
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2013 – 2018

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Friday, May 5, 2017

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10.00 a.m. on Friday, May 05, 2017.

PRESENT

His Honour M. A. CARRINGTON, 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, 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, Dip., 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.) LEC, LL.M.

Dr. M. M. AGARD, J.P., B.Sc., M.Sc., D.D.S.

Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND, B.Sc., M.Sc., MBA (Dist)

Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW, LL.B. (Hons.)

Prayers were taken by Reverend Mark Harewood.

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

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I have with me the Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, April 25, 2017.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes for the Honourable the House of Assembly for its Meeting of Tuesday, April 25, 2017 be confirmed subject to any omissions, corrections and/or observations.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: I beg to second that, Sir. Mr. SPEAKER: If there are no corrections or observations, then let those Minutes stand confirmed.

PAPERS

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the Royal Barbados Police Force Annual Report 2013.

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 today'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. 15

THE NATIONAL PETROLEUM CORPORATION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2017

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Prime Minister.

Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Speaker, I rise to move the Second Reading of the National Petroleum Corporation (Amendment) Bill. Notice of this Bill was given on March 10, 2017 and three days later on March 13, the Bill was read for a first time. The Amendment to the National Petroleum Corporation Act is intended to make better provision for the rates which are charged for a supply of natural gas and for related matters. The Amendments are reasonably straightforward as I see it.

The National Petroleum Corporation Act was passed in 1979 and came into effect on April 1, 1981, so for the last 36 years this piece of legislation has guided matters relating to the National Petroleum Corporation. The National Petroleum Corporation is a successor to the Natural Gas Corporation which used to have its headquarters on Bay Street and which came into existence in the 1950s and the Natural Gas Corporation of the 1950s was a successor organisation to a Natural Gas Company which existed from the 1800s and which of course had a very limited catchment area because in those days access to natural gas was regarded as a special privilege to be

enjoyed only by a few persons. Today, of course, the approach to natural gas is slightly different and every successor organisation, be it the Natural Gas Corporation or the National Petroleum Corporation, has tried to expand access to natural gas in Barbados so that today in the year 2017 upwards of 20 000 households in Barbados have access to natural gas thanks to the efforts of the National Petroleum Corporation. Of course, a number of businesses also have access to natural gas.

Mr. Speaker, the background against which this Amendment is being done today has everything to do with the fact that the policy of the National Petroleum Corporation and the policy of the Government is to ensure that as far as possible every single household in Barbados is able to benefit from the use of natural gas having regards to the fact that the stated policy of the Government is the creation of a green economy in Barbados and central to the creation of that green economy is the use of clean energy, and natural gas, of course, is regarded as a clean source of energy, , so whereas the National Petroleum Corporation Act, as it exists at the moment, in its definition of "petroleum" excluded "natural gas" from that definition. The amendment which we are doing today at Section II now includes "natural gas" in the definition of "petroleum" and having included "natural gas" in the definition of "petroleum", the amendment also in the Definition Section actually gives a definition of "natural gas", that definition being:

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"natural gas" means any natural occurring mixture of hydrocarbons and hydrocarbon compounds

(a) consisting primarily of methane; and

(b) existing in a gaseous state."

Mr. Speaker, those Honourable Members of the House whose proficiency in the area of chemistry far exceeds mine will I am sure dilate or expatiate on these issues as the debate develops but I think I understand enough about the chemistry of petroleum to be able to identify with that definition.

Mr. Speaker, briefly on the issue of the National Petroleum Corporation, it is headquartered in Wildey; it is employing just over 100 persons; it boasts a natural gas distribution network of about 350 miles; that 350 miles span eight parishes from St. Peter in the north to St. Philip in the south. Mr. Speaker, thereby hangs the tail because 36 years after the existence of the National Petroleum Corporation and many years since the 19th century when the gas company existed, we still have a situation in Barbados where not every parish in Barbados is benefiting from access to natural gas.

As I speak today, 36 years after the coming into existence of the National Petroleum Corporation, the parishes of St. John, St. Joseph and St. Lucy do not have access to natural gas through the National Petroleum Corporation or as I understand it, from any other sources. Mr. Speaker, that is, in my view, something in the nature of an injustice that has to be corrected but the inability of those three parishes to benefit from access to natural gas has everything to do and has had everything to do with the financial capacity or perhaps better still, the financial incapacity of the National Petroleum Corporation because the expansion of its facilities depends on access to money and that money has not been as easily available to the National Petroleum Corporation as it would have wanted it to be.

Mr. Speaker, we have a situation in Barbados today where the market for domestic supplies, only 25 per cent of that market has been touched by the National Petroleum Corporation up to now, so that 75 per cent of that market of the households in Barbados are being made to do without access to natural gas, in spite of the fact that upwards of 20 000 households have been benefiting. That too is something in the nature of an injustice that has to be corrected and the policy of the Government and the policy of the National Petroleum Corporation is to try to reach, as far as possible, that entire domestic market, rather than being limited to just 25 per cent of that market, but none of that can be done unless the National Petroleum Corporation can pay its way more comfortably than is the case today. Mr. Speaker, that is why the amendment to the legislation is making provision not only for “natural gas” to be included in the definition of “petroleum” and not only for the purpose of an actual definition of “natural gas” but also Section 21 of the legislation is being amended to replace the existing Section 21 which baldly states that:

“The Minister may make Regulations generally for the carrying out of the purposes of this Act”,

and replacing it with a new Section 21 which states more expansively and more relevantly that:

“The Minister may make Regulations:

(a) prescribing the

(i) fees to be paid for the installation, connection, examination or inspection of a meter, a natural gas pipeline or natural gas supply line to any premises; or

(ii) rates to be paid for the supply of natural gas to residential premises, commercial premises, industrial premises, or any other premises.

(b) for the installation, maintenance, inspection and examination of natural gas pipelines on any premises; (c)

for the installation, maintenance, inspection and examination of natural gas pipelines generally; or (d) generally to give effect to the purposes of the Act.”

Mr. Speaker, Section 21 goes on to say something that it did not say before. It says:

(2) “Where regulations made under subsection (1) create an offence, those Regulations should provide for that offence to be tried summarily [that is before a magistrate] and may prescribe a penalty of a fine not exceeding \$1 000 or to imprisonment for a term of 12 months or to both.” Mr. Speaker, the *raison d’être* of these amendments is to empower the Minister to exercise greater superintendence over issues related to natural gas and natural gas distribution in Barbados, but also to make provision for “natural gas” to be brought within the general definition of “petroleum” where, quite frankly, it properly belongs.

10.53 a.m.

No discussion of natural gas or of the National Petroleum Corporation (NPC) can be regarded as complete without a general overview of the energy sector in Barbados, because at the heart of everything that we do in this society is the use of energy. In recent times, because of volatility in the energy sector, the competitiveness of the Barbadian economy and the comfort of Barbadian households and businesses have been affected and in some cases undermined. Therefore, we must never lose sight of what kind of energy sector it is we have, where we are today in 2017, and where it is we intend to go.

The energy sector in Barbados is really composed of three major elements. There is the upstream and downstream petroleum sector. That sector takes care of the production of oil and gas from local reserves by the Barbados National Oil Company Limited (BNOCL), of the importation of fuel oil, diesel, gasoline and kerosene by the BNOCL, of the importation by the oil companies Sol and Rubis for the fuelling of aeroplanes, and the importation and distribution of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) by Rubis and Sol. It also has to do with the storage of petroleum products - gasoline, diesel, kerosene and jet fuel -- at the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited (BNTCL), the petroleum terminal at Fairy Valley, Christ Church, and the lease also by BNOCL of the Esso fuel tanks at Holborn in St. Michael for the storage and distribution of fuel oil. The upstream and downstream petroleum sector also accounts for the supply of fuel oil from the fuel tanks at Holborn by pipeline by the BNOCL to the Barbados Light & Power Company Limited for the generation of electricity, the distribution of gasoline, diesel and kerosene by the BNTCL to oil companies, and the sale of these products at service stations. BNTCL distributes gasoline, diesel and kerosene to oil companies, of course, for the sale of these products at service stations. That upstream and

downstream petroleum sector also accounts for the supply of natural gas produced by the BNOCL to the National Petroleum Corporation (NPC); and of course when it is supplied by BNOCL to the NPC, the NPC sells this product to households and to commercial and industrial customers. That is the upstream-downstream petroleum sector.

We also have in the energy sector a renewable energy and energy efficiency element, which has to do with the manufacture and sale of solar water heaters to the local and regional market, the installation of renewable energy electricity systems; mainly solar photovoltaic panels for the generation of electricity for use by businesses and households, and the sale of the excess electricity into the grid in accordance with the Electric Light and Power Act which was piloted through this House a few years ago. That sector also takes care of the limited manufacture and sale of biodiesel, also the use of bagasse in the sugar factories for the generation of electricity in their operations, and the use of energy efficiency and energy conservation measures to reduce the consumption of electricity. That is the second element. There is the upstream-downstream petroleum sector, there is the renewable energy efficiency sector, and of course the third element is electricity itself. That is accounted for by the generation, transmission and distribution of electricity by the Barbados Light & Power Company Limited.

It is almost axiomatic. It is very well known that ours has been a very high dependency on the use of fossil fuels, and the commitment of the Government to the creation of a Green Economy in Barbados has ensured that the Government set certain targets to effect strategic changes in our energy mix in Barbados so that our dependence on fossil fuels would not be as lopsided as that dependence has been for the better part of our history. We saw recently when there was an almost traumatic spiral in the cost of fossil fuels that the Barbados economy was severely affected, and monies that we should have been able to spend on housing and education and so on here in Barbados had to be spent on the importation of fossil fuels. What we are able to produce here in Barbados does not come anywhere near to what we actually need from day to day to keep Barbados turning over. I think that the BNOCL produces about 700 barrels per day, which is really miniscule production when you reflect that we need 11 000 barrels per day to keep Barbados turning over. Our dependence on the use of fossil fuels is, as I said, a lopsided dependence. It has been a lopsided dependence for the better part of our history, and our efforts at production so that we would not have to import as much as we do have been -- while not lukewarm -- lukewarm in their results since we have not been able since, I think, the year 1999 or thereabouts when we had a spike in local production, to do anything significant by way of producing oil here in Barbados.

Offshore, of course, there are positive signs in our offshore acreage. That is why we have to be very careful how we address issues like this, because we are not pronouncing against the use of fossil fuels absolutely, since we expect to be able to produce from our offshore acreage; but what we hope to be able to do is to use any profits we are able to generate from our offshore acreage to reinforce what we are trying to do here onshore in terms of the use of renewable energy and the diversification of our energy mix in such a way that our dependence and use of fossil fuels would not be as biased and as lopsided as it has been.

10.54 a.m.

Insert s4 juliette

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Rt. Hon. F.J. STUART: ...revenue from households to the National Petroleum Corporation (NPC) annually is the princely sum of \$450 000, and in the context of the kind of expenditures which the National Petroleum Corporation has to contemplate from year to year, it has to be conceded that is a drop in the bucket. These amendments Mr. Speaker are intended to deal with some of these challenges. The questions that have to be asked are simple. Are we satisfied that only 25% of the domestic market is being serviced by the National Petroleum Corporation? Put differently, are we satisfied that 75% of the domestic market is being left untouched by the activities of the National Petroleum Corporation? Are we satisfied that upwards of 80%, just upwards of 80% of the revenues of the National Petroleum Corporation is coming from our commercial and industrial customers even in circumstances where those customers also are being charged highly concessional rates? Is it realistic in the year 2017 that for the provision of this very critical service, households are contributing only \$450 000 per year to the income of the National Petroleum Corporation? Are those people who are enjoying access to natural gas happy that they are enjoying it, but a large number of other households in Barbados are not enjoying it? Are they happy that even St. Lucy does not get natural gas while they get it? Are they happy that people in St. Joseph do not get natural gas while they get it? Are they happy that people in St. John do not get natural gas while they get it? That is the context within which we have to look at what it is these amendments are about. For the Government's part, the policy is, the benefaction of the National Petroleum Corporation should reach as large a number of households in Barbados as possible. That those communities that were already serviced by the National Petroleum Corporation should continue to be reinforced, but that adjoining communities not yet serviced in constituencies and in parishes should be serviced as soon as possible and that these facilities should reach as large a number of people as possible in the country, in the pursuit of the Government's

policy, not only of ensuring that cleaner and more economical energy is used in the country, but in pursuit of the Government's overall policy of creating a green economy in Barbados.

So as far as we are concerned, Mr. Speaker, these issues are nonnegotiable because of what the implications are for those who are not yet getting natural gas, for those who are awaiting natural gas and for the difficulties under which the National Petroleum Corporation has been having to function. Sir, a good example of that would be this, because of the expenditure of laying involved in the supply of natural gas to the households for the domestic market, the National Petroleum Corporation has now found itself in a position where it goes to supply natural gas does not depend exclusively on where the demand is or where the most pressing demand is, it has to do with where the Ministry of Transport and Works is doing its work in terms of digging up arteries for repairs. So it kind of piggy back on the Ministry of Transport and Works, and when not the Ministry of Transport and Works it has to do similarly when the Barbados Water Authority is digging up roads for the laying of mains and so on, it has to piggy back on the Barbados Water Authority as well.

Sir, the stage has to be reached where independently of the Ministry of Transport and Works or the Barbados Water Authority, the National Petroleum Corporation can pursue its activities and respond to the demands for natural gas in its own right and in its own way, and it can only do that if it is earning enough money from the sale of natural gas to make it more financially viable. So these are some of the challenges that the Corporation has been facing.

The Corporation of course has not been sitting back and doing nothing. Of course I should say that what we are doing here today was being requested by the National Petroleum Corporation for a number of years now, around the year 2000. Certainly from 2005 initiatives were being put forward so that what we are attempting to do here today can be done, but those initiatives were not entertained. In the meanwhile the Corporation has been forced to continue to function and to perform under crippling revenue circumstances while having no abatement of its expenditure. Sir, 36 years after the Corporation has come into existence and in the light of changes that have taken place in the market place, in light of the fact that we do not have inexhaustible reservoirs of natural gas in Barbados and in fact we have had to be importing natural gas so that the domestic can be met, the Corporation has had to look at itself, the Government has had to look at the relationship between the Corporation and the Barbados National Oil Company Limited, (BNOC), and a decision has been taken to effect efficiencies and economies by amalgamating the two entities. All of the contours of that determination are being at present exploited to ensure that we get it right. Both sides agree that the interest of entities would be better

served by an amalgamation of the two entities. The Cabinet, of course, addressed that issue and that position is being pursued.

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We did all of this, of course, looking at the unfavourable financial performance of the Corporation, looking at its cash flow difficulties, its inability to vigorously pursue the kind of mains expansion programme that the Government thinks desirable and, of course, in so doing expanding its customer base. We have to take into account its inability to service, maintain, replace and or reposition old and unsecure pipeline infrastructure. It helps to make this point, Mr. Speaker, quite a bit of the pipeline infrastructure being used by the National Petroleum Corporation in 2017 was laid in the 1940s and 1950s, and, of course, we all know based on our recent water experiences what aged pipeline infrastructure can do to an entity's capacity to supply the product which is its remit. So that amalgamation of the two entities is being actively pursued, and is intended to become a reality in the not too distant future.

In addition, of course, there are plans to secure a loan from the Inter American Development Bank. The whole purpose of this loan is intended to be a loan of US\$34 million, to deal with the issue of institutional strengthening and capacity building, as we try to merge these two institutions and, of course, to deal with the company that will result from the merger of the two institutions. The loan is supposed to deal with the issue of a system upgrade. As I said, there needs to be an upgrade in the system. It is also intended to deal with energy security, since the Government is committed to the use of the clean fuels and it is intended to make sure that our access to energy, particularly renewable energy, is sustainable. The first disbursement of this loan is scheduled, as I understand it, within the next three months once the conditions precedent have been satisfied.

