
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2013 – 2018

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Friday, March 24, 2017

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10.00 a.m. on Friday, March 24, 2017.

PRESENT

His Honour M. A. CARRINGTON, Q.C., B.A., LL.B. (Speaker) Her Honour Mrs. M-J. M. THOMPSON, B.A., M.Sc. (Ph.Ed.) (Deputy Speaker)
Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR, M.Sc. (Econ.)
Mr. G. W. PAYNE, Q.C.
Mr. G. A. CLARKE, J.P., B.Sc., Dip. Ed.
Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN, LL.B. (Hons.)
Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: (Minister of Housing, Lands and Rural Development)
Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, Q.C., LL.B. (Leader of the Opposition)
Miss C. Y. FORDE, J.P., L.C.P.
Hon. R. D. JONES, J.P., B.A. (Hons.), M.A. (Ed.) (Minister of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation)
Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK, B.Sc., M.B., B.S. (Minister of Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and Water Resource Management)
Mr. D. D. MARSHALL, Q.C., LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C.
Hon. M. A. LASHLEY, LL.B. (Hons.) (Minister of Transport and Works)
Hon. R. L. SEALY, B.Sc., M.B.A. (Minister of Tourism and International Transport)
Hon. F. J. STUART, B.A., LL.M. (Prime Minister, Minister of National Security, the Public Service and Urban Development)
Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE, M.Sc., C. Eng. (Minister of Health) (Leader of the House)
Hon. S. D. BLACKETT, (Minister of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Community Development)

Mr. J. D. PAUL, B.Sc. (Chairman of Committees)
Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE, Dip. Theology, B.A., M.Ed., Ed.D. (Minister of Environment and Drainage)
Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE, Q.C., LL.B. (Hons.) (Attorney-General and Minister of Home Affairs)
Hon. S. A. LASHLEY, B.Sc., LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C. (Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth)
Hon. D. O'N. INNISS, B.Sc., M.B.A. (Minister of Industry, International Business, Commerce and Small Business Development)
Hon. C. P. SINCKLER, B.A., M.Sc. (Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs)
Mr. T. A. PRESCOD, B.A.
Mr. K. D. SYMMONDS, B.A., LL.B.
Lt. Col. J. D. BOSTIC, MVO, B.A. (Hons.)
Mr. E. G. HINKSON, LL.B (Hons.) L.E.C., LL.M
Dr. M. M. AGARD, J.P., B.Sc., M.Sc., D.D.S
Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND, B.Sc., M.Sc., M.B.A. (Dist.)
Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW, LL.B. (Hons.)
Prayers were taken by Reverend Father Mark Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: Good morning Honourable Members, this Sitting of the House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I am not yet in receipt of the Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday, March 13, 2017, and therefore I ask for the usual motion that those Minutes be deferred.

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

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

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

PAPERS

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Prime Minister.

Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the Annual Report of Invest Barbados for the year 2016.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

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

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER No. 14

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE GUARANTEE BY THE MINISTER OF FINANCE OF THE PRINCIPAL SUM OF BDS\$17.625 MILLION AND INTEREST THEREON TO BE BORROWED BY BARBADOS CONFERENCE SERVICES LIMITED FROM FIRST CITIZENS BANK (BARBADOS) LIMITED TO ASSIST WITH THE OUTFITTING OF NEW OFFICES AT THE LLOYD ERSKINE SANDIFORD CENTRE

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, the Resolution before the House is a guarantee for the payment of a loan from First Citizens Bank (Barbados) Limited. The information as contained in the Schedule to the Resolution indicates what those funds are for. It is to assist with the fit out of the new offices at what is now called the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre, of course, the former name was the Sherbourne Conference Centre.

I think that the House would be well aware of the background to this particular project but I still think that for purposes of clarity I would just give a brief history of what brought us here. You may recall, Mr. Speaker, that in 2008 we, in essence, reviewed Barbados Conference Services Limited, and the then unfinished, and for all intents and purposes still unfinished conference centre, and we were trying to determine what made sense. In a period where we were not exactly flushed with cash, Government-owned companies were told that they had as much as possible to be self-funding and the team at the Barbados Conference Services Limited was no different and indeed took that

mandate quite seriously. The then Board of Directors, of course, accepted that we had not only to effectively manage and market the Centre, and that meant making various decisions, for example, there were five buses and that type of thing that were there and parts for buses and so on that we had to sell off and empower some smaller operators, but we had to look at the real estate also and what was the most effective use of the real estate.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, there was the idea of having an auditorium. We would have loved to had that auditorium there and it would have been a nice fit for the conference facilities, but having done the appropriate study and recognising where we were financially as a country and the overall long-term planning that was taking place as far as facilities of that nature was concerned, it was felt that it would be a better fit to put Class A office space there, not that you would not have an appropriate auditorium type facility.

Mr. Speaker, the thinking of the last Government's as well as our thinking was that there was a definite need somewhere on the Peninsula, and I am speaking of the Needham's Peninsula, for conference facilities to promote conventions and the like and that we could in the course of the master planning for the Peninsula look at doing a facility of that nature down there and in essence the site at Two Mile Hill was better suited for offices. Mr. Speaker, it was on that basis that we felt that the better use of the space was to create offices of a high standard that could be enjoyed by the public and private sectors alike. I thought it was the correct decision. Of course, that was not in any way to subtract from the existing conference facilities.

The Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Conference Centre is a popular conference centre. About 100 000 square feet of conference space is letted out for all sorts of events, and I think that should continue. I also think that it is important to make the point that the future for the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre is still offering the quality conference arrangements that are there. It is just that in addition to that you would now have just over 60 000 square feet of office space that would be made available for letting. As it turns out, the Government of Barbados is going to be renting all of it, and I will get into a bit of that shortly. Mr. Speaker,

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Mr. Speaker, I think that the best use of the area previously earmarked for the Auditorium and the fact that it came as a conclusion of an appropriate feasibility study, we had to look at the existing facilities. The Frank Collymore Hall, as nice as it is, is a highly underutilized facility and we are talking about one that is even larger than that and there were concerns about the economic model of it. Mr. Speaker, the truth is that when you are talking about a world-class auditorium the acoustics,

ergonomics, et cetera, it is expensive business, you do not just put any carpet or furniture in a situation like that, not to mention the equipment that is highly specialised, et cetera. Mr. Speaker, I think we determined that it was the best option for all, not least of all the taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, so that in order to proceed with those plans it was also recognised that if you are talking about increasing the occupancy of the centre significantly with as I said 63 000 square feet of office space and you already have a problem sometimes with parking at the centre when you have two or three events or if you have one large event, that was why in the planning something had to be done about the parking as well and so a multi-storeyed car park was installed. This is not news to this Honourable House, that car park was completed a numbers of years ago, I think around 2011. The budget was \$9.3 million and the actual came in at \$8.46 million and so the car park was done under budget. In that respect as well the structural work for the office building, that is the actual building of the four storeys, everything less the 'fit out', including the demolition work that was necessary because obviously you had to create the area to build the office, the budget for that was \$36.56 million and the actual was \$37.32 million, so we near enough came in on budget as well. I might add, that was a very challenging project, apart from some cavernous areas that were encountered that needed some adjustments in the foundations. You were talking about a full-scale commercial construction site operating adjacent to a fully functioning conference centre, so there were times when the work had to be scheduled around conference activities, so I think that to come in so close to budget is actually remarkable. I will salute the project managers and everyone who were able to achieve that.

Mr. Speaker, very often when we speak about public sector projects we are always very quick to point out when they may have gone over budget, whether legitimately or not but here it is we have a sign of a project that has come in under-budget in the first phase and on budget in the second phase and I think this is good work and that they should be saluted for that.

Mr. Speaker, having made the determination that we were going ahead with the construction, of course, of the building itself started in 2011 and the final certificates were issued last year. Of course, the Certificate of Practical Completion would have been a year previous to that and we have been going through the whole exercise of determining how best we will do the 'fit out' and of course determining who will move in to the office spaces.

As I mentioned, the Government took the decision at the Standing Accommodations Committee that they will take all of the office space at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre. My information is that the Government Information Service will be on the ground floor, along with a studio.

The first floor will have the Ministry of the Civil Service and the Ministry of International Transport. The second floor will have the Ministry of Tourism and the Office of the Prime Minister. The third floor will have the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Office. I will hasten to add that the Standing Accommodation Committee and the officials of the Ministry of Housing, Lands and Rural Development are still in the process of finalising some of these arrangements in terms of how exactly the space will be allocated. Mr. Speaker, that is near enough what we expect to occur and the design layouts and so on have been submitted and therefore we are ready to roll out with the actual 'fit out'.

