. John)

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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. 20, Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley's motion. The source gives Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley's motion to extend the Rt. Hon. O. S. Arthur's time twice, in two slightly different wordings, one after the other. The fuller first version is printed and the second (about 45 words) has been left out. Please confirm.

Q4. Order No. 20, Hon. J. D. E. Boyce. Mr. Speaker's warning 'Honourable Member, you have three minutes in which to conclude.' appears twice in succession in the source; the repeated line (10 words) has been left out. Please confirm.

Q5. First Readings of Bills. The notice names the 'Excise Tax Validation of Tax Bill 2017' and refers to tax collected on 'Motor Sports and Diesel'; the first reading names the 'Excise Tax Validation of Tax (Amendment) Bill 2017'. 'Motor Sports' is presumably 'Motor Spirit'. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Order No. 20, Mr. J. D. Paul. Mr. Paul's opening sentence breaks off ('Mr. Speaker, I rise to participate in this debate') and the speech continues in a new paragraph. Printed as in the source.

Q7. Speech labels. Several Members appear under more than one style of label, e.g. 'Right Honourable O. S. ARTHUR' and 'Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR', 'Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE' and 'Hon. J.D.E BOYCE'. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly resumed on Tuesday, 14th March, 2017 with Mr. Speaker in the Chair, continuing the debate on Order No. 20, the second reading of the Appropriation Bill, 2017 (the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, 2017-2018), which the Leader of the

Opposition, the Member for St. Michael North East, had answered the day before. The debate occupied the sitting.

Mr. D. G. Sutherland, Member for St. George South, accused the Democratic Labour Party of taxing the middle class since 2009 with nothing to stimulate growth, and Hon. J. D. E. Boyce rose on a point of order to correct him. Her Honour Mrs. M-J. M. Thompson, Member for St. John, supported the Bill and argued that a rating downgrade was not a review of the economy. Hon. D. St.E. Kellman, Member for St. Lucy, said the Government was proactive and accused the Opposition of frustrating the Hyatt Hotel project. Hon. S. A. Lashley, Member for Christ Church West Central, accepted that Barbados had a foreign reserves challenge and spoke of restructuring the statutory corporations.

The Rt. Hon. O. S. Arthur, Member for St. Peter, said this was likely his last Estimates debate in 33 years in Parliament and the most important on the economy; he spoke of insolvency and a weak external position, disagreed with the Minister of Finance that transfers to statutory boards could not be cut, and recalled writing in 1981 the Cabinet Paper that took Barbados to the International Monetary Fund. Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley moved that he be given 30 more minutes; Mr. Speaker said he did not understand the propriety of the motion, and Mr. Arthur finished briefly.

After lunch, Hon. S. D. Blackett described the Welfare Department and Poverty Alleviation programmes and warned against cutting the deficit overnight. Mr. E. G. Hinkson, Member for St. James North, said foreign reserves had fallen to less than \$700 million, ten weeks' import cover, from \$2.7 billion, and put a series of questions beginning 'Is it moral', on dismissed Government workers and untendered contracts; Hon. S. A. Lashley rose on several points of order that a restoration of salary was not an increase. Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, Member for Christ Church South, spoke on debt ratios, the Hyatt project and the Ministry of Health, preferring contributory health insurance to user fees.

Mr. T. A. Prescod, Member for St. Michael East, related the \$4.5 billion in spending to his constituency; Mr. J. D. Paul, Member for St. Michael West Central, spoke on the Urban Development Commission and small contractors; and Miss C. Y. Forde, Member for St. Thomas, recalled the 32 000-odd jobs after 1994 under the Barbados Labour Party, drawing points of order from Hon. D. St.E. Kellman and Hon. C. P. Sinckler.

After the evening resumption, Hon. R. D. Jones gave notice of, and moved the first reading of, a Bill to validate

excise tax collected by the Barbados Revenue Authority since 1st April, 2014. Hon. A. D. Brathwaite, Member for St. Philip South, spoke on the Police Complaints Authority and staffing of the Solicitor-General's Chambers, and Lt. Col. J. D. Bostic, Member for the City, said the Opposition

had wished to limit second-reading speeches and go through the Heads. On the motion of Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, seconded by Hon. A. D. Brathwaite, the Sitting was suspended until Wednesday, 15th March, 2017 at 9.30 a.m.