We also have to, in addition to looking at amalgamation and the securing of loans, the issue of rates also has to be tackled, and that is what this amendment is about. Rates have to continue at a concessionary level. We are not talking about the imposition of market rates, but we have to make sure that the National Petroleum Corporation is able to discharge its remit, and to meet the ever increasing demands of the public for access to natural gas. I cannot ever emphasise this point 36 years after its existence. It has only been able to touch 25% of the domestic customers. Sir, 75% of those customers are still awaiting on the National Petroleum Corporation to bring natural gas within their reach. That is enough argument to justify a revisit of rates that have not been touched so far as commercial entities and industrial entities are concerned

since the year 1994, and in the case of the domestic customers, since the year 2002.

Once we are able to secure the financing necessary, we will be able to deal more effectively with the replacement of our infrastructure, the upgrade of our systems. We will be able to keep down to a minimum the volume of unaccounted for gas which we now lose as a result of the state of the infrastructure. All of this has to do with the fact that the infrastructure was laid since the 1940s and the 1950s.

I think, Mr. Speaker, this issue is of relevance to every single household and every single business in Barbados. I well recall between November 2014 and April 2015 during the tourist season, BNOCL could not meet the demand in the supply of natural gas for businesses, residential entities and even for the industrial sector. This resulted in much trauma both at the level of households and at the level of Businesses, it was then we had to resort quickly to the importation of the product, so that hotel sector, in particular, was not too severely affected by this challenge. We know what the risks are. We know what the risks can be and we are therefore trying to make sure that we do not find ourselves in that unhappy position again.

Sir, the amendments which I have brought to the House today are designed to confront some of these problems, the existing legislation excludes nature gas from the definition of petroleum. We are amending the legislation to include natural gas in the definition for natural gas which, as I said, states as follows:

“Natural gas means any naturally occurring mixture of hydrocarbons and hydrocarbon compounds consisting primarily of methane and existing in a gaseous state.”

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We are also replacing Section 21 of the existing legislation which gives the Minister power to make regulations to particularise the kind of regulations which the Minister can make in the area of rate setting, in the area of the infrastructure of the National Petroleum Corporation in relation to installation and maintenance and all that kind of thing, making provision for things like inspection and so on, and therefore overall to give effect or better effect to the purposes for which the legislation exists overall.

The Amendment is also creating penalties. In the event that offences are created anywhere in the legislation there are penalties which can be imposed to deal with breaches of the provision of the statute.

I do not think, therefore, Mr. Speaker, that there is much more I need to say at this stage, so let me summarise and just say that the National Petroleum Corporation has

existed since 1981, its remit has been to get natural gas from the Barbados National Oil Company Limited and to sell it to households and businesses and it has done that quite successfully for the last 36 years but quite limitedly for the last 36 years and all that has to do with the fact that the rates upon which it has had to rely, certainly since 1994 in the case of commercial and industrial customers and since 2002 in the case of domestic customers, have been highly concessional rates far below what the market would demand and as a result of that it has only been able to touch 25 per cent of its domestic market leaving 75 per cent of that market waiting for natural gas. It has also only been able to touch eight of the 11 parishes leaving St. Joseph, St. Lucy and St. John out of the natural gas picture altogether and it is intending to correct all of that but can only correct it by a number of changes at the level of the revenue it is capable of earning.

Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to learn in the briefing which I got for this debate that both the domestic, the commercial and industrial customers generally speaking pay their bills, but then why should they not. If at the domestic level you have to pay a bill of \$4.18 per month for natural gas only in the most exceptional circumstances you should be able to explain why you are not paying your bills but they pay their bills. As things stand at the moment, that 25 per cent of households is a privileged group and we want to expand those privileges to include a larger number of people, and of course so far as the commercial and industrial entities are concerned they account for 80 per cent of the Corporation's revenues. I do not think that even when we increase the rates that that ratio is likely to change significantly but what it should show is that we are being a little more realistic in terms of what we are asking people to pay for this very precious and very clean resource.

As I indicated, it is not that the National Petroleum Corporation has been sitting back and doing nothing. It has looked at its operational challenges and it has looked at the constraints under which it has had to function and along with the Barbados National Oil Company Limited and in consultation with the Cabinet a decision has been taken to amalgamate the two entities to effect efficiencies and economies, and arising out of all of that we should get the best or much better out of that amalgamation. Mr. Speaker, to facilitate that a loan of US\$34 million is being secured from the Inter-American Development Bank, the first draw down of which should come in another three months once the conditions precedent have been satisfied and a number of issues related to both entities will be dealt with out of those funds, things like systems upgrade, institutional strengthening, capacity building and so on, and overall, we should be in a better position to deal with the issues related to the supply of natural gas in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I think that as a result of what we are attempting here today that the residents of the parishes of St. Lucy, St. John and St. Joseph would be justified in having their hopes raised since over the last 36 years nothing has happened for them in this connection. These issues are now under very active consideration and it is contemplated that the Corporation's activities will reach those parishes in the near future.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, and against the background of what this Amendment to the National Petroleum Corporation Act is intended to do, I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

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

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

Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on this Bill which seeks to amend the National Petroleum Corporation Act, Cap. 20 in order to make better provision for rates which are charged for the supply of natural gas and for related matters. It went on, as the Honourable Member mentioned, to this whole aspect of the definition of petroleum. There are certain aspects of the definition with which I will agree. I have no issue with the Amendment as it relates to petroleum and no issue with the whole aspect of the regulations where it states that the Minister may make the necessary regulations prescribing fees to be paid for installation, connection, examination and inspection of metres and stuff like that. Mr. Speaker, that was mentioned by the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South in his presentation.

The Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South went on to highlight that eight out of the 11 parishes have natural gas and that there are three parishes, St. John, St. Lucy and St. Joseph, that are presently without natural gas. The Honourable Member further added that only 25 per cent of domestic, if you want to say consumers or customers, have natural gas in this country.

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Mr. Speaker, that is one of the issues that I have as I speak on the behalf of this great institution, the Barbados Labour Party, in this Lower House. Mr. Speaker, if after nine years of leadership under the Democratic Labour Party we can come to this Lower House to tell the people of this country that only 25 per cent of our citizens have natural gas, then we ought to be ashamed of ourselves.

Asides.

Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if I have unlimited time but I will not be ruffled or

fazed by the Honourable Members for Christ Church South or Christ Church East Central because Mr. Speaker, the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South had his time and this Honourable House behaved in an orderly and decent manner. Mr. Speaker, I want members who are here from the Civil Service, whether statutory corporations or Government organisations, to recognise the level of immature behaviour that comes from Honourable Members on the other side. I want them to recognise the Honourable Members' failure to allow me to make a presentation as it relates to a key sector in this country, the energy sector, which they termed as foolishness. I want these persons to recognise what we have to deal with on a weekly basis by a Government which is supposed to be more responsible, caring and more disciplined. Mr. Speaker, that is what we have to put up with in this Lower Chamber week after week, we have to put up with pure interruptions.

Mr. Speaker, anyhow, after nine years only 25 per cent of our domestic customers have natural gas. The Honourable Member spoke about natural gas going to St. John, St. Joseph and St. Lucy and I do agree with the Honourable Member because I believe that all parishes, all domestic and commercial entities should be equipped to receive natural gas because it is a cleaner and a more economical fuel. I do not like to use the term "cheaper" but it is more economical and a cleaner fuel. Mr. Speaker, we have just heard about the \$4.18 per month, the fee that is paid by our domestic consumers is reasonable. I am also hearing that they are thinking about a price increase for the first time since 1994 but Mr. Speaker, we have deficiencies as I speak today with the other eight parishes which, of course, includes St. George because when I travel the length and breadth of St. George South, the people in Frere Pilgrim, Dayrells Hill or wherever....Mr. Speaker, I went to Barkers Road in the constituency of St. Michael East and next door to that area, persons in what I would call a paralleled road within less than 100 meters the residents there are equipped with natural gas, but when we come further into Barkers Road, another 100 meters away, there is no natural gas there.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that whereas the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South spoke about these three parishes not having natural gas, the Honourable Member has to recognise that there is a tremendous deficiency that resides in the other eight parishes and that people are asking for natural gas. Wherever I travel, whether in St. George South, St. George North, St. Michael East, St. Philip South or elsewhere, as I travel around a lot in this country, the people are asking for natural gas.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to move further because it is not just about the National Petroleum Corporation and I always take time out to recognise the talent that we have both at the Barbados National Oil Company and the National Petroleum Corporation because I know some of

the technical persons who work in those two entities and I want to compliment them for a job well done under these trying circumstances under the Democratic Labour Party. Mr. Speaker, I know there are trying circumstances under the Democratic Labour Party because we have seen it, and I will get to the meat of the matter shortly.

Mr. Speaker, the Right Honourable Member often comes to this Honourable Chamber and speaks about the fact how I remind him of Russell Lowe but I believe that Russell Lowe would have made a better presentation than what the Right Honourable Member did this morning. I am certain that Russell Lowe, from the constituency of the St. George South, would have done a far better job. Mr. Speaker, the Right Honourable Member quoted some figures and I wrote them down, the Honourable Member said that presently we produce 700 barrels of oil a day. Sir, I would want to ask the Right Honourable Member where in Barbados are we producing that 700 barrels of crude oil per day or when last have we produced 700 barrels of crude oil per day? Mr. Speaker, in his wrapping up I would like the Honourable Member either to correct that figure, as the Honourable Member has time as there are technocrats sitting and can come back with a new figure. Mr. Speaker, the last time that we produced 700 barrels of crude oil per day was probably in 2014. We know very well, Mr. Speaker, that when the level of crude oil dropped below 700 barrels a day that was when we experienced the outage of natural gas on the west coast and that presently we are importing natural gas, so that we would have gone from a level of 1 000 barrels a day under the Barbados Labour Party Government when we focussed on the Ministry of Energy, when there was a tremendous focus by the Barbados Labour Party Government because we recognised that there were three fundamental issues in this country that would be facing us as the world went into a recession. Those three fundamental issues were: the cost of energy, the cost of capital, and the cost of labour. Those were the three fundamental issues that were critical to the Barbados Labour Party Government and governance structure. Mr. Speaker, under the Democratic Labour Party we have seen minimal effort to enhance either the onshore and offshore production of crude oil.

Mr. Speaker, one may be asking why I have gone into crude oil production and so for the citizens of this country who are listening, there is a direct relationship between the production of crude oil and the production of natural gas, some say it is a 2-to-1 ratio, while others say 80 per cent. Mr. Speaker, I will quote figures that were produced in this country under the Barbados National Oil Company on onshore drilling. There was also a focus on offshore drilling which I will speak to shortly because a lot was done that was not right under the Democratic Labour Party Administration as it relates to the Petroleum Mining Act, and they must remember Barbados Hydrocarbons.

Asides.

Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND: I have unlimited time, I will get there. Mr. Speaker, I wish to bring the relationship between crude oil production and natural gas production.

11.50 a.m.

I have unlimited time. I will get there, but I wish to just bring the relationship between crude oil production and natural gas production. We have figures to show that when you produced 800 barrels of crude oil a day in 2008, you had natural gas production averaging 2.0 million cubic feet per day.

Asides.

Mr. D.G. SUTHERLAND: When we produced 800 barrels of crude oil back in 2008, we produced 2.8 million cubic feet of natural gas. Mr. Speaker, then we came in 2009 and our production began to decrease; 769 barrels of crude oil related to 1.5 million cubic feet of natural gas. You can see the relationship as I speak to you. It got worse. It came down in 2014. It is lower now. The Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South did not give us a figure, because he recognised probably there is none being produced. It reached the all-time low below 700 barrels of oil per day back in 2014, and we recognised that it was 1.4 million cubic feet of natural gas. We went below that. That was the critical level in this country. That was when we saw the hotels on the West Coast being without natural gas. The signs were there under the Democratic Labour Party, Mr. Speaker. We did not just wake up one morning and run out of natural gas. Mr. Speaker, when you are driving your car, you look at your needle and you see when your needle is approaching zero and you go to the gas station and fill up. I am saying that whereas you cannot just fill up like that with natural gas, you can put systems and measures in place to ensure that our drilling programme is restarted.

We drilled a well in St. John close to my old alma mater, just a few metres away, and we failed under the Democratic Labour Party. We failed to produce anything from that well.

Asides.

Mr. D.G. SUTHERLAND: The Member for Christ Church East Central knows nothing about what I am speaking of, and he must understand he does not even know much about education. I would like the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South to speak to his Members because this is true. We drilled a well in St. John, and due to poor operations and lack of management, failed to produce anything from it.

Aside.

Mr. D.G. SUTHERLAND: In summary, Mr. Speaker, as we speak to onshore drilling, the BNOCL added two gas wells; one at Sunbury and one at Church Village back then. Those wells were supposed to address the shortage in natural gas. I would like the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South in his wrap-up to tell this country. It is all well and good to come and talk about amending the National Petroleum Corporation Act and regulating the rates from \$4.18, but I want to know the sustainable plan. We are talking about energy, and I am not just going to speak about natural gas, because we have some fundamental issues in the Ministry of Energy. I do not attack our technocrats, because I think they are highly skilled technocrats, but we have governance issues in the Ministry of Energy in this country which we need to address. While I am here speaking about the natural gas, there is a bigger issue.

This Government, just like us, produced a draft national energy policy for Barbados for 2017-2036, presented to the Division of Energy and Telecommunications in the Prime Minister's Office by an energy policy consultant. I saw that a number of agencies would have assisted in the presentation of this Document -- the Government entities -- and we are looking at a shift away from a proposed target of a 75 per cent reduction in total fossil fuels. This is a draft energy policy. Seventy-five per cent reduction in total fossil fuels, and we are looking at heavy fuel oil, diesel, ...

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: On a Point of Order. The Honourable Member is reading from what he terms a draft energy policy. I do not know where he would have obtained a draft energy policy, but I would ask that, whatever it is, at least we should have it made a Document of the House so that we on this side can benefit from this draft energy policy too, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER: What I would say is that....

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, if it is a draft, it really is not final policy either, but I still think we should benefit from it, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER: Right. What I would say is that I would expect that when Members are quoting, they quote from authentic documents, and I am sure that is what he is doing. More particularly, I would expect that you give the exact document so that we are able to refer to it. Yes, the Member has a point. If it is only a draft and it is not finished and not signed, I really do not think it is fair to the House for it to be put in as part of the documentation of

the House, but of course you are free to refer to it as your notes. Honourable Member, please be guided.

Aside.

MR. SPEAKER: If you are quoting from it, please identify the document specifically.

Mr. D.G. SUTHERLAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will make it a Document of the House. Thank you, Sir. It says, "Interim draft of National Energy Policy for Barbados 2017-2036 presented to the Division of Energy and Telecommunications in the Prime Minister's Office by Mr. David Ince, energy policy consultant."

MR. SPEAKER: Is it signed and everything by him?

Mr. D.G. SUTHERLAND: Mr. Speaker, my point as I speak on energy is that....

MR. SPEAKER: Just a minute, Honourable Member. As I believe I have said before in this House: I have seen Members seek to put in documents and so on which they have got from some source or something that fell off a truck and so on. This is not some youth group meeting. This is serious business when we come here, so when you come here, you must come with documents that are properly authenticated and so on. I am saying to you that if you are producing a document that you have access to, let us know what it is, and we want to be able to confirm that it is the final document and so on. Tell us what you are reading from.