Mr. Speaker, the estimated cost for the 'fit out' as contained in this Resolution is \$17.625 million. Of course, that includes consultancy fees, management fees, et cetera. We are happy to see that First Citizens Bank (Barbados) Limited has come with such an attractive proposal. Mr. Speaker, if I can speak to that for a moment, I think that getting a 10-year loan with an interest rate of 6.65 per cent at a time like this is also an amazing achievement. As you will see in the Resolution the interest rate is:

"Prime less 1.0 percent for a current effective rate of 6.65 percent per annum. Interest will be calculated on the actual number of days elapsed and a 365 day year."

Mr. Speaker, that is not at typographical error, that is the actual rate that we are getting. Mr. Speaker, prime less 1 per cent in an environment like this is quite good. I know some may try to belittle because it is not a large loan but we have sovereign debts that are costing us more than that. I think that is quite good, with all the talk of downgrades and questions of confidence in the Government the mere fact that we can, of course, get this loan at this rate is still quite good. I know again that critics will jump and say that this was negotiated before the most recent downgrade and that is true and perhaps it may or may not made a difference after the last downgrade but we have had downgrades prior to the last one, and I still think Prime less 1 per cent in any circumstance is still quite good. Mr. Speaker, the effective rate at this stage is 6.65 per cent and again credit should go to all those officers who negotiated to get this loan at this facility. Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest news that we are hearing about now is the cost of Government to borrow and I think therefore those who have been critical of that issue should be prepared to commend the fact that the interest rate has been so attractive. I know, of course, that is probably expecting a little too much at a time like this when Parliament is closer to its end than to its beginning, but nonetheless I feel I should mention the fact that a lot of hard work by officers of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs and Barbados Conference Services Limited would have gone into negotiating to get the best possible rate and I definitely salute them in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, there are some issues that are required. The Resolution has the particulars in terms of the conditions precedent to the loan, all of which have been met. The most recent one of a lease agreement was actually finalised by Cabinet yesterday, so the Ministry of Housing, Lands and Rural Development has agreed to lease the space from the Barbados Conference Services Limited and that in itself was something that was necessary in order for the loan to be at one of the conditions precedent. Mr. Speaker, we are therefore ready to roll out with the 'fit out' and my information also is that during the course of April we will start the actual work.

Mr. Speaker, I already mentioned the agencies that have been earmarked to occupy the building. If I can again by way of explanation so that we would not have to be asking questions, I can give the information up front. The Government Information Service was at Bay Street Boy School for many years.

10.53 a.m.

In recent times, that building has not only become cramped but the structural integrity has been challenged by the elements, and of course there are the aesthetics of the building. We all know the building as we go down Bay Street, so it is high time that those officers be moved out. I understand that they are actually occupying the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated (BTI) building temporarily, then they will move up to the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre. They are on the ground floor of the old Town Hall Building temporarily, and they will move up to the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre when it is completed. I think that should be music to the ears of those officers who clearly have been operating in substandard conditions now for a protracted period of time. I mentioned the Ministry of the Civil Service on the first floor. That Ministry will be moving in there. They themselves are on Bay Street, much like the Prime Minister's Office and the Cabinet Office. That building, of course, is in dire need of some work, and there is a view that that work cannot take place while it is occupied, so these offices will move out and they will again pave the way for the work in Bay Street to continue apace. The thinking, of course, is that if it is a decision that those departments go back to Bay Street, the office space would not be wasted. It can still be used for other public officers. Keep in mind, as I mentioned, that this is also a very attractive location for private sector individuals, so the Barbados Conference Services Limited (BCSL) will have the option if, again, the Government departments do not want to go there for whatever reason. It is not an investment that will be wasted. It is still prime real estate that can fetch a very handsome rent on the market. That is where we are in that regard. The Ministry of Tourism is already in that building, and the feeling is that, with the Ministry of International Transport being in a state of flux at the moment -- where they are in the Baobab Towers is

needed for the CAIPO (Corporate Affairs and Intellectual Property Office), I believe, and the Ministry of International Business needs more space down there -- they also are going to have to move out, so the Ministry of International Transport will also move into the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre. That is where we are in terms of the actual occupants, and where we expect to go along those lines. I should probably just mention, again by way of information, that the lease which the BCSL has to the Government of Barbados or to the Ministry of Housing, is for 25 years with an option to be renewed for another 25 years. The rental rate, of course, is \$3.28 million per annum, which is \$52 a square foot and which equates to a monthly rent of just over \$273 000. The rent is subject to be reviewed every five years. There is a service charge rate, which is standard in the industry, of \$1.577 million per annum or \$25 a square foot, and that equates to \$131 000 a month. That charge is adjustable depending on the actual cost of services, which include things like the landscaping, pest control, the maintenance of the building and the elevator, security, garbage disposal, maintenance of the services, water and water disposal, air-conditioning, the upkeep of the common areas, the janitorial work involved in that, et cetera. This is quality, as I keep saying. It is Class A office space that we are talking about here. It is good for our public officers or good for anyone, and I think that is the point that needs to be made in that regard. I also think that I made the point upfront that the conference centre will continue to function. The conference centre has, I think, done extremely well over the years, and it is almost difficult to imagine Barbados without the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre, or Sherbourne as it used to be called before, because of the wide range of activities which we have there. By way of the performance of the company, BCSL, they had an 11 per cent improvement in revenue this year over last year; or I should say, as of December 2016 it was 11 per cent up on the performance of 2015, and 2015 was four per cent up on the performance of 2014. This is the strategy, as I had alluded to earlier, of trying to extract opportunities for greater revenue earning, trying to look at the different revenue streams which the company has, and seeing how best we can keep the centre functioning fully. We would love, of course, for it to be self-funding. It has not quite got to that point yet, but I think we are well on the road there. There is clearly going to be a shift in focus, to some extent, because the emphasis would have been on conference space with just a few offices, but now you are going to have major levels of office rental and, at the same time, have to run the conference centre. In that regard, we expect the activity to continue apace. As I mentioned, there is over 100 000 square feet of usable exhibition space, or office interior space. There is another 70 000 square feet that can be incorporated outside the centre and even between the meeting rooms and so on. It is still a significant facility; an award-winning facility, I might add. It has won awards as well. A number of years ago, it was selected as the Top

Conference Centre in the entire Caribbean. We still want to see that that is maintained. If anyone is curious, the plan also is that when we are doing the fit-out there will be an opportunity as well to maybe do a little improvement in some of those common areas there leading to the various conference rooms. It is 20-plus years old, and even with the best maintenance programme, things will get a little worn here and there. You would see a few tiles that need to be fixed, and a couple light fittings and the like. The plan is to do that. We still have to take care of the facility, and not just go after the rental income and forget that the conferencing element does require that, yes, the natural wear-and-tear needs to be addressed in order that the conference centre itself can continue to function. Again, we are all familiar with the centre. The Frangipani Room down on the western side actually has the facilities for interpretive booths and the like. The other Hibiscus and Poinsettia Rooms have moveable partitions and so on so that you can have good quality events. You can have good regional or even international events there, and that should continue. Credit, of course, should go to the man whose vision it was that we should have a conference centre like that, and whose name, of course, adorns the centre now: Lloyd Erskine Sandiford. Credit should go to him for having the vision in the face of much criticism, and yes, as a matter of fact I will use this opportunity to wish Sir Lloyd happy 80th birthday. Today is his 80th birthday, and indeed it is interesting that we are debating a Resolution that will lead to the completion of a very unique facility that bears his name. Again, I want to wish him and his family all the very best. In order for the conference activity to continue to take place there, we have to accept the need to have some appropriate sales and marketing activity. H:No.D8 (3) 10.54 a.m.