Mr. D.G. SUTHERLAND: I am not aware that a document has to be signed. I mean, I can refer the matter to the Clerk and you can guide me, because I said where the source is, Mr. Speaker. I said it is an energy policy consultant and that the document was presented to the Division of Energy. It is a draft document and I basically wanted to reference the move from fossil fuels to more renewable energy. It was not an indictment on any Member on the other side. I was just using it to make a reference, and I want to make it a Document of the House. It is not signed, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, Members have this practice of saying, "I am making this a Document of the House," and we accept it. For future reference, the only persons really who are empowered under the Rules to lay documents in the House are Ministers or Parliamentary Secretaries. When you check the Standing Orders, you will see that, and that is so because they are able to then produce a document or submit a document which they understand to be an authentic document.

11.52 a.m.

Insert s10 juliette

Friday, May 05, 2017

Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND: When we increase these rates of natural gas and when we amend this nice Bill here to a new Act, am I going to see the natural gas capability being built out in Frere Pilgrim, Barkers' Road, Watts Village, Boarded Hall, South District, Campaign Castle and all those areas that are known to me right next to the wells and will I be able to go to a house during my political sojourn and say yes we would have benefitted from natural gas installation as a result?

Asides.

Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND: The Honourable Member passes there petty often. Campaign Castle needs natural gas and they also needs roads.

Asides.

Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND: Yes, from those days they needed roads but I am not going so far back and I am not getting in on roads right now because the road debate is a very serious debate so do not let us go there, let us stick to the task at hand. We are talking about renewable energy, crude oil production and natural gas production.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Right Honourable Member to tell this Lower Chamber and the citizens of this country when we amend this Bill and we have a new Act, the National Petroleum Corporation Act, when will we begin to see the natural gas capability being built out in this country. Or will this just be another piece of paper with an amendment that would sit on the Honourable Minister desk like others have done and we see no action at all because we know that this Government has suffered from an implementation deficit not only in the Energy Division but in other divisions. We are now averaging less than 500 barrels a day of crude oil production and that will always force us to import natural gas so we have become a net importer of natural gas with foreign exchange going out of the country on oil again. What are we going to do as a Government to ensure that we bring crude oil production to 800, 900 and 1 000 barrels a day that can assist the National Petroleum Corporation because it is all well and good to talk about the National Petroleum Corporation and about merging but our fundamental issue lies with the onshore production of crude oil. Let us address this issue of the onshore production of crude oil. Let us make the well at St. John and the wells at Church Village and Sunbury more productive.

This Government came into power in 2008. I am going to touch on the Cess tax because when we speak about the Cess tax the Honourable Members on the other

side often say that the Barbados Labour Party subsidised oil to the tune of racking up \$160 million in losses and some said that when we add interest it was \$200 million but what the Barbados Labour Party did was to make sure that whereas diesel was an input to the productive sector... When the price of oil rose, I think it was above US\$80 a barrel, the Barbados Labour Party saw it fit to cushion the citizens of this country and that is why losses occurred but it was not just losses, it was a methodology at the time imposed by the Barbados Labour Party because we did impose at the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited a 2 cents per litre Cess tax back in 2008, so that when the price of oil drops we would begin to recover the losses as a result of subsidising, but when this Government came into power a Cess tax of 18 cents per litre was imposed on diesel and gasoline and that is why over the years we have not seen any benefits being passed on to the consumers after the Barbados Labour Party left office. This Cess tax was supposed to recover the losses that the Democratic Labour Party claimed that we ramped up when we subsidised the oil when the price went above US\$80 a barrel. We recognised that the citizens and businesses of this country could not survive if we passed on the true cost of the oil to them, so we subsidised it, so the Cess tax that was imposed by the Democratic Labour Party to recover the losses, in the worst case \$160 million plus the interest amounted to probably \$200 million, was recovered by 2015, so the consumers did not benefit because the Democratic Labour Party did not cushion them and instead passed on everything to them. After the Democratic Labour Party recovered the money the Barbados National Oil Company Limited was still making profits and the Government used those profits to fund some of the State entities like the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, the Transport Board and whoever, that is what the Barbados National Oil Company Limited did.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking the question if in hindsight whether some of those profits could have gone to build out the renewable energy capability in this country or gone to natural gas production or invested in the onshore drilling programme as opposed to paying dividends, some \$30 million, and funding the State-owned entities. I am not saying not to save the Transport Board. I will be a hypocrite, Mr. Speaker, if I stand up here and say not to save the Transport Board or the Queen Elizabeth Hospital which are fundamental institutions. My point remains that some of those profits that we keep ramping up at the Barbados National Oil Company Limited should have been invested in the onshore drilling programme so that our natural gas production would be above the 600 cubic feet per day and we would not now be a net importer of natural gas in this country. These are some of the things that we have to ask ourselves in hindsight.

Mr. Speaker, I believe strongly that if the Barbados Labour Party was in power that would have been the focus

because when I look at our 2013 Manifesto we said that we would have removed the Cess tax imposed by the Democratic Labour Party because our view was always to cushion the poor man and the businesses. The middle class people and the poor people in this country need some relief so we would have done that and that was written in our Manifesto but fate would have it we were not successful at the polls at that time and here we are again coming full circle trying to address a fundamental issue of natural gas supply in this country.

This debate is not only about a rate increase and the definition of petroleum, this has to do with a reliable and clean supply of energy, whether it is in natural gas, whether we are going to wind or if we are going to solar because we recognised that the world is moving and we have to shift our focus. If there is a mixed portfolio being created by the Government and it is some reduction of 75 per cent of fossil fuels to a more diversified mixed including renewable energy then we have to ask ourselves if the proposed 30 per cent of natural gas in that mixed can really be achieved based on the Government's onshore drilling programme.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to speak briefly to the offshore drilling programme because when the Barbados Labour Party left office we had awarded two blocks to BHP Billiton on the offshore drilling programme, and I do not think that any major work has been done since we left office

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12.12 p.m.

We are now talking about an Environmental Impact Assessment Study but let us remember they changed the Act to allow Bajan Hydrocarbons to bid for one of the blocs but the technical persons in the Ministry, congratulations to you, recognised that Bajan Hydrocarbons had no skill whatsoever, neither did they have the resources, but that was simply about the piper stoking his friend. We remember Bajan Hydrocarbons, do not let us forget, but we can sit on the other side and can point fingers, because these are some of the issues on which we have to focus, not only the onshore drilling programme but also the offshore drilling programme.

Mr. Speaker, if this country is to achieve more citizens and the 11 parishes being equipped with natural gas, then the focus has to be both on the onshore and offshore drilling programmes, we cannot achieve it by importing natural gas in the bullet tanks because the price of natural gas will definitely go up and the only way that we can have reasonable rates, because I do not know what they would go up to, but this Bill would have given the Minister the right to address the rates and presently that

rate is \$4.18 per month that is being charged to domestic customers, so that if we are supposed to see all 11 parishes like the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South mentioned in his presentation, then we have to address the onshore and offshore drilling programmes.

Mr. Speaker, we have to start and get up and do some work, this Government is suffering from an implementation deficit. The Minister of Energy has sat over the past nine years and has done nothing major as it relates to building out the natural gas capability and also the renewable energy capability of this country. Mr. Speaker, I await to see the final energy policy and to see the mix as it relates to renewable energy, natural gas and what we call the heavier fuels like diesel and gasoline. I am waiting to see the final policy to see what the mix is as it relates to renewable energy and wind energy.

Asides.

Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is having fun. I would not quote from the document because it cannot be laid in this Honourable House but I am waiting to see. I would also like that in his wrapping up that the Right Honourable Member would tell us what is the plan not only for the Barbados National Oil Company Limited but for the other oil companies in this country, such as Simpsons Oil Limited (S.O.L.)

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable Chamber and I need to be guided, Sir. I heard the Honourable Member saying that his document cannot be laid in the House. I did not hear you say that it cannot be laid, I thought I heard you say that you want the document to which the Honourable Member is referring, albeit the conditions under which documents should be laid. Mr. Speaker, therefore we need to get that clear because I am looking forward to the document myself.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, there is no point of order found. Please continue, Honourable Member.

Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND: Mr. Speaker, I will reinforce my point, what is the transition strategy for these oil companies such as the Barbados National Oil Company, S.O.L. and Rubis, as we transition into a more renewable energy economy. Mr. Speaker, it is okay for us to be coming here and talking about reducing our dependency on fossil fuels, but what is our strategy as we move forward? The price of oil will reach US\$240 per barrel, which has already been predicted, what would we do? When the price of oil reaches US\$240 per barrel, what would the National Petroleum Corporation be doing? Would we come again to ask for another adjustment in rates or would we increase the price to the consumers? We have to transition to a more renewable energy based economy in very short time but

while we are dealing with our natural gas capability which is a cleaner fuel, we have to make sure that we build out our capability and the capacity of the natural gas in this country.

Mr. Speaker, when I canvass along the length and breadth of St. George South - Frere Pilgrim, Dayrells Hill, Boarded Hall, Watts Village, South District, Brighton, when I canvass in St. George North too - Campaign Castle, among others, the people in those areas have been asking for relief through the installation of natural gas. Is it that the installation cost is so exorbitant? Is it that the Barbados National Oil Company limited needs to drop the price at which they sell natural gas to the National Petroleum Corporation? These are some of the questions that we have to ask.

Mr. Speaker, the rate of \$4.18 is good, yes, I am not disputing that rate but I am asking where are we going with this, is this just another document that will be passed or will the citizens of this country truly benefit from natural gas installations in their homes and businesses? I am one who believe that the time has come that we should get into charging different rates, both commercial rates and industrial rates should be different to domestic rates.

Asides.

Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND: Mr. Speaker, while the Honourable Member for St. Philip South will laugh and have fun, this is a fundamental issue that we are discussing in this Lower House, therefore I would like the Honourable Member to make a contribution as it relates to his constituency with respect to energy and where we are going as a country, because I said and will repeat those three fundamental issues in this country: the cost of labour, the cost of capital, and the cost of energy.

Mr. Speaker, we are spending too much money on our fuel import bill so, Mr. Speaker, as we seek to wait on the decision with respect to the sale of the Barbados National Terminal Oil Company Limited to S.O.L., Rubis or whomever, there is a more fundamental issue in transitioning these companies to be seen as renewable energy companies, as opposed to just fossil fuel companies and selling diesel and gasoline. How will we deal with these issues? Mr. Speaker, I would like that the Right Honourable Member in his wrapping up to tell this Lower Chamber, along with the people of this country, what is the plan to build out (1), the natural gas capability and capacity in this country as we seek to address rates, and (2), what are the plans as it relates to the Barbados National Oil Company and the other oil companies as it relates to transitioning to renewable energy-focussed companies. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SUSPENSION

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I now beg to move that this Honourable House be suspended for lunch, to be resumed at 2.00 p.m. this afternoon.

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

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

H:D10(12)

RESUMPTION

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Members. Good afternoon. This Sitting is resumed. When the Suspension was taken, we were on Order No. 15 and with that we shall continue. Yes, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

Hon. D.St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in this debate to move the Second Reading of the National Petroleum Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2017, and to say from the outset that it is rather disturbing that after being in Parliament when a Green Economy Budget came to this House by the Opposition, when one listens to the Honourable Member for St. George South, one would be surprised that he would have been associated with that Budget. When one listened to what he had to say this morning, it was clear that he was very opposed to anything dealing with renewable energy, because he put a case clearly for the subsidisation of fossil fuels. One would not believe that a Member who is supposed to be leading for the Opposition and claimed that they brought a green energy and a renewable energy Budget in 2007, could put such a strong argument on behalf of fossil fuels and tell the country why they were prepared to subsidise fossil fuels at a time when they claimed they were supporting renewable energy. That tells a lesson about the Barbados Labour Party, and it is that they say one thing and do something quite different. It is no wonder that the public of Barbados today has to stay clear of their mouthings, because it is clear that what they are saying prior to the Election is not what they would do if, by chance, they were to be elected. It is a lot of election talk but no seriousness to it.

Mr. Speaker, when one looks at the statistics you would not believe that you would hear them all over Barbados trying to tell you that you should go to the International Monetary Fund and you should try to balance the budget and all of that talk. This is a party that has been able to practise deficit financing for the BNOCL, and you

heard it very clearly from the Honourable Member for St. George South, and it is demonstrated not only by his mouthings but also by the statistics over the years. Not only did he say that they accumulated \$160 million in losses at the BNOCL, which accumulated, using his statistics, over \$200 million which would have helped create the deficit. That is why we would be in a deficit trap today, because it is clear that instead of looking after the interests of the country Barbados, they were looking after the interests of votes. They were looking to create the “feel good” syndrome by allowing Barbadians to get fossil fuels at a low cost, create the impression that everything was well and that there was really honey in the hive, when in truth and in fact it was trouble for the country Barbados down the road.

When you see and hear about these large deficits, you need not worry for the simple reason that they never had to worry about it. They knew that they were cushioned by the accounting cash-based system, so they did not have to account for it, so they could have afforded to create the impression in this country that everything was well; that the economy was doing well when in truth and in fact what they were doing was hiding deficits which they were not forced to account for. Prior to that they were operating on the cash basis, but right after 2008 as soon as the Democratic Labour Party came to Government, they were faced with the accrual system, which meant that all the losses that had been accumulated at the BNOCL and at the National Petroleum Corporation had to come to book. When you therefore look at the statistics and the growth of the deficit, clearly you would see that prior to 2008 you had a situation where the deficits would have been reported on the cash basis, which mean it was only that little surplus. As you know, using the cash basis, by rights, you should not even have a deficit. You should really be showing a break-even, but right after 2008 all the losses that the Barbados Labour Party had accumulated and all the debt they would have incurred had to be accounted for by the Democratic Labour Party.

When you see these big deficits, one gets the impression that it is the Democratic Labour Party which created these deficits, when in truth and in fact all that occurred was that the Barbados Labour Party did not have to account for them; but now we have to account for them. Sir, a good example of that was in 2004 at the National Petroleum Corporation: Losses to the tune of \$2 million. In 2005, losses to the tune of \$1.1 million. In 2006, losses of \$0.4 million. In 2007, losses of \$1 million again. In 2008 was when things started to change, and you had a profit in 2008, but then after 2009 you had some losses. It took us up to 2013 before we could bring that corporation back to profitability. After a small profit of \$0.3 million in 2012, you were able to see a surplus of \$1.6 million, and then in 2014 it was \$2 million, and in 2015 it was \$1.6 million. The reason now why we have to come back and adjust the

rates is because for 2016, you had a deficit or a loss of \$1.1 million, and for 2017 there is a projection of \$0.8 million, and by 2018 it is showing that the losses will be \$4.7 million. In other words, if we were to continue to allow these losses to occur without adjusting the revenue, we would not be able to increase that 25 per cent as it now stands where the domestic suppliers are able to be supplied. Instead of probably having the 25, we would look to see that that 25 would probably be reduced down to 15 or so. That is not what we are hearing in Country Barbados. In Country Barbados we are hearing, no matter where you go, forget about St. Lucy, forget about St. John for now, and forget about St. Joseph. Even in areas that are supplied with natural gas, there are people asking to be part thereof.

I am saying that you cannot deliver natural gas to people if you are accumulating losses. The Democratic Labour Party cannot be as reckless as the Barbados Labour Party to continue the deficit financing for these corporations at the same time when people are asking you to deliver the good to them. We are not a “too few” Government, and that is exactly what was occurring under the Barbados Labour Party; a “too few” were the ones who benefited from natural gas. What we are saying is since we are an all-inclusive Government and we want to include everybody in the goodies, we are just asking for a slight increase so that we can have some profitability and we can have some money to use for working capital so that we can expand the source. We are not only leaving it at that, Mr. Speaker. We have recognised during discussions that in order for us to be able to take this a step further, the commercial side of it is the side that we also have to look at.

I want to apologise to this House because I was also misled in this House by the Barbados Labour Party, when they gave the impression that a company like Chefette was the only one to benefit from natural gas and that whenever Chefette was constructed, natural gas went to Chefette.

2.23 p.m.

Insert s15 juliette

Friday, May 05, 2017

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I am saying that this is a very good debate and this now allows us not only to satisfy the demands of the people of Barbados but it also solves the environmental problems and allows us an opportunity to reduce the deficit and to spread natural gas right across the country.

Sir, now that I have found a solution and now that the Prime Minister has demonstrated that it is not fair for St. Lucy, St. Joseph and St. John and all of those other persons who want natural gas to be left out that we will

even see a situation where they will be an increase in the supply which would cause us to see a reduction in the price supplied to us and will also cause us to see a reduction in the inefficiencies, so if you see a reduction in the inefficiencies it means that the cost should also drop to the suppliers.

Mr. Speaker, all Barbadians out there who previously thought that natural gas was an impossible thing to receive now know that it is not impossible anymore, that there is now a possibility under the Democratic Labour Party and there is hope. Mr. Speaker, those are the facts not fiction. What you saw over the years is an accumulation of fiction which we had to correct and now we are producing the facts to solve those fictions.

Mr. Speaker, what is annoying is that somebody is paying a natural gas bill of \$4.18 per month and because you said that you are going to increase that bill by a small amount, you have some Opposition Members parading, not all because I see the Honourable Member for St. James Central looking at me as to say he is not part of that debate and I can understand...

Mr. Speaker, it no way that the cost of a bottle of gas is \$52 or more per bottle and some people have to buy two bottles or three bottles and has to pay between \$100 and something dollars to \$156 and another man is only paying \$4.18, does not have to drive his car anywhere and does not have to do anything different than to turn on the gas and is complaining about \$4.18 per month, and you are telling me that we are unreasonable to come and ask that guy to help increase the revenue at the National Petroleum Corporation so that his neighbour can get natural gas too.

We are living in a country where we know each other neighbours. We know how to hand a breadfruit over the guard wall and receive a soursop. We know how to share, so I do not believe that there are any persons out there... It is only the Barbados Labour Party talk that we are hearing. They are vexed because we are moving it from \$4.18 per month so that the neighbour next door can be able to get a supply too. That is exactly what is happening. We are bringing back a neighbourly love to the neighbourhoods. We are demonstrating that we are bringing back the love that people used to have to the people of Barbados once more. We are teaching them how to share and to understand the neighbour's burden.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that this is one of the best debates that we have had for a long time because it has demonstrated exactly what I have been saying in housing that if we continue to have all can solutions you would not be looking after the neighbourhood and that is why it fits in nicely with what I have been saying in housing, that is, let us get some house lots and allow the artisans, the labourers

and so on to be able to share in the goodies too instead of having all of these can solutions.

Mr. Speaker, our long-term strategy is well planned out but we recognise that in order to get it to function we have to inject some new life into it. After the Barbados Labour Party has put it in the morgue we have now taken it out of the morgue and off of the operating table and it is now walking and alive again. The cost recovery is not only cost recovery but there is now recovery in real life for the National Petroleum Corporation. Mr. Speaker, we are going to ensure that the domestic people who paid a slight increase and did not quarrel in 2002 and the commercial persons who have not seen an increase since 1994 recognise that they too have a contribution to make so that other persons will be able to tap into this sweetness.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know anybody in Barbados who would tell you that they do not want to have an opportunity to have natural gas at \$4.18 per month. Mr. Speaker, let us forget about the \$4.18, even at \$20 a month Bajans will be prepared to get natural gas because they know that when you put a gas bottle in the car or you have to beg a neighbour or you have to get on a bus to get a bottle of gas it is very inconvenient and they know the amount of gas you have to drive out just to get that bottle of gas and some people drive out more than what they pay in the bill and if you put in the value of your time it is even worse, so how can any reasonable or sensible person come to this House and argue that a bill that is \$4.18 per month is too high or unreasonable. Only an unreasonable person or a person that does not care about other people would come and put an argument against an increase like this.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want anybody getting up in here and saying we support and then two hours after you cannot believe that they just said they give it their support. Let us be realistic and let us recognise that it is country Barbados that we are arguing for and that it is our neighbours that we are depriving. Anybody who goes against this Bill is not only going against the Bill but is going against their neighbours. I nearly said something else but if I had said that I know we would then know how many persons hate their neighbours because it is very easy to fish out people. You only have to say certain things and the blue peter sharks come biting never mind there are some people who would object.

Mr. Speaker, just to show you what we are talking about in relation to greenhouse gases and so on, whereas natural gas is 53.07; LPG is 64.01; gasoline is 71.3; kerosene is 72.2; - that is pounds of carbon dioxide, that is the emission you are talking about - diesel is 73.16; asphalt oil is 75.61; and Bunker C Fuel is 78.79...

Mr. Speaker, let me pause there. I want to tell my friends at the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited

that when they use Bunker C Fuel which is nearly 25.72 higher than natural gas that they will do well if they move from that Bunker C Fuel to natural gas and protect the environment because I know based on what I saw them doing and want to do in St. Lucy that they are environmentally-friendly because they have the renewable energy project with the photovoltaics in St. Lucy. I know they that they not only love the people in St. Lucy by doing but that they also want to come and put the windmills in St. Lucy, another renewable which will not create any carbon dioxide for the people of St. Lucy, so if they do not do that in St. Lucy I would not expect them to want to burn Bunker C Fuel to the rest of Barbados. The same way they appreciate how we love our environment, I know that the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited cares about the people of Barbados and that they will soon move from Bunker C Fuel to natural gas because they would be looking at their carbon credits because they are not only going to look at the carbon credits in St. Lucy with the windmills and with the photovoltaics but they would recognise too that they can add and reduce the impact by switching from Bunker C Fuel to natural gas. Mr. Speaker, what is even worse is if they were to use the residue from the tyres which is 89.97. Mr. Speaker, waste oil is 95.25; and most of all pray tell, you would not believe it, pet coke 102.1.

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

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Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, you can see that any person who loves their country and cares about the environment will move to natural gas and they need not worry because the more we import the more we reduce the cost of natural gas, so I am asking the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited and the Arawak Cement Plant who have readily agreed that they will look at it because it makes sense and that they care about the residents of St. Lucy, I am asking the Barbados Light and Power Company to take as I know they will be because they have always demonstrated that they have a love for Barbados to come on board and buy natural gas instead of bunker seed fuel and let us (1), reduce the import bill, (2), let us reduce the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and (3), let us allow more Barbadians to be able to get natural gas and (4), let us be the most environmentally-friendly country in the world as we promised in our Manifesto, 2008. Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much.

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

Mr. K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, you may have noticed that during the speech of the Honourable Member who has just taken his seat, I spent much of my

time with my hands in the position of supplication. I was not really praying for the Honourable Member to end but I prayed that the day will dawn on this Honourable Chamber when the Honourable Member for St. Lucy will recognise that it is not necessary for the Honourable Member to engage this Honourable House in the rambling and repetitive assortment of snippets from his voluminous collection of bad speeches, I simply say that the Honourable Member has nothing useful to contribute.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is that two Honourable Members from the Government Bench have lend their voices to this debate today to what should have been a matter that would address this country on a critical issue of not just energy policy but the future and management of two statutory corporations which are directly linked to Barbados' energy fortunes. The reality is that in the presentation of the Prime Minister himself who led this debate, fortunes were not much better. The Right Honourable Prime Minister began by taking us on an excursion into how old the National Petroleum Corporation is, what the remit of the National Petroleum Corporation is and has been over time, the ability of the corporation to only touch on eight parishes and of course the ability of the corporation only to impact the lives of 25 per cent of the population. Mr. Speaker, all of those things equate largely to froth without any beer.

Mr. Speaker, what the people of Barbados I would have imagined wanted to hear from the Leader of Government when the Honourable Member breaks his stony silence on matters which pertain to a Ministry which coincidentally is his own Ministry, even though his voice has never before in this term been heard to speak to energy matters, the people would have wanted to hear about the matters of governance, first and foremost, I would imagine, within which the Ministry of Energy is being conducted.

Mr. Speaker, I start on that note because I think that perhaps for a number of reasons that is the most troubling part of this exercise thus far today. This Honourable House is now being asked in 2017, 16 years after the creation of a Fair Competition body of legislation aimed at protecting consumers, first and foremost... Mr. Speaker, that may offend certain members of the Government but unfortunately for them that is the remit of the party that I am part of and it is a philosophical belief that I hold dear, that first and foremost in matter of commerce, whether we are dealing with Government entities or private sector entities, I take a first position of seeing how the consumer in Barbados is affected. Mr. Speaker, we have a compendium of legislation relating to fair competition issues in Barbados. We are speaking about a statutory corporation which is a monopoly, and 16 years after the creation of fair competition legislation in Barbados we are now asking this Honourable House, made up of what I presume to continue to be sensible rational thinking souls...

Asides.

Mr. K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South lets me hear his voice yet again so perhaps the Honourable Member raises his voice in exception to that. I do not feel that way about the Honourable Member but if the Honourable Member wishes to opt out so be it. Mr. Speaker, the point is that 16 years after we have created fair competition legislation we are now going back to the bad old days or we are being invited to go back to the bad old days where a Minister is to set the rates for public utilities, not in circumstances where a transparent exercise could be conducted by an independent public body before rates are set, a body with the capacity for conducting in-depth inquiries into market developments, a body with the capacity for conducting in-depth inquiries into regulatory issues, matters which touch and concern the protection of consumer interest, the promotion of the consumer's wellbeing and yes, at the same time having an eye and an ear for what is in the best interest of the fortunes of the corporation that we are talking about.

Mr. Speaker, we are being asked not to go there where quite frankly the Barbados Water Authority is looking to go, where the Barbados Light and Power Company has long ago gone, where every other utility of this type around the developed world and indeed in the developing world is going but Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are going to go where a Minister is to set a rate. Mr. Speaker, I pause for the Honourable Member to speak.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading this House. The Honourable Member is telling this Honourable House that they left the National Petroleum Corporation under the Fair Trading Commission and that we are now going back to the good bad days, according to the Honourable Member.

Mr. SPEAKER: Very well, Honourable Member. Please continue, Honourable Member.

Mr. K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, the first challenge that I have is with the logic of this piece of legislation. The confused and confusing schizophrenic approach of the Government reflected quite frankly in the submission of the Honourable Member who has just risen on a point of order, that a member of the Cabinet himself does not understand and grasp the nature of the issue that we are fighting with today. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the National Petroleum Corporation so we are told, according to the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South whose word I must rely on because there has been no independent evidence asserted to support this, that 350 people per year are added to the services of the corporation and that, Sir, is largely as I understand it, due to existing rates, which per his argument gives the justification for this tragedy that we

are being asked to accept of a Minister now being empowered under the new structure of the amended Act to be the rate setter.

Mr. Speaker, I say to this Honourable Chamber that gone and hopefully forever should be the days when that is the approach that we take, because we all know that we have to be truthful and honest with ourselves, and more importantly we have to be frank with the people who have sat and watched aghast at the mismanagement of not only the Barbados economy first and foremost but of several statutory corporations, including the National Petroleum Corporation.

2.55 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, were we to follow the path, which I think is the better one, of taking this type of approach to the Fair Trading Commission, there would be issues of wastage, squandermania, and the failure to adopt the very best possible commercial practices and principled investments. Sir, this is a corporation that went to Trinidad and invested in two disused and abandoned wells. This is a corporation that went to Trinidad and invested in two abandoned wells, Mr. Speaker. We have to understand that we are talking about a situation where the BNOCL has acted as a merchant bank to state entities in Barbados as recently as last year, Sir. As recently as last year this House was notified that the Treasury bills that were held by the BNOCL amounted to over \$10 million. In addition to that, I think bonds were raised or floated by the Transport Board. The Minister of Public Transport is in here. Mr. Speaker, the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated (BTI) \$3 million. The BNOCL is servicing the Barbados Agricultural Management Company, the BTI and the Transport Board, and propping up the economy of Barbados by spending \$10 million on Treasury bills, which is part of the printing of money.

Mr. Speaker, now we come to say that after all of that bad management, the age-old solution, and for the Democratic Labour Party and its practitioners of political warfare on the people of Barbados, the happy solution for them is to say, "You know, there are people out there who have not had to pay more money yet, so let us put a little bit more on them." I am not going to get bogged down into how much more will go in, because the truth is we have no way of knowing what the \$4.18 will move to, because the Prime Minister has not condescended to particulars on how much more the impost to be carried by households in Barbados will be. Nor will he in the wrap-up to this debate condescend to particulars on that fundamental matter of dollars and cents in the pockets of the people of this country.

Sir, we are being told that the solution is that the people should carry yet another imposition. I understand

the Prime Minister's argument to be that four dollars and how much ever cents is very reasonable, very low and there is no justification in not paying it, so you can pay a little bit more. I am not going there. That is to be led down a garden path that leads you into the path of ambush, Sir. He will not ambush me, Mr. Speaker. I have been in town too long. Mr. Speaker, I know that the real issue in this debate is the mismanagement, through the Ministry of Energy led by the Prime Minister of Barbados, of the BNOCL. That, I know, is the issue, and I say to you, Sir, that were we supposed to be going down the road of the Fair Trading Commission, where we could open the windows and let in some daylight to illuminate what has been taking place in the BNOCL and in the National Petroleum Corporation, we would see that issues of the best commercial practices, issues of reinvestment of modern technology, issues of reinvestment of resource capacity, human resource management issues, and a variety of other issues would be on the forefront of the considerations of such a committee or such a body before they settled on any agreement that the consumer must pay a higher burden or carry a heavier financial cross.

Sir, there is also a matter beyond that which disturbs me. The Prime Minister has asked us to venture with him into the theatre of the absurd. Sir, he is saying that there will be a greater opportunity once we now carry up the rates for Barbados to service or supply that 75 per cent of the population which is not now supplied by natural gas. It does not work so. It cannot work so, Mr. Speaker, with great respect to the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South. Sir, the mathematics....

POINT OF ELUCIDATION

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Prime Minister.

Rt. Hon. F.J. STUART: The Honourable Member continues on his very smooth flow in incredible folly, but he is misleading the House. All I said in relation to this matter was that on the advice which I got from the people who should know and who know better than I do and who know better than the Honourable Member does, whereas per year they are only able to expand to 350 households, they are now going to be able to do 500 additional households per year, taking it to a grand total of 850. That is the advice available to me.

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

Mr. K.D. SYMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, with great respect to the Right Honourable Member who just took his seat, therein lies the error of his ways. It shocks me that he is sufficiently lodged within the realm of the absurd that he would raise himself on his hind legs and repeat it, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter is that the issue cannot just be what he was advised. The issue must be what is credible

within the realm of the advice. Where does the capacity to carry the increased service come from? You cannot wave a magic wand and create the gas that you do not now have, Mr. Speaker. Where does the additional capacity come from? The Right Honourable Prime Minister had the duty as Chairman of Cabinet to be penetrating these matters with a greater forensic degree of analysis than just to parrot and repeat that which he says has been sent to him by way of advice.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the BNOCL has, as quite eloquently put by the Member for St. George South, engaged in a frolic of importing natural gas.

Asides.