The whole LESC brand was created and relaunched with a website and various local awareness campaigns were put in place but we also got far more aggressive in terms of teaming up with local event planners, local event coordinators in having activity. I found certainly back in 2008 when I first came to the Ministry the team at BCSL was just a little bit too laid back for my liking. They were just sitting down and waiting for people to walk in through the door and say we would like to rent a room and I did not think that was the approach that was needed and we have sort of restructured and rejigged that scenario and we are seeing some results in that regard. As a matter of fact, if you just take a snap shot of the events that were held there in 2016 we had "Laff-it-Off", we had the back in time parties by Pyramid Entertainment, we had a chocolate festive exhibition, we had conferences by the Ministry of Labour, we had the Rotary District Conference in April, we of course have BIMEX every year, we had a Security Association of Barbados Conference which was in May, CXC examinations took place there in May and June and the CFA examinations as well. Yes, the Jehovah's Witnesses Conventions in June and November, the

Barbados Darts Association, the Ministry of Agriculture had a conference in July and Foreign Affairs had one in August which was the Network Consultation, I believe, last year, the CAF Management Back-to-School Expo, I think the Canadians do this thing where they let young people come and see the schools and that sort of thing. That is also an annual event is there and in fact I think it is twice a year. The Student's Centre Canadian and University Programmes and Education Fair. The SOTEX State of the industry was there as well, the Home Expo was in October, Sweet Indulgence Desert and Beverages Showcases, Barbados Association of Medical Practitioners (BAMP) and University of the West Indies (UWI) had a conference there as well, NIFCA had several events there including the Visual Arts Exhibition and the Culinary Arts one. Of course, the ACCA exams for the accounts, that also is an annual exercise so you can get a snapshot from that the range of things that takes place there and I am not talking about the family reunions, the weddings, prize giving from different schools, graduations and the like. We see the Conference Centre is something that is in demand therefore we have to, again, carefully manage what we are doing to see that the financial health of BCSL can continue to sustain it. When I speak of the revenue streams of BCSL I think it is noteworthy that BCSL have developed so much skill in this area of providing conference facilitation that they actually provide these services offsite. Sometimes you are at the Hilton at an event and you do not realise that the sound and the sound system and even the arrangements for the interpreter and so, if they are delegates from abroad, all of that has been provided by the staff of the Barbados Conference Services Limited (BCSL) at a cost. This service has even been purchased from beyond our shores so staff would leave here with the equipment to go to provide conference services, as the name suggests, for conference even beyond our shores and that is anything again that you would normally associate with a Government owned entity. I am not talking about a Government to Government technical cooperation thing, I am talking about somebody actually writing a cheque and paying for services that a company is very effective at providing and services that I presume they could get from other parts of the Caribbean in the private sector but they chose the quality offering of BCSL and I think that those young men and women, there are one or two in the technical department, yes, that offer that service and work so hard to make sure it is at top notch quality and it should be saluted in that regard. I want to again make the point that we have to continue to see that we maintain a high standard of the offerings, the conference facilities and making sure that people will want to come back again.

The Conference Centre on the international front now has also distinguished itself, not one but two UN Secretary Generals have been there now. It was the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Conference and that was Butrus Butrus Ghali, I think, but more recently Ban Ki

moon, the immediate past one, he was there and he unveiled a plaque to commemorate the SIDS Conference as well. Of course, President Clinton would have had his meeting there as well when he visited the island so the Conference Centre has also has a number of international events. If we go back several CTO meetings, the FCCA meeting that was also held there as well, a major meeting, so we have had several international conferences. The FCCA is the Florida Caribbean Cruise Association. Forgive me, I should not use an abbreviation like that without explaining what it is. I know that some Members would know what that means but some may not. In terms of going forward in 2017 in keeping with the desire that we should have international events there, there are a few that are planned. The world flower show, Barbados Flower Arrangement Society as it has won the bid to host the world flower show and the entire centre has been book for the event from 17th -- 26th June.

Again I want to really salute the horticultural society and the Barbados Flower arranging society for doing this. A few years ago I threw out a challenges to those ladies and gentlemen, there are not ladies than gentlemen. We have been supporting the Chelsea flower show for many, many years and doing well getting gold medals repeatedly year after year and I asked: why do you not host something here? They came to me with this World Flower Show and next thing you know we are hosting it in 2017. I think it is remarkable and look forward to seeing what benefit that could bring for our flower arrangers and our horticulturalists and for that matter our famers as well. Ornamental horticulture is a very serious industry and I think it is a good thing to have that show here and not to advertise anything but as a matter of fact that the Barbados Orchid Society, Orchids Masquerade, that show is this weekend. The opening is this evening and I will be there to be a part of those arrangements. I am not advertising anything for the Orchid circle, they can do their own thing, but I think it is good to see that this particular group are blooming in every sense of the word and that is good news. We are happy to hear that the World Flower Show for 2017 is going to be held at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre from 17th -- 26th June. There is also going to be the Carib Food and Hospitality Expo which is in July and this is as a result of work done through our UK Office and it is being promoted as the first Caribbean Food and Hotel Restaurant Exhibition to both local and international participants and exhibitors. I do not know too much about it but that is exactly the kind of thing that we want to see happening where the staff at the Barbados Conference Services Limited (BCSL) working along with those at the BTMI and for that the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association (BHTA), the CEO and our nominee sits on the Board of the Barbados Conference Services Limited (BCSL) so we can have the natural synergies that can take place there and dare I say, it is working.

We hear that the Conference Centre does not have a hotel attached to it and that is true but it is not true to say that every single conference facility in the world has a hotel attached to it or is in a hotel belt. All of us have had the experience where you are attending a conference and you have to meet in the lobby sometimes and hour before it starts to get into a coach to be transported far away sometimes to go and attend the actually activity. It is always nice when you can walk down the corridor from your hotel ...

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It is always nice when you can walk down the corridor, of course it is from your hotel room, but sometimes it is not always the case. What is important is, you work with the hotel sector so that you can then do packages. For example the intimate group, small hotels, many of them probably do not even have meeting rooms as such, you can then do packages to attract business. It works in both directions. The Conference Centre can also team up with the hoteliers. So that element is working well.

Of course, the big one for 2017 would be the end of August, from the 17th to the 27th, the entire centre and grounds, including eastern car park and the southern grounds by the lily pond will be taken up with the CARIFESTA ...they call it the Grand Market Fest, the big element. One of the blue tip events for CARIFESTA. It is going to be centered at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre, the Grand Market. Again, we are happy and we look forward to that. It is another significant piece of our history that will be etched on the grounds of the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre.

I think we can say that the determination that the Conference Centre should in fact function effectively has worked. The decision we took to make some upgrades, one of the things we had to do, for example when we came in was to upgrade the kitchen offerings so that we could handle events of a certain size. We upgrade the kitchen facilities that was something that was needed. Another thing that was needed was to upgrade the air conditioning system. It is entirely possible that if we did not have that outlay, the sector may be already self-sufficient, but having said that we understand that this is a capital investment and it will require the maintenance arrangements and so on in order to keep the Conference Centre at the correct level.

I think that I should also speak, having discussed major local events, having discussed major international events and those that are planned, I should also speak to the small rooms initiative that has been taken on by the sector. That is recognising you have so many young entrepreneurs out there who may literally be functioning from in their bedroom with a laptop. Sometimes you need a little room to have a meeting or whatever, so the small rooms initiative

is very much developed for the emerging entrepreneur who may or may not have a shingle to set up. They may be a virtual company. That is the reality. That is the direction we are going in, but the small room initiative because we do have some of those small rooms, I think on the first floor, you have the Ginger Lily and the Ginger Lily Annex, then some other small ones as well on the ground floor that you can rent a part of and we will work out the necessary packages and that is a good.

Now intertwined in the small room initiative as well was a decision that the Board took along, well, really on my recommendation to be quite frank, that for young artistes or should I say anyone writing any book. You want to do a book launch you can actually have one of the rooms at the Centre to launch your book from. We made that decision, the Board along with myself, and so far Mr. Wendell Callender and Mr. Rawle Eastmond have taken up that offer and I have had functions there free of cost, and that goes to anyone who wants - you know after you work so hard, staying up so late, so many weeks, so many months, you probably wipe out your savings trying to get a publisher onboard, we are saying, look, you can have a room and invite the media, whoever you need to invite, family, friends and well-wishers and have a little event that you can at least get your publication going, legitimate publications, of course, and serious ones. I said to the Board this is a simple initiative. It is not going break the bank and it will go a long way towards at least sending the right message to the community and to be on the right side of producing literature in Barbados and so on. I think that is, again, something we need to mention in her in terms of BCSL and the Conference Centre and how it is viewing its role in the Barbadian society, because they do have to play the part in that regard.

The Centre, again, I am almost certain this was raised previously in a debate. I should mention that the energy efficiency measures. They have changed almost all the bulbs to LED bulbs and it has seen a remarkable saving in the light bill, and the plan is that the Volta voltaic as much as possible will be used when it can be afforded. In essence, there are a lot of flat concrete roofs all over that Centre now and will be -- well since the extension has been done and, of course, the carpark and so on, we need to see how best as part of the public sector Smart Energy Programme, the CLS can take on the necessary projects to be totally green and to see how much Volta voltaic can be used to generate electricity.

I think that the Conference element is still alive and real. I did not want to speak about outfitting the officers without still speaking to the other activity that takes place at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre and where Barbados Conference Services is concerned. The whole question, of course, the Needams Peninsula, that I touched on earlier, I think I could mention to the House that this is something,

again both sides agree on, because the idea of the Convention Centre at Peninsula is not anything that started with this Government. It started with the last Government. I do not think it started with that Government either. It probably goes back to several Governments. That has been talked about for a long time. By way of advancing it we have signed a non-binding Memorandum of Understanding, Bajan Urban, where the developers of the world's famous Birds Nest Stadium and many other facilities of that sort in China and around the world, they are ready to work with us to have a convention facility on the Needams Peninsula. I think that is the direction we should go in. Having, of course, develop the full range of skills from Lloyd Erskine Sandiford, it would seem appropriate to me that we can even again move those skills over to that world class convention facility that we look forward to building in the not too distant future.