Mr. K.D. SYMMONDS: Even as we tell this country that we are looking for ways to offset the level of foreign exchange expenditure, and even as we tell this country we are looking for ways to earn foreign exchange, the truth is that the National Petroleum Corporation (NPC) is importing and has become a net importer of natural gas. Sir, what we have to get right is the first principle. As I said before, the NPC for some reason thought that when people in Trinidad had abandoned a well, that well should have been pursued by them. That having failed and having squandered more money, the NPC then went down the road of saying they were going to add two gas wells at Sunbury and Church Village, which was a very short-term approach, Sir. This is where the Prime Minister owed the country the decency, I would have thought, of explaining, because the reality is that under the eight years of his stewardship, there has been little or no drilling activity taking place in the pursuit of trying to find new oil wells and, by extension, new sources of natural gas in Barbados.

Again, I understand why you want to heckle and laugh at the Honourable Member for St. George South, but he intellectually outstripped the Prime Minister on the Floor of this Parliament today. The Honourable Member for St. George South made the very valid point that there is a ratio between the oil wells that are productive and the natural gas that is being produced. Therefore, and because it is such a basic point, Prime Minister, you should not be echoing the things that you echo by way of your faulty advice. It stands to reason, therefore, that if you are not drilling wells, as the Honourable Member for St. George South has told you that you need to drill, then you cannot just have more money, and because you get more money by way of revenue, you cannot have more natural gas.

3.02 p.m.

Insert s19 juliette

Friday, May 05, 2017

Mr. K. D. SYMMONDS: Sir, we hear that a sales process has begun but no one charged with responsibility for this matter has come to the House of Assembly and said to this House we take you in your confidence on this matter, this is what Government is attempting to do, and we can only assume that you are attempting to do it because you want to raise foreign exchange. Interestingly enough as I am at this point, let me say that it was in the Estimates debate that we heard about the sale of another State-owned asset, and again we are treated with contempt as a people. I am not so worried about how they treat the Members of the Barbados Labour Party in here because we know how they feel about us but the people of Barbados hear that a State-owned asset is to be sold and not a word was said about what the asset is, why you are selling it and what you expect to get for it, and that Sir passes for the new governance in this country.

Will the sale of the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited as Government is proposing to do create a monopoly in this country as it relates to the supply and distribution of fuel oil? That is what we ask the Honourable Prime Minister to share his views about. We ask that the Prime Minister tell us who will benefit from the sale of the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited. Will the sole purchaser only benefit and will there be an expectation that prices will rise at the pump in the estimation of the Honourable Member for St. Michael South? The Honourable Member must have lent his mind to these issues when he chaired Cabinet on the matter because it has repercussions for the people that he leads.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are concerned that there is a 15-year moratorium or rather that we hear talk about a 15-year moratorium. We can only say we hear talk because no one on to the Government side, and they have the documentation, has condescended to share with us any of the particulars relating to this matter because they treat it, though it is the crown jewel of Barbados' State-owned enterprises, as though it is a personal piggy bank. Mr. Speaker, the question is: Will the 15-year moratorium, if it exists in planning, on the construction of a terminal for storage and the handling of products also create a monopoly, and if it does, what are the implications for the consuming public of Barbados with respect to petroleum product?

Mr. Speaker, the matter that is before this House, in my view, deserves far more by way of the introduction and by way of explanation than that which was given by the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South and Prime Minister of Barbados. The matter that is before this House touches on the wellbeing of the National Petroleum Corporation. It touches on the fate of the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited. It touches on fundamental governance issues with respect to the partition of interest in the Barbados National Terminal Company

Limited. It touches, Mr. Speaker, on matters of fundamental importance for the consumers of Barbados who from the dawn of us having an independent Barbados up until this time knowing that Government acted as a big brother in matters of energy and who understandably now must be concerned about what are the implications for the future; what are the cost projections for the future; how do we as a household encumbered by the fact that we now got to look for other resources to send our children to the university; how do we as a household encumbered by the fact that the Minister of Health continuously places us on notice look to pay more money or pay money for your healthcare; and how do we as a family face with the fact that there are increasing financial concerns about every aspect of the Barbados economy now not also become more greatly concerned about what is the future of our financial well-being insofar as the energy we consume in Barbados...

In a real sense, Mr. Speaker, all the Opposition has asked in this debate... Again I go back to that golden speech by the Honourable Member for St. George South because all he asked as he led for us was the simple question, why cannot there be more or greater accountability in these matters of fundamental importance to the people of Barbados. Why is it that of all people the Prime Minister himself descended on this Chamber breaking his months of inglorious silence to speak to the country about matters that he must know resonate in our breast and then he decides that he will say nothing about the state of the offshore petroleum sector and he will say nothing about the need for us to do more onshore drilling and if we are in fact doing it how far is it going. He says nothing about the fact that through carelessness and lack of professionalism there was a loss of a well that was being done in Society, St. John at a cost of \$7 million, all of which has gone through the chute and it has to be done over. Not a word from the Honourable Prime Minister because that is chump change. Mr. Speaker, that \$7 million properly allocated could help offset a little bit of the cost that we have to carry at the University of the West Indies, so while the Honourable Prime Minister may feel that these are inconveniences to him personally and that the Honourable Member for St. James Central should really... and get out of here, all of that there so would be going through his head.

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member for St. James Central were ordered expunged from the record by Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: I had also dozed off and your time has expired but I will give you one minute to conclude.

Mr. K. D. SYMMONDS: Okay, Sir, that is no problem. I am obliged to you, Sir.

The reality, Mr. Speaker, is that there is every reason to believe that better should and could have been done by the Prime Minister as he brought this particular matter to this House and that what we have worked out from where we are is that there is really no ray of hope and there is no prospect of improvement. The Prime Minister is set in his ways. There is a chilling indifference to the things that are affecting the people of this country especially in a financial way and we can hold out no prospect for improvement in days or months and thankfully not in years to come.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

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

Hon. S. A. LASHLEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, I rise in this debate in support of this Amendment to the National Petroleum Corporation Act. Coming after the Honourable Member for St. James Central I again have to lament the fact that in serious debates you only have to allow the Opposition to speak for an extensive period of time and you really then have to analyse the content of the contributions and realise that the contributions hardly connect or collide with anything really in terms of the nature of the debate.

We are here, Mr. Speaker, debating a very important piece of legislation and for the last half of an hour we have been entreated to a diet, I would say, of comedy because you could not take anything that the Honourable Member for St. James Central said seriously. In fact, if I had to point to at least three things that I could walk away with to say that as the Minister responsible for energy is moving forward in relation to this particular matter that could assist us in formulation any strategies or policies, you really could not find anything in what he had to say.

At the end of the day without in any way reflecting on what the Honourable Prime Minister said, I was in this Chamber and I heard the presentation of the Honourable Prime Minister and after all of the talk you would be surprised to know that this particular measure which is before this Honourable House is designed, having acted on the best of advice from within the Ministry of Energy and from the officials of the National Petroleum Corporation, the Government is responding to the advice of the experts who are aware of the developments in relation to natural gas production in Barbados. Mr. Speaker, interestingly enough, the Honourable Member who has just taken his seat would not in any way admit that from the year 1994, I think, when the Barbados Labour Party was in office, there really had a Government that was not responding to any purposeful recommendations coming from the National Petroleum Corporation.

In fact, they totally ignored any submissions in relation to the development or improvement of the National Petroleum Corporation and therefore left it to languish without any direction in relation at the policy level.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is really a national disgrace that we have now had to address this matter of how we take the National Petroleum Corporation forward, that is why we say in this Honourable House that it is not really pleasing when you hear Opposition Members speaking because they do not account for their stewardship in any meaningful way, they do not in any way connect with what the members of the public who are asking for natural gas are saying. Of course, all you hear is that there is a particular increase in relation to natural gas, without recognising, Mr. Speaker...

Mr. Speaker, what was laughable was that the Honourable Member sought to make a case that here is the Government now increasing the price of natural gas and that the people of Barbados are now being asked to carry a further burden in relation to this, without recognising that the statistics as laid out in this Honourable House by the Right Honourable Prime Minister pointed to the fact that in terms of the availability of natural gas that you only have 25 per cent coverage in relation to households. In fact, I would expect that when persons speak, such as the Honourable Member for St. Thomas who represents the constituency of St. Thomas where there is no coverage at all in relation to natural gas, that the Honourable Member would be one who would certainly be supporting this expansion of natural gas in Barbados.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading this House. If we are to believe the Right Honourable Prime Minister who presented the Resolution, the Honourable Member said that the three parishes that do not have coverage of natural gas were St. Lucy, St. Joseph and St. John, so therefore it is misleading for the Honourable Member on his feet, the Minister of Sport, Youth and Culture, to say that St. Thomas does not have any coverage. Therefore either the Honourable Member or the Right Honourable Prime Minister is incorrect.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, thank you for the correction. Please continue, Honourable Member.

Hon. S. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I accept the correction, I really meant to refer to the parishes of St. Joseph, St. Lucy and St. John. Mr. Speaker, the point I want to make is that we have at least three parishes that are without natural gas coverage and what we are dealing with here is a case where from since 1994 we have not had the benefit of any review of the rates charged by the National Petroleum Corporation in relation to commercial rates. In fact, the argument being used by the Honourable Member

for St. James Central in relation to the claims of hardship for Barbadians really does not hold water because currently 80 per cent of the revenues that accrue to the National Petroleum Corporation comes from commercial operations.

Mr. Speaker, because of the fact that we have not looked at this holistically in relation to the growth potential and the infrastructural enhancement of the National Petroleum Corporation, we have household in Barbados without the opportunity of gaining access to natural gas. Mr. Speaker, I have some in my constituency as well. Mr. Speaker, rather than connecting with that fact, we have Honourable Member for St. James Central creating a hullabaloo with no facts whatsoever in relation to what is happening in terms of the energy industry in Barbados. Mr. Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party does not have a proud record in that regard, expect to say that they have spent many years repeating in their Manifestos what they intended to do in relation to energy, that is really all that we have had coming from the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, this debate is in relation to how we could expand, how we could look at the whole question of the development of the National Petroleum Corporation and how, for example, we can lay out further access to natural gas in Barbados. We have the information in relation to the expected expansion, the facts are that the current revenue that is available to the National Petroleum Corporation does not enable expansion beyond the current state and therefore something has to be done in relation to that. Mr. Speaker, having looked at the totality of the issue facing the National Petroleum Corporation this particular amendment is before this Honourable House, (1), to bring the definition of “petroleum” to ensure that that could include “natural gas” as it never before did, and (2), to ensure that the Minister with responsibility for the National Petroleum Corporation can by regulation or Statutory Instrument deal with the issues pertaining not only to rate increases but to other issues pertaining to inspection and other dynamics facing the National Petroleum Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that this particular amendment is really a straightforward amendment that perhaps should have come a long time ago because since I have been in this Honourable Chamber or since I have heard anything in terms of debate on energy, I have not heard anything coming from the Barbados Labour Party in relation to how they would address the issues relating to natural gas production in Barbados. Mr. Speaker, that is what we are seeking to do, we are seeking to ensure that the National Petroleum Corporation is placed on a solid footing so that we could look at the sustainability of the production of natural gas in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, the Right Honourable Prime Minister also spoke not only in relation to disclosing to this Honourable House, because oftentimes you hear from the

Opposition that we are not willing to take decisions, that this thing is here and that the Government is not acting. Mr. Speaker, we have come to this Honourable House with legislation to effect decisions to safeguard the future development of the National Petroleum Corporation and you can hear nothing of any merit or substance coming from the Barbados Labour Party. Mr. Speaker, except for attacking the characters of individuals in this Honourable House and outside, except for that tradition of the Barbados Labour Party, you can hear nothing that connects with what this Honourable House is being called upon to debate, so I want to say that I believe in reinforcing the points made by the Right Honourable Prime Minister that we are faced with a situation where the National Petroleum Corporation in terms of its development and capacity has largely been lopsided and we need to put it on an even footing to address the future and present demands of the consumer of Barbados, whether those consumers are commercial or domestic consumers.

3.37 p.m.

That is what we are doing in this particular Amendment to this legislation. In fact, if you are looking at the need to effect efficiencies as the NPC rolls out its network across Barbados, it has to be given the resources. This Government is mindful of the fact that even in relation to what resources are placed at the disposal of the NPC, we have to be mindful of the economic climate. I believe that the Prime Minister would have indicated the rates that are currently being charged by the NPC. You have corporations from which 80 per cent of the revenue or the customer base are really corporations which are paying highly subsidised rates. This was going on since the year 2002 for domestic consumers and since 1994 for commercial operations. In fact, it was the Barbados Labour Party that presided over a situation where highly subsidised rates were being charged by the NPC to companies that could afford to pay more, much to the detriment of domestic consumers who wanted access to natural gas and could not get it. The Government of the day did not have the vision or did not have the leadership capacity to guide the NPC along a sustainable path. That is the charge which I want to lay out.

When we are in the House looking at areas which can develop Barbados, I believe that this particular Amendment is designed to develop a very key component of the energy policy of Barbados. The availability of natural gas, of course, combined with the thrust of the Government in relation to alternative energy, is delicately arranged in a way that could give us maximum forward thrust as we relate to how our energy programme continues. I believe the Right Honourable Prime Minister spoke about the status of the quest towards offshore drilling, and therefore that is proceeding as well in terms of the determination of the Government to move in the

direction of offshore exploration. The legislation is in place and the Ministry of Energy has been engaging with those international oil companies which have shown an interest in terms of the blocs allocated for offshore drilling, with a view to ensuring that that particular programme can be expedited. You therefore cannot accuse the Government of not being on point in relation to where the energy sector is going. What we have to do is come to a point of consensus in relation to those areas that are in need of infrastructural reinforcement and in need of a rethink and a recalibration in relation to what modern Barbados requires.

Mr. Speaker, we have to the point in this House, as it relates to this particular measure, to speak to the country quite candidly and quite transparently. I hear the Member talking about governance, and that this is lack of governance. Once we have brought this matter to the House with full disclosure in relation to the justification and the basis upon which we believe and know that the NPC needs to be put on a better financial footing, then that is the height of accountability. That is governance. We are not hiding in the dark in relation to our plans for the NPC. We have come to the House with an Amendment. We have come to the House with an Amendment in relation to the National Petroleum Corporation Act, and this is the place where we have to do that, Mr. Speaker. This is the process. The process is that we engage in debate in here hoping that, as it relates to the Members of the Opposition, some small iota of an idea, a strategy that connects with the particular matter before the House, can come before us to be incorporated.

We have not been a Government that has not heard alternative views or ideas and not acted on them; but when you sit in this Chamber and you listen to the kind of meandering, the kind of lack of focus, the absence of any strategy.... Do you know what? The Members on the other side are very good at descriptive language. They describe everything under the sun without recognising that their job in here as lawmakers is beyond that. It is beyond that. You are called, when we are debating matters, to provide insight as to where you believe this Government should go in relation to any particular policy. In this case, the NPC has been left out there since 2002 in relation to domestic consumers and since 1994 in relation to commercial consumers without any kind of strategic focus from the Barbados Labour Party in office. We are bringing a particular strategy in here and asking for a debate on it; and I believe that unless, for example, I did not hear what I heard this morning, the mover of this Bill, the Right Honourable Prime Minister, is still waiting to hear from the Members of the Opposition what are the salient points of the areas of dispute as they relate to this particular Amendment. There can be no dispute in relation to here.

We do not know how much it will go up, but the principle of it is that you have a National Petroleum

Corporation with significant demands across the country from consumers for access to natural gas at reasonable prices, and being unable to do so over the years because of the structure of the arrangements provided to it. We are seeking to address that in a meaningful way to ensure that the NPC can survive financially and is able to do what its mandate is according to the law that we are seeking to amend; which is to ensure that, of course, natural gas is made available to Barbadians.