Sir, this is again not new. We had the Dover Convention Centre, you may recall, and there are some of the original staff from those days would have gone over to Sherebourne as well. We are expanding out our conference offering because we talk about tourism and one of the niches that we have been fairly weak in over the years is MICE. That is not to say that we do not get some of the MICE business, but we have lost a lot of business over the years because we just do not have the facilities to have meetings, incentives, conferences and events with a limit.

Sequence 5

Asides.

Hon. R.L. SEALY: I apologise. I did the same thing with FCCA earlier and I apologise. I am prepared to apologise. I would not say it. MICE is an acronym. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North knows what I am talking about.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member please address the Chair.

Hon. R.L. SEALY: These meetings, incentives, conferences and events is MICE. That is the acronym MICE. It simply means -- it is a niche for tourism that is considered very lucrative, very positive. A place like Las Vegas, we think of the gambling element that a huge part of the Las Vegas business is actually, the MICE niche, people having incentive groups having meetings, conferences and so on. Likewise a place Cannes, in France, as well, they do a lot of that type of business as well. They have a number of conference and convention facilities, so they may even have them going on at the same time. You will find we have missed out on some business, Bahamas, even Trinidad with the Hyatt to some extent. Of course, in the north coast of Jamaica in Montego Bay they recently built a very extensive convention facility there. We have

missed out on some of that business. I think the move of developing that capacity in the Peninsula, something the Democratic Labour Party and the Barbados Labour Party have agreed on over the years ... I am not sure what the position is now, but certainly over the years we have both agreed on that. I think that is the direction to go in. That too would have informed the original opinion that we could do the Class A office space at Two Mile Hill, because we knew what was happening at the Peninsula down the road.

I think I have got the point across as well that we are still not abandoning that capacity, that it will go elsewhere and we can build out the MICE niche. It is a bit of a mouthful, we are calling four things at the same time. So I am going to use the jargon for the time being. We are still going after conferences, meetings and conventions, the large ones, but we have to get the facility in place.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is, there is no place in Barbados where you can seat 1 000, banquet style, no place. There is no facility where you can do that. You can seat 1 000 or even more theatre style, but if you wanted to have an event of a certain scale and there is an awards banquet at the end or so, there is no place you seat 1 000 and do it. That is one of the reasons or one of the things that I certainly tried to lobby for with the Sandals Royal. I do not think they will be able to do 1 000, but they will be able to do more than we can currently do in some cases. The Hilton can do I think may be up to 400 or 500 as a tight fit when they open up their banquet facility. Of course, the new Sam Lords will also have banqueting capacity as well. I think we need to not escape that element to the extent that the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre can get some of that business, the more modest ones, we should continue to encourage to do just that. That is what is ongoing.

I once again want to salute everyone for making this project a reality. I think it will be wonderful for Barbados, the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre will continue to function as providing qualify office space, but will also at the same time still continue to be the top notch conference facility that it is. I salute the officials from First Citizens and the Ministry of Finance, along with the Board and Managers of the Barbados Conference Services Limited, who too would have negotiated what is an excellent loan to get this building completed and with those few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I ask that this Resolution do now pass.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged. Secunder please.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: I beg to second that.

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

Mr. R.C. TOPPPIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I would not be nearly as long as my colleague who just introduced this Resolution. After his very flowered presentation, the bottom line still is, which the Minister has really skirted around, we want to hear more about the profitability of this Conference Services Centre. We need to hear about the profitability. It is not good enough to tell us that last year the revenue streamed improved a little better than the year before, which improved a little better than the year before. We want to hear about the profitability of this centre.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister at the beginning of his presentation sought to give a historical perspective, but he started at the year 2008, but for the purposes of completeness I think that a fuller picture needs to be given. If there is one thing really... we heard about Orchids, we heard about parties and back in time events at the Conference Centre, but the fact is, what the Minister's presentation really amounted to was a clear admission that what we have here before use, and we had over the last several years since 1994, is a project without a plan. That is really the problem with what is before us today. We have a project without a plan. We paid a terrible price financially, because over the years millions upon millions of dollars have been pumped into that institution which as I said is nothing more than a project without a plan.

Sir, from the very beginning and up to now it has had nothing more than a checkered past.

Sir, it was built to coincide with the holding in Barbados of a Small Island Developing States Conference, it was built at that time. It was embroiled in controversy and scandal even during the course of its construction. Every day a new scandal rose about it especially of overruns, and it actually provided the fodder for one of the most successful calypso called "Steal". That is a fact. From the beginning it was really a project with no plan, riddled with "Steal" in it and just scandal and controversy on a daily basis even as it was being constructed.

Sir, having been constructed, then the question arose, what you were going to do with, because it was a project without a plan. What you were going to do with it? What use you were going to put it to? The first use that was announced was, it was going to be an examination centre. We started to figure, yes, it would be an examination centre. Then as that was being settled upon, we then learnt, no, it was not going to be an examination centre, it was going to be the home of the National Youth Orchestra. As you start to become settled with that idea, that was again changed and then it was decided that it would in fact become a conference centre, which really was a fairly absurd idea, given that it was going to be built in a forest, in the woods, away from any hotel, an area that is loaded with traffic congestion. That was when it was announced

that it was going to be a conference centre, which did not make any sense.

So when the Government changed in 1994 and the Barbados Labour Party took office, we found an announcement that it was going to be a conference centre, we had to then find out really how could we sensibly make use of this building. This is the real history that I am telling. How can we sensibly make use of this building? We decided therefore that you had to get into event planning if you want it to start making money, to make sense of a budget that had no plan. So we decided we would have event planning and transportation to the services provided so as to try to make the entity profitable.

Sequence 6

Those coaches that were bought were showing signs of profitability. In fact, in the years 2006 and 2007 were it not for depreciation expense and a few other book entries, I am advised by accountants involved at the time, the coaches would actually have shown a level of profitability in those years. The Government having changed in 2008 the Minister took a decision then that the Centre was to rid itself of those coaches and in doing that the Minister made the announcement that from the following year, I remember the words very clearly, we were going to see a turnaround in revenue and in fact we were going to see a return to profitability of the Barbados Conference Services Limited.

Mr. Speaker, on that occasion when the Minister spoke, I am not going to be very long, it was actually in this Chamber when we were seeing the new Government injecting by way of guarantee the sum of \$58 million, which is shown in the books as a debt to Government, and the Minister announced then that the money was being injected to build out commercial office space, to build a multi-storey car park and to fix up a kitchen for \$58 million. All of this occurred because the Minister was turning a new leaf, that they were returning to profitability. Mr. Speaker, I want to hear about the repayment of that loan, the extent to which it is being repaid, if the Minister would be kind enough to tell us in his wind up.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Minister returns to us today now, some eight years later, with a further injection of some \$17-plus million into the same Barbados Conference Services Limited and all he can tell us is that last year's revenue was more than the year before. Mr. Speaker, that is not enough, we want to hear about the profitability of this entity. We want to hear about that because this entity now called the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre has really behaved like a pawn of quick sand or a bottomless pit that just sucks in money. This new Government when it was faced with options that the Minister spoke about in 2008, found in place a partially

built-out auditorium, a performing arts centre, upon which some \$2.3 million had been spent, a roof was on and concrete works were done for a performing arts centre which the said Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford who has turned 80 today, we have heard, must be cringing at the very thought that his legacy for what it was worth, he would call it that, of this performing arts centre that could have cost them, study showed, \$33 million.... A Government professed to be interested in developing the performing arts, had a partially rolled out performing arts centre and they tore it down, not only had cost been put in but the cost of tearing it down also involved the spending of more millions, and decided they were going to build 81 000 square feet of commercial office space and a car park at a cost of some \$58 million. Now they come back in here today, Mr. Speaker, and add another \$17 million to perform some very, very nebulous outfitting of offices at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre.

Mr. Speaker, I really want the Minister to spend some time because what really caught my eye as I read through the Resolution is that reference was made to the conditions precedent to the loan. The Minister, as I said, skirted very cleverly the whole issue about the profitability of this Barbados Conference Services Limited and went into a few of the conditions precedent but in Clause 6 one of the conditions precedent to the advancing of the bridging loan says that there must be legal opinion from the lender's legal counsel confirming that there will be no negative implications to the lender entering into an agreement with the borrower in light of the company's insolvent balance sheet. Mr. Speaker, this company for which the Government is providing a second guarantee, which is really just a fancy way of doing a very covert transfer, that is all that is happening here because they did not want to do a transfer because it would then show up in the books and would affect the deficit so they tack it on as a guarantee so it becomes a debt, is still payable by the taxpayers one way or the other. Mr. Speaker, what I want to know and what I want to hear from him is why is this Government so hell-bent on continually injecting such large sums of money into a company which on the basis of the Schedule to the said Resolution before us today says expressly that a condition precedent is that there must be a legal opinion from the lender's legal counsel confirming that there would be no negative implications to the lender entering into an agreement with the borrower in light of the company's insolvent balance sheet, so the balance sheet of the company is expressly referred to as being an insolvent balance sheet.

Mr. Speaker, these are important things because right now in Barbados people cannot afford to buy food and are struggling to make ends meet in this country and the Government is coming again to inject another \$17 million into a company with an insolvent balance sheet, so we need to hear a lot more than what we are being told.

Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that I need detain the House any longer but I do believe that I want to hear from the Minister in greater detail about the financials of this company. The Minister gave the assurance in 2008/2009 that in a year's time it would have returned to profitability. We now see a Resolution stating that it has an insolvent balance sheet. Some \$58 million went into it a couple years ago and now \$17 million more are going into it and the people of Barbados deserve explanations.

I am grateful, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to join this discussion because I think it is important to put it in perspective first of all by way of the Objectives of this Resolution. Even as we consider the terms of the specific loan and the conditions precedent as they are referred to, many of which I do not have to tell you obtained in every loan that we negotiate as a country either as a company, a statutory corporation or whatever, and to pull these Clauses out and pretend that they are now with us for the first time makes it look as though there is something untowards being undertaken by the Government, but nothing could be further from the truth.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start by commending the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central for his presentation and the fact that he sought to put in perspective the myriad of activities that now take place at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre. Let me take the opportunity, Sir, to join him and the rest of my colleagues and I am sure the entire Parliament in again acknowledging and congratulating the former Honourable Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Lloyd Erskine Sandiford who celebrates his 80th birthday today.

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May we wish him and his family all God's best wishes and good health.

Mr. Speaker, the myriad of activities to which the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre is put today helps to explain the situation or confusion the Honourable Member who just sat finds himself in because the Honourable Member just cannot understand why we would outline so many different activities and associate them with a centre which, in fact, is a multipurpose centre. The Honourable Member condemned and ridiculed the fact that once it was to be considered to be an examination centre. I dare say that examinations are held there now and so it is still an examination centre, if the Honourable Member wants to say that. Mr. Speaker, what is wrong with it being the home of the Barbados Youth Orchestra? It is not the house but

the home where they go, entertain and have facilities in which to perform and so it is ideally suited for that. The Honourable Member then said they settled on it being a conference centre but it is still a conference centre today.

Mr. Speaker, what the Honourable Member must understand is that along with it being a conference center and as this Resolution seeks to support, there are also a number of office buildings and office facilities for Government especially, which have been rolled out at that site. Indeed, it has been to the tremendous benefit of the operations of this Government. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member who has just sat would have to tell me if there is not a continued urgent need for Government to methodically seek solutions to facilities for Government offices in Barbados, A-1 office space. Mr. Speaker, this is something which we have no apologies to make for because even as we seek to achieve that noble objective, we are so often reminded of certain shortfalls which we encounter by way of the entire environ in which we operate and the Honourable Member should really be ashamed of himself because they have no record on which to lean in this regard and if we ever were to go down the road of what conditions for public servants were like in 2006/2007 as to what they are like today, well, then, Sir, we would have a lot of questions to be answered.

Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to join the Honourable Members in that approach if that is what they wish because even in the Ministry of Health for which I have responsibility, we came and found a division of the Government of Barbados situated at the Old General Hospital site, Jemmotts Lane, it was a total and complete dilapidation if there ever was one. Mr. Speaker, even today we still grapple with the realities of that facility which has been allowed over time to deteriorate, that only a couple of weeks ago we had to once again move the Emergency Ambulance Service to a newly renovated or freshly renovated facility at Wildey. My checks with the staff and the management of that unit, I am satisfied that they are comfortable and that the needs of the unit are being met. Mr. Speaker, we will continue to stay on top of that in terms of the delivery of that very vital service and will look for innovative ways in which to carry out that important task.

Mr. Speaker, the truth is that the improvements in the Ambulance Service notwithstanding the lack of a permanent facility or the shortcomings of any intermediate facility, we can find the improvements that the Ambulance Service are commendable and it has been through joint efforts, commitments by way of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in terms of funds made available for purchasing of vital equipment, et cetera, and on being on top of the ball with respect to how the facilities that the staff are asked to occupy are prepared and made ready for them.

Mr. Speaker, it is heartening to hear that in outfitting this facility using the \$17.625 million that is the subject of this Resolution, we will be looking to locate the Ministry of the Civil Service, part of the Office of the Prime Minister because one only has to look at the structure of Government to see that the Office of the Prime Minister can hardly be considered to be just the Prime Minister and maybe Cabinet but a large portfolio of responsibility which we have to make sure are properly well-attended. Indeed, as the Honourable Member who presented the Resolution said, the actual facilities for the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and that these will evolve with time.

Mr. Speaker, there is no question that the facility at Bay Street is very operational, we meet there every Thursday, staff are there, the Prime Minister works there every day, the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, the Minister in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, the Minister in the Ministry of Civil Service, all operate from that facility and of course many, many public servants. Mr. Speaker, the truth is, and the Honourable Member who introduced this Resolution made that point, that there is need for upgrade at this facility. The Honourable Member did not dwell on it but alluded to the fact that there is still debate in Barbados as to if this is the ideal location for the seat of power or authority in Government in Barbados or should we seek to release this area of land for further tourism development.

Madam President, I am not coming down on either side of the debate but I certainly see value in considering this kind of option, especially as we are going to be looking to over time fully outfit the facility at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre. Sir, I have no difficulty in providing good accommodation for our public servants, we have done so with the three towers at Warrens, including the much talked about Barrack Building. I do not think it has another name yet. I am being reminded that, yes, it does have a name, now it is the Warrens Office complex but Mr. Speaker, it is difficult to disassociate yourself with the history of that project.

Mr. Speaker, to hear the Honourable Member for St. Michael North coming to this Honourable Chamber and presenting to you a story of woes about the spending of \$58 million first in the primary development of the office facility at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre and then for the \$17.625 million today for the proper outfitting of that facility... Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member has to look beyond just the questions of chairs and tables. Mr. Speaker, to outfit a facility there is the whole question of telecommunications and connectivity. You just do not outfit a facility by putting a chair, a bench, two tables, a lunchroom, a refrigerator and whatever else in that facility, that is not how a facility is outfitted today and so you need to have adequately allocated funds for such a contemplation.

Mr. Speaker, let us talk a little bit about the spend because the Honourable Member was very critical of the \$58 million and this \$17.625 million. Therefore let us ask the Honourable Member to tell this Honourable Chamber today about the almost \$200 million that would have been spent on the Warrens Office Complex, or more appropriately when you are talking about \$200 million, the Barrack Building, because that name would have been the primary beneficiary of that \$200 million. Members on that side can be as exasperated as they want to be, Mr. Speaker, but that is the reality.

11.50 a.m.

Whereas we take the reminders about caution and about spending, I just want the Members on that side to remember that when they throw stones, they have to be man and woman enough to admit as to their transgressions -- and there are serious transgressions -- which Barbados is still paying for, Sir. That renovation and outfitting of that office facility at Warrens will cost the Barbados Government some \$200 million when all is said and done. The construction would have been paid for three times in reaching the completion of that facility, so they can hang their heads in silence now while we go about the business -- the very expensive business -- of continuing to provide these effective facilities and opportunities for their provision, so that our Government workers can be adequately accommodated.