The Right Honourable Prime Minister spoke of efficiencies and so on in relation to amalgamation. We are dealing here with a holistic plan which speaks to how we are going to make the NPC more efficient. We spoke of the plans to amalgamate. We did not just come in here and look at two simple Amendments. We spoke of the policy that informed that; the strategy that we are using in relation to how the NPC in 2017 and beyond should be positioned in relation to meeting the present and future demands of Barbados. We are convinced that from where we see the position of the NPC, there has got to be some consensus in relation to the fact that this is the current position of the NPC: Its revenues are really informed by outdated rate structures and we need to look holistically at how we advance this particular corporation. Mind you, I expect and we have seen it and heard it in the Estimates, where the Opposition comes in here and says, "We have some statutory corporations in this country that are not financially viable." I heard that phrase coming from Members of the Opposition. "The Government is presiding over statutory corporations that are not financially viable and it is doing nothing about it." I have heard the Opposition saying that, and that we are presiding over transfers to statutory corporations without looking at their efficiency.

3.41 p.m.

Insert s23 juliette

Friday, May 05, 2017

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: National Petroleum Corporation Act ostensibly one to define petroleum now to include natural gas which previously did not actually specify, also to define what natural gas is in terms of the hydrocarbons and the compounds involved but ostensibly as well to allow the Minister responsible for energy to prescribe fees for the supply of natural gas and the installation and collection thereof when as has been previously said the foundation Act did not really give the Minister overriding powers to make regulations.

My colleague, the Honourable Member for St. George South, in the prime response of the Opposition, of course, outlined the defects of the Government's energy

policy. I mean we are into an age where we are spending, I believe, about \$800 million or more on energy.

Asides.

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member for St. James North were ordered expunged from the record by Mr. Speaker.

Asides.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: Sir, I will with respect also ask you to rule that Members should remain silent when other Honourable Members are speaking, that is a Standing Order of this Parliament. If the Honourable Member for St. Lucy has been in this Parliament for 23 years now, he ought to know that is a Standing Order of Parliament by now and he should let me speak with silence from his part.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, it is a Standing Order.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: Sir, between 2007 and 2011 the country's import bill on energy escalated from \$456 million to \$787 million, and that was primarily within the governance of this Democratic Labour Party. The Honourable Member for St. George South sought to and was successful in showing the defects of the Government's energy policy over the last nine-and-a-half years.

My colleague, the Honourable Member for St. James Central, was absolutely correct when he said that this Barbados Labour Party in the last regime brought in a series of competition legislation to protect the consumers of this country. Those were nobly brought in by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North as Minister for Consumer Affairs, an outstanding Minister as he was in that area. Mr. Speaker, to now bring this piece of legislation to seek to give the Minister powers to prescribe the fees without going through the competitive legislation which is on the statute books still to protect the consumers of this country is quite frankly backwards especially in an age when and where the energy cost of Barbados takes up so much of our foreign exchange bill and when clearly revenues from foreign exchange are at the lowest ebb. I believe we have under \$700 million in foreign exchange reserves, just a few weeks of import so clearly we are on the brink of economic and financial disaster in terms of the foreign exchange capacity of this country, so it is quite disappointing to come in here to be asked to vote on an Amendment to legislation giving a Minister powers to prescribe fees no matter what those fees may be or no matter how small they may be now or whatever increase there may be.

In a day and age when accountability principles, transparency principles and governance principles are of prime priority both globally and ought to be nationally to

have this is, as I said, disappointing, but that is how this Democratic Labour Party operates even though it speaks about its mantra being good governance. That of course as we have established, is just a series of rhetoric without any meaning and without any, quite frankly, solid background foundation.

We on this side would have thought that the Right Honourable Prime Minister as Minister ultimately responsible for energy would have clearly sought to define what is his Government's energy policy. This Barbados Labour Party on demitting office in early 2008 left a clear energy policy led by Ms. Liz Thompson who was Minister of Energy then. I believe that blocks had been set out for tender and might have even been awarded in terms of offshore exploration of oil, petroleum and natural gas so that we could seek to limit as best as we could the foreign exchange earnings associated with imported energy.

After all, the Democratic Labour Party Manifesto in 2013 said on page 31 -- this is a document of the House -- that it was seeking to reduce the country's cost of imported energy by \$150 million over the next five years. We heard no facts from the Honourable Prime Minister who led off this debate on how much the cost of imported energy has been reduced. We are now into almost four-and-a-half years, certainly 4 and a 1/3 years, of the Democratic Labour Party second term and I would have thought that would have been brought as evidence in support of this Amendment here today. I could only imagine that it could not be brought because the energy bill has increased even more beyond the \$787 million that it was. Back then again the Democratic Labour Party historically considered its Manifesto to be just a piece of paper that could be torn up, it is not a social contract between that party and the people who it asked to vote for it.

In that Manifesto on page 33 we also see that the Democratic Labour Party pledged to explore with Trinidad and Tobago the construction of a natural gas pipeline linking Trinidad and Tobago to Barbados. Of course, that was the intention as I said of the Barbados Labour Party in its last term of office if it had been re-elected. It had been doing that feasibility studies with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, where are we with that as my two colleagues who spoke earlier spoke to with a sister CARICOM country that has a record in terms of the exploration of crude oil, petroleum and natural gas and of course has an industry in that field? Where are we in that exploration as outlined in the Democratic Labour Party Manifesto as one of the programmes that it was going to pursue during this term of office? I would have thought that was something that the Right Honourable Prime Minister as both Head of Cabinet and as Minister responsible for energy would have outlined in his opening. Thankfully, Sir,

life gives second chances in a lot of cases and hopefully he would speak to that in his wrap up but I would not bet my life on that.

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Mr. Speaker, we have also seen in the Democratic Labour Party Manifesto that they were going to examine the feasibility of generating electricity from wave energy and all of this is connected to energy cost. I have heard and I do not know if I have missed it, there is no such policy being advanced in the 4½ years of this second term of office of the Democratic Labour Party regime. Additionally, the Government was to acquire a more definitive seismic data on the prospects for oil and gas in the unlicensed part of the offshore territory which would benefit the consumers of Barbados, the people whom we have been sworn to protect. Mr. Speaker, these are all nice sounding words but there has been no report on such seismic data, and of course energy security is one of the main ways in which any right-thinking and progressive Government would seek to protect its people.

Mr. Speaker, we were to have the Barbados National Oil Company Limited using its profits from crude oil production to explore for more gas and oil reserves and to expand production of oil and gas at such reserves. Where are we with that? The Barbados Labour Party in its last term of office used the profits, in fact, minimised the profits of the Barbados National Oil Company Limited and passed those profits onto the benefit of the consumers in terms of regulation of oil and gas prices. Mr. Speaker, what is significant is that when the Barbados Labour Party was last in office, in its third term the world price of crude oil went to as much as US\$150 per barrel and the Barbados Labour Party was able to ride that out, while still being able to keep the cost of gasoline, diesel, kerosene and natural gas at a reasonable rate. Under this Democratic Labour Party regime the world price of crude oil has gone down below US\$40 per barrel, 25 per cent of what it was at one stage under the Barbados Labour Party Government, yet that price has not been passed onto the consumers who are still paying through their noses, feet and mouths for the price of oil, crude and petroleum in this country.

Mr. Speaker, little boys and little girls the Democratic Labour Party still continues to blame an international recession that has stopped four years ago when they have had the benefit of the international circumstances that have caused a reduction in the price of crude oil to 25 per cent of what it was under the Barbados Labour Party Government, yet that is not reflected in the cost of energy in this country on the cost of living overall in this country. Mr. Speaker, the Democratic Labour Party in its 2008 Manifesto pledge said that the three things that they would deal with was the cost of living, cost of living and cost of living, yet with a reduction in crude oil to 25

per cent of what it was under the Barbados Labour Party, we see instead a rise in the energy cost and a rise in the cost of living by about 40 per cent over the last 9½ years, but that is the Barbados Labour Party for you. Mr. Speaker, deception, lies and propaganda has always been...

Mr. Speaker, we have to confront this, these are the facts, we are talking about facts and these are the facts that are indisputable, the Barbados Labour Party, Mr. Speaker, had in its 2013 Manifesto something...

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading this House. The Honourable Member said that under the Barbados Labour Party, they reduced the price of fuel and that under the Democratic Labour Party we increased that price and that it went from \$400 million to \$700 million. Mr. Speaker, I would like the Honourable Member to explain that to this Honourable House and to stop misleading this Honourable House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Very well, Honourable Member. Please continue, Honourable Member.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: Mr. Speaker, 11-year-olds sat the Common Entrance Examination earlier this week, I am not under any test or examination from the Honourable Member for St. Lucy. If the Honourable Member wants to test people, the Honourable Member should go to Moon Town and weigh some rice and test it that way. Mr. Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party in its 2013 Manifesto pledged to reduce and eventually remove the Cess placed on gasoline and diesel and that is consistent with what it had been doing during its last term of office, we passed on to the consumers the benefit of any reduction in oil prices but this Democratic Labour Party Government has the price of oil, diesel and petroleum going up and down like a yo-yo, sometimes it goes up by one cent, sometimes you look in a paper and see that the price goes up by two cents, never mind that the price of crude oil on the world market is going down. Mr. Speaker, even when the Democratic Labour Party might have reduced the price on occasion by a little two cents, we do not even now have two cents in Barbados, we have gotten rid of that, but they would have done that about two or three months after the international price had gone on, they still hold all of the profits and taxes yet, Mr. Speaker, we hear about a Government that does not have any money, when they are getting all of these taxes from the people of Barbados, when, in fact, the taxes that this Democratic Labour Party Government had extracted from the people of Barbados, including 35 new increase in taxes which amounted to more than the tax collection of the Barbados Labour Party Government, yet we continue to hear, especially from the last speaker, the Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central, about how the Barbados Labour Party in times of plenty should have done this and should have done that when his

Government, a Government of which the Honourable Member is a Member of Cabinet, is collecting more money in taxes overall from the taxpayers of Barbados than the Barbados Labour Party collected. Mr. Speaker, these are the facts if we want to talk about facts.

Mr. Speaker, this debate which the Right Honourable Prime Minister presented, one of the purviews was to lay the foundation for an increase in natural gas rates under the pretext that only 25 per cent of households in Barbados have access to natural gas. Mr. Speaker, if there is one thing for which I am thankful to the Right Honourable Prime Minister during his presentation is that figure because really and truly I did not realise that it was so low. What the Right Honourable Prime Minister should have said was what the percentage was 9½ years ago when the Democratic Labour Party came to office. I would want to surmise that it was not much below the 25 per cent that it is now, that again is what I thought that the Right Honourable Prime Minister would have given this Honourable House, as well as the people of Barbados both at home and in the Diaspora, the benefit of his knowledge with, of course, the experts within the Ministry knowing that I am sure.

4.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I know that it was a problem because when I canvassed in my constituency as all of us on this side do in our respective constituencies, that is one of the issues. In Lower Carlton, I know that the people at some time were promised natural gas pipelines and have never got them. Trents was the same thing. People in Trents asked me. Someone with a laundry, for example, with high energy costs, spoke to me about the prospect of having natural gas going, and I of course have had to tell them, "The Government is broke and at least it behaves as if it is bankrupt. We do not know how it has got there. Barbados is now the third most indebted country in the world under the Democratic Labour Party Government in nine-and-a-half short years, and we have to wait and hold strain for another year until the Barbados Labour Party comes into office, hopefully, by the will of the people, for better times. That is all I can say."

We hear now that it is 25 per cent; too low, and really and truly we ought to have been able to do better than that. Yes, we agree, but what assurance is the Right Honourable Member and the Cabinet of Barbados going to give, not to this Barbados Labour Party because they treat us with contempt and disrespect all the time, but to the people of Barbados who they will be going to within a year's time to ask for a vote, Mr. Speaker? When they increase or when the Minister, I presume, on the expert advice of the executive Cabinet, increases the natural gas rates, what assurance will the people of Barbados be given that the figure of 25 per cent -- a disappointing figure, quite

frankly, for those who have access to natural gas -- will increase? There is no guarantee, because eight years ago the people of Barbados were asked to pay an additional 60 per cent on water rates. Most people did not complain. Of course, yes, there were clearly those who could not afford it, such as the elderly and people with disabilities, who then saw it jump from the \$20 minimum rate to \$32. I mean the extra \$12 without an increase in the pension rates, et cetera, was difficult. Yes, they lodged some complaints but ultimately, all of Barbados paid for this increase of 60 per cent in water rates which, again, the Cabinet of Barbados, through its Minister for Water Resources, ordered and mandated that the public of Barbados pay.

Where are we today with water supply in this country? A year-and-a-half ago, we had people in St. Joseph, St. Andrew, some parts of St. John and St. Peter being without water for about ten months effectively, and bathing with water from a standpipe like in 1966; 50 years ago. In other words, we had not progressed after 50 years of Independence, in spite of a 60 per cent increase in water rates which we were told would have helped in terms of installation of new water mains. Mr. Speaker, where I live every day for the last week the water has gone off. You fix here, and then tomorrow the water is off again because ten metres down there the main is broken too.

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

Mr. E.G. HINKSON: No problem. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the 60 per cent increase in water rates, we are still not better off because the Government, through its executing agency, the Barbados Water Authority, has not acted with any despatch in trying to solve the water supply situation of Barbados, which can ultimately only be cured by the installation of new mains. What guarantee do we have that when the Minister of Energy increases the price of natural gas that my constituents in Sion Hill or in Ashton Hall or in Mount Standfast would now be connected to natural gas? Will this only be some additional tax collection by the Government of Barbados to try to solve the inefficiencies of the Democratic Labour Party Government and the incompetence of it?

We heard from the Right Honourable Prime Minister that the NPC is \$11 million in arrears. After all, I believe that a decision was taken by Cabinet on May 19, 2011, that the BNOCL would sell natural gas to the NPC at a fixed price of \$7.50, so I suspect that all of this now must be money owed to the NPC; this \$11 million. Again, Sir, the question of accountability and governance and transparency arise, because we are hearing now about an amalgamation between the two corporations. Mr. Speaker, we would want to know what that means in terms of employment for people. Will there be further retrenchment of public servants as a result of this amalgamation? We had

heard in December 2015 in a Ministerial Statement by the Honourable Minister of Finance about amalgamation of statutory corporations, most of which have not yet come about, including statutory corporations under the mandate of the last speaker, the Minister of Sports. That Member said that it would come about; amalgamation of the National Sports Council and, I think, the Gymnasium and Kensington Oval Management Incorporated (KOMI). That has not come about yet. What are the implications in terms of job losses? After all, the Democratic Labour Party won an election on this principle; an old woman on a bus talking about privatisation.

Mr. Speaker, we have the National Petroleum Act, and you know my position on these issues. If we are talking about transparency, governance and accountability, the National Petroleum Act, Chapter 280 of the Laws of Barbados speaks to the fact that statements of accounts should be laid in Parliament. In fact, the accounts should be kept and statements prepared in pursuance of the Act, audited by auditors, presented to the Minister and laid in Parliament. The last such statement that was laid in this Parliament was for the year 2010, Sir; a whole six or seven years ago. This is in breach of the Laws of Barbados. Again, Mr. Speaker, the Act speaks towards Annual Reports being laid in Parliament as soon as possible after the accounting year. Again, a statutory corporation under the ministerial mandate of no less a person than the head of Cabinet could only have cause to be laid in this Parliament, as its last Annual Report, that of 2010. This Democratic Labour Party is in breach of its own standards as defined in its Manifesto to govern this country or to preside over the political administration of this country with good governance. Mr. Speaker, on that principle alone, it does not deserve the confidence of the people of this country whenever the Right Honourable Member, who happens to be Minister of Energy, decides to go back to the people. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: I am obliged. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central.

4.20 p.m.