In passing, just before I go onto the broader use of the facility, I need to again focus on the Ministry of Health. There are still serious accommodation issues associated with this Ministry. Indeed, the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre site could have been considered as a facility where the location of an ambulance service may have been identified, in terms of access to the road network, easy access to the highway network, et cetera. That access would have been one of the points in favour of a location, but obviously there are other elements. There is still a store-room at Jemmotts Lane belonging to the Ministry of Health, which is again not ideally located. It is a facility where workers have to go. We therefore need to understand that even as we outfit Sherbourne and as we relocate those three offices mentioned, there is still a lot of work to be done and there is still a lot of money needed to make sure that the entire situation is properly dealt with. In terms of the maintenance department of the Ministry of Health, one can pass on Jemmotts Lane and see what is really, to my mind, an eyesore. When you look on your left as you approach the first roundabout at what I call the Purity intersection, that is an eyesore. Again, we need to find facilities for relocation of this unit to somewhere which would be a source of better accommodation and better facilities, and so encourage the delivery of their service. I want to mention something which is probably not mentioned very often. Honourable Members on the other

side are acutely aware of it. The Barbados Family Planning Association (BFPA), for instance, is located at the Jemmotts Lane facility, and it is not an ideal facility. It is something which we at the Ministry of Health are concerned about and are working with central Government to provide a new, or certainly more suitable, facility for the very important work that the BFPA does in Barbados. The kind of clientele which they reach, Sir, sometimes is not prepared to present itself to the Ministry of Health in our primary care setting, and therefore we must all come together at the end of the day in making sure that these offerings are available and that Barbados can maintain -- listen to me carefully, Mr. Speaker -- its No. 1 status in this region in delivery of healthcare. I have that on good knowledge as recently as this morning, so I do not need to be guided by anyone out there; and Barbadians have it on good experience in terms of the kind of healthcare we enjoy, Mr. Speaker. I hear the noises from the Member for St. Thomas, but we are accustomed to these interruptions. Mr. Speaker, the only person who does not hear these interruptions must be you, Sir. We will live on. This, to me, is a very honourable Resolution today, which must find the full and unbridled support of both sides of this Chamber. It demonstrates too that in spite of the overall economic commentary -- and I am careful in choosing my words -- on Barbados, we are still able to go out there and negotiate this kind of help. The Minister who introduced the Resolution was careful to point out that this particular negotiation would have been prior to the most recent downgrade; but downgrade there must have been, because I am seeing all over my papers and as the topic of a number of expositions by the Honourable Members on that side the fact that there were some 19 downgrades? This must have taken place between one of them. It is not that we ignore downgrades. We are mindful of the important work that has to be done in terms of the economic framework operating in Barbados, and we are going about this exercise. I am sure the Honourable Minister of Finance has made it clear in terms of the strategy Barbados plans to apply. Mr. Speaker, there was a Budget delivered in Jamaica yesterday. I want to suggest that the Honourable Members on that side get a copy of that Budget and read it, Sir. I do not have to read the Budget verbatim. I am in contact with Jamaicans, and I know already what the mood is on the ground as the measures of that Budget are contemplated and implemented. It is about the economic situation under which the loans are negotiated; that is the relevance. Mr. Speaker, Barbadians will have a long -- was it 51 weeks that we were told some time recently? -- 51 weeks to contemplate. I am enjoying the challenge of the 51 weeks. I am facing up to that challenge, and we are out there -- every woman and every man on this side -- making sure that Barbadians get the message. We are sticking to the facts. We are not dealing with alternative facts. We are sticking with the facts as they apply to Barbados' economy. The choices are very important, and it is not choices about people or personage. It is about choices regarding policy;

what the policy choices are. Mr. Speaker, this little \$17 million arrangement today gives us the opportunity to touch on these very important aspects. I want to say my piece because obviously I cannot sit without acknowledging the hard work of the Barbados Flower Circle and the Barbados Orchid Society. Mr. Speaker, I am acutely aware of this work. I must admit that it is one of the flowers of my life, in that I get to experience this kind of beauty. Occasionally, I even go as far as being gifted with a beautiful plant to take to my office, and the staff cannot help but admire the handiwork. This organisation, the Barbados Flower Circle, has asked the Minister -- I know on good authority that they are requesting some consideration -- and I want to join with them and say a few words on their behalf, and encourage the Minister to look and see how can he assist this organisation in whatever ways possible in putting on this important flower show at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre in June this year, Sir.

11.53 a.m.

The Honourable Minister obvious has the entire matter in hand. He spoke to the fact that even as we contemplate this roll out to keep that facility running they had to be timely upgrades by the way of a kitchen, catering, air conditioning. We run a Parliament here, Sir, and you know and the Management Commission of Parliament knows what it cost to keep this facility in good order and even then we as Members sometimes suffer in terms of air quality. Each Member may suffer differently but the point is we need to understand that these are cost that are now associated with management a building, managing a property and they have to be properly provided for. Of course, my support, Sir, for lighting efficiencies and the utilisation of a photovoltaic plant to generate electricity is obvious and it certainly speaks to the fact that we are in a modern world, mindful of our need to replace our reliance on fossil fuel and be mindful too of the tremendous opportunities and savings that can be associated with an effective and efficiently installed alternative energy programme.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to support the Honourable Minister and support the Resolution for the borrowing at very reasonable rates, given today's choices, of something like \$17.6 million for the continued outfitting and refurbishment of the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre so as to provide critically needed office accommodation for some members of the public services.

With those few words, I am obliged to you.

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

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I also rise to support this Resolution and to say I was very happy to

hear the Honourable Member for St. Michael North making his point because when I listened to him, I recognised that everything he said about the project, the project was being used for. It shows that when you have foresight that you can build something and instead of having one purpose it can have many. I am a strong believer that whatever you do in life you should not do it with a singular purpose but you should do it with a plural purpose that this project is a demonstration that we had foresight and that we were able to execute a project that was able to have several purposes. For example, Mr. Speaker, there would have been a criticism about the location of the project. I had to smile when I heard it because when one considers the location of the hotels in Barbados one cannot, if they reasonable or subjective they cannot criticise the location of this particular project because it gave all the same advantage. If we had located Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre on the west coast we could easily have been criticised of looking after the rich and famous. If we had put it on the south coast we could have been criticised, if we had put it in the north we could have been criticised and if we had put it in the East, we could have been criticised, but we put it in the centre of Barbados which created accessibility and allowed every hotel to promote Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre as if it was there centre. I cannot understand why the Honourable Members on the Other Side could not see the foresight of this Government but putting it in that particular location. It is not doubt that this is not attached to one hotel and it gives the advantage to all the hotels. It is free to apply to us if they are holding a conference and they need not worry.

Mr. Speaker, what is rather interesting is that it is right on the highway so when you think about accessibility, the accessibility is also there. The examination centres it is used for, the Youth Orchestra it is used for, conferences it is used for, dancing it is used for so you can see that unlike the others who built projects and they had a singular purpose, when the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) or this Government builds projects there is a multisector relations and a multipurpose relationship that is executed. Mr. Speaker, I also heard the criticism that the \$17.625 million should not be treated as a contingent liability but the impression is given that it should have been taken up as a debt by the Government instead of doing the guarantee. Mr. Speaker, I keep saying in this House there is always a history to many events. I remember the number of sugar bonds that were guaranteed for the sugar industry but when the Other Side guaranteed the sugar bonds they never said that they should have been brought to book. They treated them all as contingent liabilities and you know the history today because you would have seen on many occasions that even though the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) did not borrow all of those sugar bonds that we have to pay for them today so it was rather surprising to hear the Other Side speaking about how this loan should be treated but when the shoes was on their feet they did not treat to it the

same way. It is rather, rather, rather interesting to see how they deal with these particular matters.

Mr. Speaker, I am also hearing criticism that the money being spent for the conference services and so should be treated differently. Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time that we would have given an entity money and it did not account for it. I remember, Sir, when the Airport and the Port were corporatized, the Government of Barbados did not set up a liability saying that the money is owed to the Government. The buildings were vesting into those entities and the same thing is occurring. The asset has moved from the main Government into these bodies.

Do you know what is also interesting, Sir? When the Airport moved, the revenue remained with the Airport but the expenditure did not go to the Airport to match the revenue that it was earning. You have revenue and you had revenue expenditure but the revenue expenditure was being taken up by the Government of Barbados on its books in the various ministries while the Airport, a company, was getting all of the revenue but not matching expenditure. Today you will hear a criticism of this Government now that we are matching the revenue and the expenditure.

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Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I support this guarantee and also say that anybody who wants to question whether we were right or not that one only has to look at how the tourism sector has been expanding. It is no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that we have to continue offering different offerings to enhance our tourism sector. Mr. Speaker, that is why I will continue to make the point that the Barbados Tourism Product Authority must have a working relationship with the Rural Development Commission because it is from the Rural Development Commission that we will be able to build out the product, and that the Barbados Product Authority needs to pass some of the resources they have to the Rural Development Commission so that we will continue to make our tourism product exciting and interesting because we cannot continue to encourage people to come to Barbados and offering 'two-few' services, we must continue to refresh and expand our services so that we will remain viable and the product will be very exciting to those coming to Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I believe that we are on the right track and we need also to expand the number of conference services locations and start appreciating where we are and start marketing Barbados as a place where one could come and hold their conferences because of the location. Too often we ignore that location is key when developing a product and sometimes we believe that just because it is Barbados that it is nowhere but that is not true. Mr. Speaker, I will continue to make the point that the Panama Canal is important to Panama and that this little

rock in the Caribbean is very important because of the accessibility and we need to exploit it. In the same way that the people from Panama have been able to exploit that canal, we need to exploit our location here and maximise the returns.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I support this project and I want to thank Sir Lloyd, the former Right Honourable Prime Minister, for his foresight. Yes, it is rather interesting that we are debating this on his 80th birthday and I think that one of the best presents that we can give to him is to continue to exploit the offerings from this Barbados Conference Services Limited and show people that his foresight was such that everything he said it was built for we were able to execute.

I thank you, Sir.

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

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the Resolution and to compliment the Minister for the fact that he is bringing the Resolution. On behalf of the constituents of St. Michael West Central I also want to say that it is a Resolution that I think we can support at this stage and that it is at least a signal of confidence that a time when there are many persons out there who are actually saying that nothing is happening, that Government is not doing what it can to support the effort in terms of trying to create activity within the country, that we can mobilise from a financial institution \$17 million to do the work that is required at the Barbados Conference Services Limited in order to at least give further economic activity in the country at this time.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the way in which the loan is being targeted, certainly one must give support where the promotion of the small room initiatives and the volume bookings in order to increase sales because as was pointed out there are a lot of small business people who certainly will benefit from what is happening here. We are at a stage in the country where it seems as if unless it is big it does not attract the attention but what we sometimes do not understand is that there are a lot of many small initiatives being undertaken by Barbadians which I think is worthy of support and recognition.

Mr. Speaker, during these challenging times that we are facing, the fact that the Minister is able to come up with these types of ideas that are able to support the efforts of these types of entrepreneurs certainly in a centre like the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre is something that is worthy of praise and I think that we need to recognise that, and I am sure that the Opposition would want to give credit to the Government for being able to undertake projects such as these at this particular time because it is precisely these

types of projects that will benefit persons in communities that are challenged.

Mr. Speaker, I really think that we need to understand the fact that the Barbados Conference Services Limited in terms of the way in which it is marketing itself and showing that it is also trying to cast a different image is something that we need to recognise because historically when we look at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre in many cases it was viewed as something that certain people could not tap into and I really think that again that it shows where we are going as a Government. When we are enabling other stakeholders who otherwise would not have the opportunity to access the services of the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre certainly through an initiative like this, it would enable those persons to be able to access those initiatives. We need to really understand therefore that we have a thinking Government which is looking at tapping into the other stakeholders that maybe we are currently not tapping into. Sometimes when we hear going around Barbados of the doom and gloom that is being forecasted from the other side, one needs to understand really that we are in a rebuilding process and that every effort is being undertaken to exploit initiatives that are available out there in terms of trying to rebuild this economy and to involve Barbadians to actually take advantage of it. Mr. Speaker, in a sense, we must give credit to the Minister of Tourism in perusing this particular initiative and to recognise that it has to be done.

Mr. Speaker, the Barbados Conference Services Limited in itself is the home of a number of annual activities among which is BMEX, the Barbados Manufacturers Exhibition, which is coming up from June 1-4. Mr. Speaker, speaking about BMEX, one just has to think about the recent furore that we had in the Press in relation to the question of the ban that has been placed right now on corned beef. We hear from some elements within the private sector that the ban came too soon. When the Barbados Conference Services Limited itself is supporting producers in this country in terms of the type of shows that they have at the Barbados Conference Services Limited maybe it is an opportunity this year to have a full house at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Conference Centre where you can see an attempt on the part of those producers who are here in Barbados to showcase a lot of the products that are being produced locally at BIMEX.

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Madam President, again the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre has played a principal role in terms of facilitating that type of show, that is why I am saying when you look at the depth and variety of the shows that are being held there, one can understand why Government has to make this type of commitment towards developing the centre at this point in time in order to facilitate the type of activities that we

have going on within the country. Mr. Speaker, of course, we have the World Flower Show which the Honourable Member referred to, which again represents how important it is that we engage in this type of expenditure that will help to facilitate persons within Barbados in terms of these types of activities in which they are engaged.

Mr. Speaker, we have to understand that this is not something that should be taken likely and that it should be casted aside. Mr. Speaker, too often we are hearing today the type of negative approaches that are being promoted by members within the Opposition in terms of how do we push Barbados forward. The negativity is what we need to get away from. Mr. Speaker, sometimes when you listen to the speakers' comments it is as if nothing positive is happening in this country. I do think we really need to get away from that negativity. Mr. Speaker, when Government is making a step in a positive direction let us all agree that a positive step is being taken and that we need to applaud it. Mr. Speaker, we need to encourage Barbadians to take advantage of those things and not just to see what is happening as being negative but that they are very positive things of which we need to take advantage that are happening at the same time.

Mr. Speaker, just recently we heard what is happening in Jamaica in terms of what is going on with their budget. As a matter of fact, Jamaica is a country which the Opposition was holding up to be saying that we should be going to the International Monetary Fund. Mr. Speaker, I think Barbadians need to understand, and I also want to speak especially to the constituents of St. Michael West Central, because sometimes we hear the stories coming from the Opposition and we do not understand that sometimes they come with stories that are simply that, just stories or fiction. It is not that they are bringing something that is credible because here it is that they were promoting Jamaica as being the place that we should look up to and that we should follow Jamaica's example. We can see clearly that from the steps that the Government of Jamaica has announced yesterday in their budget that really all that they are doing with the International Monetary Fund is not working, so that this indecent attempt on the part of the Opposition to force the Government to want to rush to the International Monetary Fund is just that, an indecent attempt, because if they were truly concerned about this country Barbados, they would really not want any Government of Barbados to go in that particular direction and therefore we need to understand what is happening.

Mr. Speaker, I think the Opposition in itself needs to understand that from time to time when we have been faced with these challenges, we have been able to come up with strategies that have able to address the various economic situations in which we have found ourselves. Mr. Speaker, I am sure that when you see the types of efforts that are being made, we can see therefore that we are laying the

ground work upon which we can actually surmount these economic difficulties. Again, I really want to compliment the Minister for the fact that he has at least continuing to invest in an institution that is offering ordinary Barbadians the opportunity to be able to address some of the economic difficulties that we have in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, in a sense, one of the things I believe that you can see that the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre does is that it showcases many of the different economic aspects of Barbadians, so that we are not only seeing BIMEX, we are seeing now the World Flower Show. We see it dealing with the Carib Food and Hospitality Exhibition. In other words, we are seeing all of those things. Mr. Speaker, I think that again businesses need to capitalise on the various offerings that are available at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre to showcase a lot of what is Barbadian. I also think that in terms of the whole question of education, it is of course good to see different educational institutions are taking advantage of that centre again to showcase Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, it really represents a place where beyond culture that also business in itself could help to showcase the products there. I think we really need to give credit to the Government for the insight, for the fact that it is continuing to invest in those things that will help to create the type of economic activity in Barbados which could at least redound to the benefit of the country and could help to get it to the growth path that we desire it to be, and not to listen to elements in the Opposition which would want to force the Government to go to the International Monetary Fund to be able to satisfy persons that they know best.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is something I think we need to applaud the Government and with that I want to indicate again my support for the Resolution. I thank you.

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

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to wrap up the debate on this Resolution. Of course, I would want to thank Honourable Members for their worthwhile contributions this morning. I suppose I should also thank them for the worthless contributions as well this morning. We are all God's creatures and who am I to question his will?

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, did you say "worthless" contributions? I am not sure I heard you, if that is what I heard you need to withdraw that comment.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw that comment.

Mr. SPEAKER: Fine.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, I simply want to thank everyone for their contributions this morning. I will say what I have to say. Mr. Speaker, the question of the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre, I think again the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre is better run than it was, certainly what we have now and what we found. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North is claiming that in 2008 I said that the centre would go back to being profitable the next year. Mr. Speaker, I could not say that, because the road to profitability will take a time. How could I say that we would be profitable next year and we embarked on a KPMG study?

Mr. Speaker, even though there was capacity on the Board, I think Wayne Kirton who was familiar with organisational restructuring was there, it is not good to advise yourself, you should always get professional advice and we sought professional advice. We also had to engage the unions as well because the place was ridiculously overstaffed, therefore it was a process that would have started and we would have gone on the road to financial viability.

Mr. Speaker, for a State-owned company it is really an absurdity to discuss profitability. When you think about it, you could easily convert Government's input to equity and restructure the balance sheet so that you can make a profit, so that it is really not a sensible discussion to have. Mr. Speaker, the sensible discussion to have and certainly the one on which I engaged when I first introduced the Resolution is to reduce the dependency on Government, you want to minimise the dependency on Government. Mr. Speaker, that is the course of action that we have been on. Honourable Members are free, the Barbados Conference Services Limited has laid all of its reports up to March 2015 and the one for this year will be laid later on this year as well. They are up-to-date, so if you have concerns about the balance sheet of BCSL, it is a Document of the House.