Insert s27 juliette

Friday, May 05, 2017

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Sir, I do not like to use the term the silly season but it is that time, it is vote grabbing and making vote grabbing time so people who perhaps normally would make more rational statements find themselves venturing into the absurd.

The National Petroleum Corporation has been maintaining for some time now that if we want them to expand their programme of more connections on to the

system that they need to have more capacity. If they are going to embark on a capital works programme that will invariably mean some sort of loan arrangement because they would have to be able to service the loan... You need to have capacity and that is what this exercise is about and that is what I understand this Amendment is to be putting in place, and I look forward to it.

Mr. Speaker, if I could be very parochial here for a moment, not surprising the majority of the National Petroleum Corporation customers are in the parish of St. Michael the most populous parish. Of the 20 000 customers, 10 380 I believe it was of what I remember seeing, are in St. Michael. There is a simple reason for that beyond the question of how populous St. Michael is, it also has to do with the density and in that way you could have many connections in a short run so while half of the connections are in St. Michael you will, for example, see that St. Michael does not have half of the households in Barbados but it has half of the National Petroleum Corporation connections because it lends itself to the highly urbanised areas and so naturally we would want to see the rest of St. Michael or the rest of Barbados have access to it but the only way that can happen is by being real. For, example Goddards Road and Blackman Road in Carrington's Village have natural gas and I would love to see some of the other areas there get it. I have sent petitions for Valery in Brittons Hill, for example. We want them to come on stream but they can only come on stream if the overall financial help of the Corporation is so improved that that can become a reality. I certainly do not have a problem looking at someone who has enjoyed natural gas for a number of years now... If I am not mistaken those Carrington's Village lines were laid around 2009 or 2010, but if I would have to go and explain to the residents that the highly subsidised nature of what they are enjoying will continue but not to the same extent, I would. I mean again as they say in Bajan parlance "cud dear" you pay \$3 a month to rent a metre from the National Petroleum Corporation, \$3 plus VAT comes to \$3.45 or whatever, and on top of that you pay \$1.48 a cubic metre which is a lot of gas, so you have people running entire households and so paying \$7, \$8, \$9, \$10, \$12 a month so to ask them to pay a little more so that a larger segment of the population can have access to this wonderful product is really nothing unreasonable to ask, and I think that is what I am prepared to reduce this debate all down to.

We are talking about improving the well-being of a Corporation that was the pride and joy of the late Harold Bernard St. John. I remember the pride he used to have in that. I mean we have a Barbados Labour Party parliamentary group looking to give us lashes for preserving the legacy of Harold Bernard St. John who was so proud of the National Petroleum Corporation and what it could do and had the potential to do. The late Harold Bernard St. John was out of frontline politics but he pushed

the Gasworks 2000 Programme. His right hand man Mark Clarke was running the place. Here it is we are watching the Corporation grow up.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing that needs to be mentioned here, and this is in my opinion quite important, is the whole realm of innovation. I know that there has been some forays. I am not advertising anyone but Courtesy Garage has been working with the National Petroleum Corporation with the natural gas automobiles, something that is quite commonplace in many North Atlantic countries even in public transportation. I remember that when I was in Phoenix Arizona that all of the taxis there were powered by natural gas. I am saying that we can only properly attack those opportunities of looking to innovate where we can deal with other energy and transport solutions and so on such as the question of air-conditioning and natural gas powered AC units if in fact we have the capacity and the financial help to do it.

Let me again say, Mr. Speaker, through you to the House, and perhaps the Honourable Prime Minister would deal with it in his wrap up, that we will import the natural gas we need. There is nothing wrong with importing natural gas. We are spending nearly \$800 million a year in fossil fuels and this is the cleanest of all the fossil fuels and perhaps the most abundant with trillions upon trillions of cubic metres available globally and because of the explosion in transport providers who are taking LNG over long distances once it the temperature is reduced, I believe it is minus 250 Degrees Celsius, I could be corrected on that, but that is some dated research there, to literally one-sixth hundredth of what it was. You can carry large quantities of this substance over distances and that would allow us to use our indigenous resources as well. You can have the locally harvested natural gas along with what we import and it will provide a nice stepping point into the renewables. I think that is the other thing that I do not know that came through necessarily from the Barbados Labour Party, I know that is the position they are taking on this issue. Yes, we want to see the renewables but the reality is you cannot again wave a magic wand and yell out abracadabra and you go from fossil fuels to renewables. The nice intermediate step is to use what is your locally available fossil fuel and buttress that with some imports that are at a reasonable cost. The natural gas market also is not nearly as volatile as crude oil so you can even plan better in terms of embarking in contractual arrangements, et cetera to source natural gas from outside of Barbados and that gives you a nice stepping stone into the renewables as well. We are weaning ourselves off of the fossil fuels but the prevalence of natural gas here and abroad gives us a nice indeed intermediate point that we can step into so I do not think that it is an unreasonable ask at all.

The last domestic increase was in 2002 and the last commercial one was in 1994. I think we need to accept the

reality that again we are not asking persons to even pay the full economic cost, we are asking them to just contribute a little more to let us improve the health and well-being of the Corporation to the point where it can provide more ideas for our cooking solutions and so on for the average Barbadian but indeed it can even promote industrial development, et cetera by having the capacity and avoid us from a repeat of what happened in 2015.

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Mr. Speaker, that was a very lived experience for me as Minister of Tourism when we had those problems on the south and west coasts and we have again, through the policy of Barbados National Oil Company importing, been able to deal with that in a way that will avoid it from occurring in the future. Mr. Speaker, we have to continue to innovate, we need to continue to see that we can have energy solutions that are eco-friendly or as eco-friendly as possible and we have to do all this within the context of a development plan. The amendment before us is speaking to that, it is not about the 20 000 households that are being affected, it is about the other 60 000 households that have not yet been affected and that I think is as succinct as we can put it, that is what this is about, it is about the have-nots and not the haves, we want to get to those who have been deprived. It is reasonable and it is not again inconsistent with our unrepentant view that ultimately we want to go the way of the renewable energy sector, as it provides us with that nice intermediate stepping point that we can do what we have to do.

Mr. Speaker, the other simple situation is that given the economic reality that we are confronting, and I know that a few Honourable Members had something to say about this but I have to make this point. We are constantly reminded in this Honourable House about the precarious nature of our public finances but usually it is done in very bland way, you talk about the deficit to the Gross Domestic Product is too high or these general vague terms are used but no specifics are given by way of offering an alternative or a solution.

Mr. Speaker, here it is that a Government is prepared, according to the Opposition, months away from an election... Mr. Speaker, we could have kicked this can down the road and say to wait, let us do it early in the third term but no, we did not say that, we said that let us look after Barbados first. It is not about the party, it is not about the election, it is about what is in the interest of Barbadian citizens. Mr. Speaker, an Opposition that cannot give any specific recommendations on anything relating to improve the economic health and wealth of any entity in Government or indeed the Government altogether, they cannot offer one single idea, solution, alternative or anything else and so once again we get here and hear about inflicting hardship on people, people who are paying \$7 per

month for natural gas but we are asking them to pay \$9.75 and you are inflicting hardship on them, so that in order to ensure that another 60 000 people who are not getting anything at all, who have to go to the gas station and pay \$50 or \$60 for a bottle of gas and then having to ask somebody to take it home for them, we are trying to get past that, yet we are hearing that this is some incredible hardship that we are inflicting. Mr. Speaker, it is not so at all.

Mr. Speaker, I really feel compelled to say those things. I will say what I have to say on the offshore drilling programme but unlike the others I am not going to anticipate this Honourable House, it is a matter on the Order Paper and I will speak to it then, but suffice it to say that this policy would be consistent with any natural gas that is generated from that programme. I can say that, I think that is relevant in this debate, the same way that I said the onshore programme would be buttressed by the importation of LNG, I can just as easily say also that the same programme will be buttressed by what we find offshore as well. We do not need to torch the gas as happens elsewhere but we can indeed harvest it and that too can go in the mix and can help our household to enjoy what is a quality product.

Mr. Speaker, for as long a mankind as we know it, in fact, since the Neanderthal man who used to gather wood in order to fuel fire for cooking but I think it would be hard-pressed anywhere in the world to find anyone... Mr. Speaker, of course, gas is used for other purposes in the temperate countries, including heating, a challenge that we do not have here, we use it for cooking. Mr. Speaker, the point I am making is that the price is more than reasonable, it is totally under-economic and I believe that an increase that is reasonable is not too much to ask, it is one that we can sell and I believe that we have the maturity to do just that.

Mr. Speaker, it is important also to note that it is not only about the rate, it is also about the overall governance of mechanism as well, which is what this debate is about. Mr. Speaker, it is about the whole governance mechanism and the Minister of Energy now being able to integrate this whole question of our natural gas resources and our use and deployment of natural gas and how that fits in with the overall policy of pushing the renewable energy sector and the green economy, as we like to say. We are still holding true to what we promised the people of Barbados in terms of economic viability and environmental soundness, that is, maintaining that social balance and of course undergirded and overarched by good governance. I like to hit it from both side, so we cannot go wrong by those fundamentals, so that this amendment fits snugly into what exactly this Government has been all about, it shoe-horns in perfectly and I am very happy to associate myself with this amendment.

Mr. Speaker, I salute the mover of the Resolution, the Right Honourable Prime Minister who has provided leadership on this issue and indeed has provided global leadership on this whole question of the green economy and Small Island Developing States at the level of the Special Committee set up by the Secretary General of the United Nations, so we salute and commend him. Mr. Speaker, certainly last and not least I will end on the very note I started because I feel very strongly about it. I want to congratulate Mr. James Browne and his team at the National Petroleum Corporation, not because he is a former school mate of mine but because it is a statement of fact, where he is managing 100 employees, where he is managing an entire network and is managing it well without incident and on a shoestring budget. I encourage him to keep the faith and to continue doing the great work, do not take to heart anything that he might have heard here today, they call it the silly season for a reason but you are doing splendid work and even though some of those people who spoke, when they are lying down across their beds, they know as well, they did not really mean it, but the National Petroleum Corporation is doing good work and is also giving great advice as well. Mr. Speaker, this nonsense as a Minister, trained technocrats that have advised Ministers for years, all of a sudden now you have to peek behind them, under them and question them. I could not believe it. I suppose what, are you supposed to fire everybody when the Government changes? I do not understand that foolishness. Again, the silly season is upon us. The National Petroleum Corporation has done great work, they have given sound advice and I hope that they can continue to be assured that this Government is impressed with their work.

5.02 p.m.

I would just have also mentioned, since I glanced at it earlier, that even at a time of crisis -- because what we were facing in 2015 in the middle of the tourist season was all the top restaurants and all the hotels being full of bookings - when one turned on and no flame appeared, that was a legitimate crisis; but calm heads prevailed and we got through it and we have put everything in place to avoid a repeat. Again, that is good, competent work by these men and women, so once again I assure them of the Government's support and I want to once again thank you, Sir, and I support this Amendment. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Just a minute, Honourable Member.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Michael North West.

Hon. C.P. SINCKLER: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. I just wanted to add a few words. I trust I should not be too long in doing so, and I want to

associate myself with the comments made by Members on this side relative to the matter before the Chamber, which basically, as the last speaker quite ably said -- I thought it to be a very erudite presentation and one very well thought out and delivered by the Member for St. Michael South Central -- overall really speaks to the processes governing how the Minister would interact with the provisions of the legislation relative to his own authority to make orders and give instructions and to the overall objective of the efficient functioning of the NPC as a very critical and important entity in the setup of commercial State-owned institutions, in which Government has a significant controlling interest.

I think that we should not lose sight of the very important fact of that particular process, because we do pass legislation and from time to time we find some deficiencies in such pieces of legislation, and we have to come back to make changes to strengthen that. Of course, at the time when they were passed, they were probably not deficiencies in that way, but with the passage of time and the changing of circumstances and the reordering of priorities and so forth, they then crystallised themselves in a way that portended an intervention by the legislative process here in Parliament to ensure that at least we keep pace with what is considered to be modern practice in the governance, administration and operation of those entities. That is absolutely important.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I think perhaps we have not done as much of that as we ought to in relation to how these entities -- both the commercial and the social-type entities -- function, and the pieces of legislation governing those entities. We pass a piece of legislation, an Act, to govern many State-owned entities and their operations. A lot of these Acts, based on the type of activity that is being conducted, have generally similar features. They are, of course, nuanced differences because of the type of activity that is involved, but they generally have these broad principles and objectives that find their way into provisions of these various pieces of legislation.

I note that it has become now the practice of at least the Member for St. James North, every time he speaks on a subject pertaining to statutory corporations, to do a kind of childish recitation about which statutory entity has not submitted its audited financial statements. He gets up and he recites all of them, as though this is a new practice. I am Minister of Finance and I am not at all saying that I endorse or in any way support breaches of the provisions provided for in the specific pieces of legislation, but we all know in the circumstances governing how these things operate that many factors impinge. Some entities, truth be told, are a little tardy in getting their stuff together, but the reality is that many of them have blockages in a number of areas that have affected those entities under both Governments and both parties in office. We, for example, came into office and found that the largest single financial institution in

Barbados, the National Insurance Scheme, which handles billions of dollars in liquid and fixed assets on behalf of the workers of Barbados, had not had audits for close to seven years. Those were laid here in Parliament. In fact, so bad was it that we had to engage the services of private accounting firms to try to reconstruct those audits. Of course, as you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, with the passage of time officers move on for one reason or the other, documents cannot be found, and the reconstruction process to try to get the current set of financials is extremely difficult and sometimes you have to write off some years. Fortunately, we were able to get up to 2012-2013 or maybe even 2014-2015 to try to see if we could get those audited statements up to date. That is the largest financial institution.

There may be reasons why this happened. I am not saying -- as I said before, and as Minister of Finance I cannot really say -- that it is something that should be condoned, but I think the point I am trying to make in relation to this particular matter is that we have to find perhaps a slightly better way or a different way. First of all, we have to make the provisions in the legislation realistic. They always speak about audited financial statements. As the Minister of Finance, among the things I concern myself intently with are management accounts and Annual Reports on the performance of the companies and what they are doing and so forth. That is what I am very interested in seeing, because at least with consistently done, clear, transparent and applicable management accounts, you get to know with some degree of confidence what is taking place in each and every organisation. The truth is that very few, if any, organisations can produce a credible audited financial statement if they do not have good management accounts. I think that is part of the problem why some organisations are behind in having their audited financial statements; because their management accounts are not consistently done. We in the Ministry of Finance have to put pressure on them, and we are very shortly going to recommend -- in terms of a body of work we are looking at -- to the Cabinet some changes in relation to how these things are handled.

4.59 p.m.

Insert s31 juliette

Friday, May 05, 2017

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: ...made available by financiers to people in the alternative energy sector. We have seen now over the past years how this sector has begun to take off as a new viable sector in Barbados that can buttress what we do at present, which is to import very heavily fossil fuels provision for energy production in the country, but we can begin now to see over the next 10, 15, 20, 25 years how we could move that back, save the

country valuable foreign exchange and provide consistent reliable energy supplies of an alternative nature in the country and how we can work to diversify the energy sector and liberalise it because we are going to have more people producing energy other than the lone monopoly you have in terms of electricity with the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited.

We also reduced the duties on vehicles that operate on things other than fossil fuels, the hybrids and now the electric motor vehicles and liquefied natural gas, the LNG now. It is a complete policy which we have done and we are beginning to see that it is bearing fruit. We have not done everything. There are other things that we have to do in that particular regard but at least forward looking with foresight and determination the Democratic Labour Party Administration has set in train, we have now set it off, and it is beginning to take off.