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Do not ask me to produce something that is already here. I mean it is there and you have access to it. You need to read it. It is laid in here for all Members, so do not tell me I have to bring it like if I got it home at me under my bed. It is here. You have been here longer than me. You know where to find the Journal Department, so do not let us get into that. The issue is not profitability. The issue is returning some sense of viability and reducing the level of dependency on a Government subvention.

You know, the real issue with the Member for St. Michael North is when he said that I started at 2008, because he would really like me to get into what happened before 2008. We all know the love affair that he had with

my predecessor, the former Member for St. Michael South. He never was able to live with the fact that when my dear friend, the Member for St. Andrew, was removed from the Ministry of Tourism, that it was the Member for St. Michael South who was the choice of the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter and it was not the Member for St. Michael North. He has not got over that yet, you know. I am to get up here now and talk about what happened before 2008, because he knows full well. You see where he started; he started with the buses. He wants me to get into the buses, you know. Fuzzy Lovell and Noel Lynch's careers are over. I do not really need to come in here with that foolishness that they were getting on with. We had to sell the buses. Those buses spent more time down than up, and when they were up they were doing everything except conference services' business. The Member for St. Michael North knows this. I am to get into this, you see, because he wants me to go after the former Member for St. Michael South, the very hardworking CEO of the Barbados Cricket Association. I am not doing it. He is busy planning for Pakistan now, and I do not see why I should be getting into that. You will fight your own battles with him; it is nothing to do with me. I am not getting into that at all. The real part that I thought was almost amusing was this: I did not think that in 2017 anybody should have to defend the conference centre at this stage. Do you mean we are still talking about the examination thing and the home for the orchestra, and the "museum of madness" and so on? I thought we were past that. In 1994 this building was a white elephant and was so terrible. The then Deputy Prime Minister 'bound' in there with her office like a mighty rushing wind on the Day of Pentecost. She bounded up there and set up her office. I do not know. I have mentioned all the different activities that have been taking place there under both Governments, and it is a credit to those who conceived the centre that it has been able to have done so much good for Barbados. It is difficult to imagine a number of activities taking place had it not been for the centre. Again, I did not think that anybody at this stage would have to defend that. I think that the Barbados Labour Party played a little game there, and whatever, but they got past that. We do these things in the cut-and-thrust of politics, but I think the centre has made a case for itself. I do not have to make a case for the centre, and so I would not really get into that necessarily. Mr. Speaker, again we look forward to the completion of the centre; the work that has been done since 2008 since we had the restructured plan, and it is a plan, as I said. Professional advice was sought, we had to look at the market for Class A office space and the location of the centre. Mr. Speaker, all of these things were taken into account in order to come up with the plan that we are executing, and I once again want to salute everyone for all of the work. The loan I spoke about. I thank the Minister of Finance and his entire team. One per cent below prime is an excellent loan to have at a time like this, and therefore once again, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass. The question that the

Resolution do now pass was put to the Honourable House and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, with that we have come to the end of the Sitting for a brief day, albeit, and I want to thank.... Asides. MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please. ADJOURNMENT Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be adjourned until Tuesday, April 25, 2017, at ten o' clock in the morning. The Honourable Member for St. Andrew is not normally here, Mr. Speaker, so why does it matter? MR. SPEAKER: When are you adjourning to, Honourable Member?

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Sir, I apologise. MR. SPEAKER: You are moving until we adjourn to when?

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Tuesday, April 25, Sir. Speaking on the Adjournment, of course, we recognise that during the Adjournment there will be the customary Easter celebration. I want to wish all Honourable Members a very happy Easter. Even as we approach Easter and reach that commemoration, the celebration of our Lord on the Cross, we are contemplating the 40 days of Lent when Members may want to reflect on what their habits are now, and may want to consider their ways and be wise. Mr. Speaker, I therefore want to wish all Honourable Members and indeed Barbados a very happy Easter celebration. Our special event at Oistins is open for your participation. It is my information that the Right Honourable Prime Minister has accepted the invitation of the Oistins Fish Festival Committee to speak at the opening ceremony on the Saturday afternoon, and I obviously encourage people of Oistins and, of course, of Barbados, to come and observe that opening. It is a very interesting festival; one of the highlights of the Barbados cultural calendar, and certainly the Festival Committee and those associated need to be continually congratulated for their work. Mr. Speaker, with those few words I want to move that the House be adjourned until Tuesday, April 25, at ten o' clock in the morning. I am obliged to you, Sir.

Hon. A.D. BRATHWAITE: I beg to second that, Sir. Asides. MR. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Miss S.J.O. BRADSHAW: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would want to echo the sentiments of the Leader of Government Business in wishing everyone a blessed Easter. I know some people, when they were asked what they are giving up for Lent, jokingly said the Democratic Labour Party, but, you know, to each his own. I do wish everyone, including all of the staff who have worked tirelessly over the past few weeks with us, certainly during the Estimates as well with us, an enjoyable Easter season, and certainly to my colleagues on both sides of the political divide as well, and to you, Mr. Speaker, as well. With those few words, Sir, I thank you. MR. SPEAKER: Honourable

Members, let me also take the opportunity to wish you all the best for the Easter season. Asides. The question that the Sitting do now adjourn until April 25, 2017, at 10 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and MR. SPEAKER adjourned the Sitting accordingly. H:No.D8 (13) 12.31 p.m.

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

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

EDITORIAL QUERIES

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

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

Q2. Papers. The Speaker calls ‘Honourable Prime Minister’ and the paper is laid under the label ‘Hon. F. J. STUART’. Printed as in the source.

Q3. Order No. 14, speech label. The label for the Member for St. Michael North reads ‘Mr. R.C. TOPPPIN’. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Order No. 14, Hon. R. L. Sealy’s reply and the Adjournment. From the end of the Minister’s reply the source runs procedural matter into the speeches: the question on the Resolution is part of his last paragraph; the Speaker’s interventions, the heading ‘ADJOURNMENT’ and the motion to adjourn are run into Hon. J. D. E. Boyce’s speech; the Speaker’s ‘Yes, Honourable Member’ is under Hon. A. D. Brathwaite’s label; and the Speaker’s Easter wishes, the question on the adjournment and the take-slip are under Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw’s label. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Take-slips at the close. The take-slip ‘H:D8(12)12.33 p.m.’ is followed by the final slip ‘H:No.D8 (13) 12.31 p.m.’, two minutes earlier. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met on Friday, 24th March, 2017 at 10.00 a.m., with Mr. SPEAKER in the Chair; prayers were taken by Reverend Father Mark Harewood. The Minutes of Monday, 13th March, 2017 were deferred, the Annual Report of Invest Barbados for 2016 was laid, and Standing Orders were suspended on the motion of Hon. J. D. E. Boyce.

Hon. R. L. Sealy moved Order No. 14, the Resolution to approve the guarantee by the Minister of Finance of the principal sum of BDS\$17.625 million and interest, to be borrowed by Barbados Conference Services Limited from First Citizens Bank (Barbados) Limited to fit out new offices at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre, formerly the Sherbourne Conference Centre. He explained that after a review in 2008 the planned auditorium had given way to some 63 000 square feet of Class A office space, all of which the Government would rent, while about 100 000 square feet of conference space would remain. The multi-storey car park, completed around 2011, had cost \$8.46 million against a budget of \$9.3 million, and the office building \$37.32 million against \$36.56 million. The loan was at prime less 1 per cent. He spoke of building the ‘MICE’ niche (meetings, incentives, conferences and events) and noted that no venue in Barbados could seat 1 000 people banquet style. Hon. J. D. E. Boyce seconded.

Mr. R. C. Toppin, for St. Michael North, said the Minister had skirted the question of the centre’s profitability, had begun his history at 2008, and that the centre had had nothing more than a ‘checkered past’. Hon. J. D. E. Boyce defended the conditions of the loan as standard and joined in congratulating the Rt. Hon. Lloyd Erskine Sandiford. Hon. D. St.E. Kellman praised the building’s many uses, from examinations to the Youth Orchestra, and Mr. J. D. Paul, for St. Michael West Central, supported the Resolution as a sign of confidence and of help to small businesses.

Hon. R. L. Sealy replied. The Speaker queried his description of Members’ contributions as ‘worthless’, and he withdrew the word. He argued that profitability was the wrong test for a State-owned company, that the aim was to reduce its dependence on Government, that the centre had been overstaffed and was now better run, and that the financial reports had already been laid. The Resolution was agreed to without division.

Hon. J. D. E. Boyce moved the adjournment until Tuesday, 25th April, 2017 and wished Members a happy Easter. Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw and the Speaker added their good wishes, and the House was adjourned until Tuesday, 25th April, 2017 at 10.00 a.m.