I heard the Honourable Member for St. George... saying that the Government should take hold of the alternative energy sector but the Government does not need to take hold of any alternative energy sector, Government needs to empower people in the private sector to take the lead in that sector. The Government will provide whatever facilitation we have to by way of ensuring that the legislative, regulatory and other frameworks are in place. If there are strategic areas that we can intervene in to give a little bit more push to them that the private sector may be a little timid about we will do that, but generally this really should be a private sector thing, and that is what we have been doing, so it is very clear.

Mr. Speaker, one of the areas that we looked at to see how we can begin to diversify the energy sector is doing a lot more with the National Petroleum Corporation. The National Petroleum Corporation has been asleep. It is almost like a sleeper cell in Barbados. You only hear people talking about the National Petroleum Corporation when they cannot get natural gas through their gap. That is a lament about the Corporation. The truth is that a lot of what the National Petroleum Corporation has to do to produce and provide natural gas to businesses and domestic households in Barbados is heavily infrastructural. Even if you buy the gas from somewhere else you got to spend a lot of money to get it to people and that cost quite a bit of money. Now, we know that the prices which the company has historically charged, either by Government order or otherwise, for the supply of natural gas just is not really a reasonable, fair, competitive or accurate price relative to the cost of production and supply. Mr. Speaker, that is not disputed by anybody. In fact one hotelier, a very honest fellow, told me that from his time in the hotel industry he used to watch how chefs in the kitchen where the company was using natural gas would turn on the gas and go and do all kinds of things and the stove was there running with nothing on it and was just burning. He said that the reason

why they do that is because when any hotelier takes up their utility bills or their expenditure bills for any month or quarter they do not look at the natural gas charge because they know that is way below anything else they have to pay for water, electricity or anything. It is so low that they do not look at it and through that there is a bit of wastage in what is taking place.

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

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, because the cost of it is so low people really do not pay attention to it. I looked at some of the records of the company in relation to its income and from as far back as 2004 the company was making losses, and the question is: Why did not anybody intervene during those times to ensure that the company was at least able to make a return on the investment necessary, even if it was not making super profits at least to make it to break even in relation to that, to assist it to have the capacity to expand which is what we are saying.

We know everybody wants fiscal prudence in the country and everybody wants these State-owned entities particularly the commercial ones to make money and to do well and to be profitable but then in the next breath they want them to not charge the real fee for them. In every circumstance it is not possible to do so but at least you have to give them the opportunity to be technically and operationally viable. You cannot leave them out there and tell them you want them to provide gas to here and to there or to provide this service to there or this good to there and all over the place but then you leave them exposed in a state where eventually they are going to have to end back up, if they were there, or come for the first time on central Government's budget because it is simply not feasible to do so.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I hear a lot of talk about water and water is the same thing. If you check the water rates in Barbados as opposed to what is happening in the Caribbean, in Latin America, the United States of America and the world over, you would see that we charge one of the lowest rates for water you can find anywhere. In the last five years alone the Barbados Water Authority with the assistance of the Government of Barbados has done close to BDS\$500 million in infrastructural upgrades to the water system all over Barbados that should have been done previous. The mains relaying programme, the metres improvement programme and the reservoir programme that we are doing now have all cost tremendous money and there is a lot more that has to be done.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am going to close now but I am saying that if we want to have these upgrades and if we want to continue to supply quality potable water to

businesses, individuals and households in Barbados and to maintain the globally high standards for the quality of water that we have been doing then we have to know that at some point in time there has to be a cost recovery because this money just does not drop out of heaven or it is not in anybody's backyard buried where you go and dig it up. Much of it is loan financing which has interest costs attached to it and it has to be done.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I now currently do not benefit from natural gas, I have to do bottled gas like most other people in Barbados but I want to see the situation where we can have natural gas supplied to as many households and businesses as is possible that we can do in the circumstances, and if it means that giving the National Petroleum Corporation a little bit more capacity to do so by any rate increases which may have to be done then I think it is in the best interest of the country that we do so.

I close, Madam Deputy Speaker, by saying I associate first with the Honourable Prime Minister and of course the Honourable Members for Christ Church West Central and the St. Michael South Central in saying that I think that the staff has done an excellent job and I also want, I am sure the Honourable Prime Minister will do it, to pay tribute to the role that the late Sir Harcourt Lewis would have played as Chairman of that Corporation in a very challenging time to keep it together stable and operating at a high level.

With those few words, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am obliged to you.

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MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER VACATED THE CHAIR. MR. SPEAKER ASSUMED THE CHAIR.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. George North.

MR. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to lend my voice to this important debate, and coming after the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, one has to ask the question, what next is the Government trying to privatise. Mr. Speaker, we know that the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs is interested in the collection of finances and revenue. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member's main concern is collecting revenue. We have seen the Minister at work, we know that his Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals for 2017 are to come and we would want to know if the Honourable Member is going to increase the rates of the National Petroleum Corporation. The Honourable Member said that the rates will not be increased, rates but we are waiting patiently, the Honourable Member said that the rates will

not be increased this term but that they would want to increase those rates during a third term.

Asides.

MR. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, that is what I heard, I heard that the Government is not prepared to introduce any increases this year because it is election year but that if rates are to be introduced, they would have to be introduced in a third term.

Asides.

MR. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is free to rise on a point of order, but the Member is of the view and is saying that the rates of the National Petroleum Corporation will go up, not this term but in a third term. Mr. Speaker, we therefore ask the question, what next this Government is going to privatise? We have seen that they have privatised a sister company, they have actually given it away and one wonders what is the role of Government in this whole exercise at this time. Is Government prepared to sell the National Petroleum Corporation and it is therefore putting it in a commercial venture so that it will attract... Mr. Speaker, obviously by putting it into a commercial exercise it would attract good would-be buyers and so I would want to know if this happening.

RT. HON. F. J. STUART: On a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. George North is misleading this Honourable Chamber. Mr. Speaker, I piloted this Bill this morning and I gave the reasons why this Bill is before this Honourable House. Mr. Speaker, within those reasons that I gave none of them had to do with anything about privatisation or readying the National Petroleum Corporation for any sale. Mr. Speaker, it is an indecent piece of mischief on the part of the Honourable Member to be suggesting any such thing.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, while that may be so, I think the Honourable Member also has the right to speculate, so I cannot stop the Honourable Member from doing that. Please continue, Honourable Member.

MR. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, we know we have seen spinners, in fact, we have just seen a few spinners here at Kensington and we know a "googly" when we see one, we know the ones that flip and the ones that flip back where you cannot play that ball at all. Mr. Speaker, the Right Honourable Prime Minister is aware of these things, we know about spinners and we know when a spin is being put on a ball. I am asking the Government the question, if the Government has no plans of selling the National Petroleum Corporation, then they can come say so but I do not want the Government to come to Parliament today and introduce a rate change after 36 years because Mr. Speaker,

the National Petroleum Corporation Act, Cap.280 was introduced in 1981 by the Barbados Labour Party at the time, in that year the Barbados National Oil Company Limited had about I think 25 per cent of shares in this company and the Government of Barbados held 75.5 per cent. Mr. Speaker, this whole company is intertwined in the whole oil operation, that is why we pointed out today that we still need to continue our drilling exercise, we still need to continue to have a ready supply of fossil fuels.

It is important, Mr. Speaker, because we have seen this company expanded over time, in our time it has expanded in terms of providing new mains, in fact, in my representation to the National Petroleum Corporation it has expanded into Salters and into Charles Rowe Bridge and it expanded to Parish Land, Glebe and other areas where the demand is quite high because of the commercial venture, but we have noticed that this company has a policy that only when there are commercial ventures within those vicinities only then will they expand. Mr. Speaker, they will expand if there is a commercial venture like that of a big bakery, a big restaurant or a big hotel, but they are not prepared to expand into residential areas, for example, the area of Bush Hall and Bank Hall, because of the high density of the population, will not attract the National Petroleum Corporation, only if there is a business venture.

Mr. Speaker, I heard one of its members on the radio recently talking the need for the establishment of commercial ventures. Mr. Speaker, even though this is important, I believe that they must still see the returns to their investment as being important. Mr. Speaker, this matter did not now come up, I have before heard this argument, this argument came while we were in Government, that the National Petroleum Corporation wanted an increase in rates more than 10 or 15 years ago. The then Government felt that here is a monopoly, the National Petroleum Corporation -- and here is the difference between the two sides - that a monopoly cannot make substantial profits off the people's backs. Mr. Speaker, I want you to understand, the economist would tell you...

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading this House. When one looks at the record, one would see that the National Petroleum Corporation was not making profits but in fact were making losses. What the Honourable Member is saying is that they were giving the public the impression that everything was well when the company was really making losses.

Mr. SPEAKER: Thank you for the elucidation. Please continue, Honourable Member.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, at the time the National Petroleum Corporation was covering its operating

expenses and at that time we felt that there was no need for rate increase, even though the rate was \$4, \$5 or \$6. We saw it before, they were not paying any difference in rates under the Barbados Labour Party, some people were paying \$12, while others were paying \$4 but that is not the point, the point I am making is that people have a right for low rates.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, the difference between the two sides is that the Barbados Labour Party believes in a low tax regime, while the Democratic Labour Party believes that even though the rates are low, still to increase those rates.

H:D10(33)

Mr. Speaker, remember that it was this Government which came and taxed bicycles. Bicycles went from zero dollars to over 60 per cent. Water rates were increased by 60 per cent. It has nothing to do with the base rates. Mr. Speaker, I am saying to you that I heard the Member for St. Michael North West saying that we are a very low-rate destination. I want him to check the rates in Trinidad. I just checked it, and in Trinidad I was told that people pay water rates per quarter, and that is why Trinidad has become a better destination for business than Barbados; because of the rates in gas and electricity, Mr. Speaker. The rates in electricity charged to businesspeople are three times the rates in Trinidad. Mr. Speaker, the rates of natural gas are three times more. If, then, you know that you want to be competitive and if you say to me....

POINT OF ELUCIDATION

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Hon. A.D. BRATHWAITE: The Honourable Member is misleading the Chamber, because what the Honourable Member should divulge to the Chamber is that Trinidad has LPG to the commercial sector only at a subsidised rate. They pay a third of the cost. Consumers, the ordinary man in Trinidad and Tobago, which produces LPG, does not receive LPG in his or her own home.

MR. SPEAKER: Very well. Thanks for the elucidation.

Mr. G.A. CLARKE: What I am saying is that the rate charged for businesses is a third of what it is in Barbados. Government may want to be competitive, especially with hotels. This NPC mainly sells the natural gas to the BL&P which is a big purchaser, as well as to the hotels and the hospital. It is right here in the Report, and Members were saying that there is no need for the Report but we found all of this in the last Report that came before

this House. We need to have the Reports. Mr. Speaker, I am saying....

POINT OF ORDER

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Rt. Hon. F.J. STUART: I did not hear anybody in this House say that there is no need for any Reports.

MR. SPEAKER: I heard nobody say that. It has never been said, so the Member stands corrected.

Mr. G.A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, from what came across to me, Members were of the view that there is no need to supply all of these Reports every year. We need to have a Report. Mr. Speaker, as Chairman of this Chamber, Reports need to be submitted annually. The last Report came between 2009 and 2010. The Report I am reading now is a 2008-2009 Report, Mr. Speaker, and we are saying that we want to see how much distribution and equipment there is. We want to see how many new connections were made by NPC in the last year. For example, I can tell you they connected in 2008 about 800 new connections, Mr. Speaker. I want to see how many new connections they are about to make. Mr. Speaker, the point that I was making earlier that needs to be examined is this: The NPC is the only supplier of natural gas in Barbados. Mr. Speaker, they have the monopolistic right to produce. They make profits and they cover their operating costs, and because the cost to the average householder is low, it does not mean the NPC is not making profits. They came to us before, and they asked for an increase, and they were told, "No. Go back and show us how and what you are going to do when you expand in terms of bringing on new people to the grid."

Mr. Speaker, I am of the view that even though you say that the rates are low, why are you prepared to increase the rates at this time? Can the NPC show that they are making losses? We want to see the losses they have made over the past two years. We do not see it. We cannot see the rate. We want to see what losses they made. They have not employed any more people. Mr. Speaker, in fact this Report showed that in 2009 they were employing 116 people. They were employing less by 2010. I think it is 108 persons now being employed by the NPC. The employment has been reduced, but yet they are telling me they are making all of these losses, so therefore there is a need for Government to increase the rates at this time. By increasing the rates, you are going to affect the hotels and local businesses. The rates will increase.

POINT OF ORDER

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Hon. D.St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, on a Point of Order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House, because the Honourable Member has been all over Barbados telling people that this Government has increased the number of people whom it has employed even though it said it was cutting. Now, the Honourable Member has produced a Document to show that instead of increasing, the Government has decreased, so the Honourable Member has now convinced the whole of Barbados that the statistics which they gave to the private sector and which have been brandished across Barbados are wrong.

MR. SPEAKER: Very well. Honourable Member, please continue. He has had his say.

Aside.

Mr. G.A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, this corporation has done good work. There is no doubt about it, and it is preferred over persons going to buy the petroleum and gas for cooking from the gas stations and from the local producer. It is preferred, but yet we find, as the Prime Minister said today, only 25 per cent of the population has been hooked up to the NPC. I want to see their ten-year plan. Is it the plan of the NPC to increase to 30 per cent, to 40, to 50, or is it only waiting on businesses within the area? We have to find out what is the long-term plan for this particular company. We want to find out not only that. If you increase the rates, how does it help you in the long run, since they have to be able to justify any rate increases? I want the Government to understand that the Opposition will not stand idly by and allow this corporation to increase the rates to the detriment of Barbados, to the detriment of that 25 per cent who are hooked up at this time. They have to justify it.

Even though you say to me that the rate was only \$12 per month or whatever, so what? It does not mean that they started paying \$12 in 2008. They were paying less than that in 1994. They were paying less than that in 1981. The rates were always low, and Barbadians always enjoyed -- those who were hooked up -- the low rates. We believe that these rates should continue for a long, long time, but we want other persons to be hooked up because it is unfair for the other 75 per cent of persons not hooked up now. I would like to hear the people of St. John crying for gas. I would like to hear the people in St. Lucy. The Member for St. Lucy never got up and made a claim for his constituency.

Aside.

Mr. G.A. CLARKE: He never complained, and that is what he should be complaining about; that we need some gas in St. Lucy, we need some gas in St. John and St. Joseph. That is what it is. We believe that the NPC should look at a programme. They were told so before, Mr.

Speaker. This is not the very first time they have been told this. They were told, "Show me your expansion programme. Show me how you are going to expand so that Government can help you in terms of providing the infrastructure." I want the Prime Minister to understand this; that the Government wanted to provide and to help the NPC with the expansion by putting in the lines, but it never contemplated increasing the rates. The Barbados Labour Party never contemplated this time would come. We always felt that the rates should remain low for those persons who are hooked up, and we wanted to see at the time the rates for the majority of the country brought down as soon as is practicable.

I believe that I have spoken about what the Barbados Labour Party stood and stands for. We believe that the rates should be kept as low and affordable as possible. We believe that those persons who do not now get the natural gas should be hooked up as well.

5.38 p.m.

Insert s35 juliette

Friday, May 05, 2017

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: I heard the Honourable Member for St. James Central, I believe and I may be wrong, speaking about the Barbados National Oil Company Limited went into Trinidad and invested in empty wells. Well, I am sure that the Honourable Member probably heard that somewhere at Roebuck Street over a drink but it is plainly not true and it is unfair for him to come in here and malign the characters really of serious managers of a public institution, and that is why sometimes people are not willing to step forward and get involved in certain institutions because they are concerned that their names would be used and used unfairly not only in here but come election time around the streetlights, et cetera.

Asides.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: I heard about a well at Society for \$7 million. Again, my information is that the most that the National Petroleum Corporation has spent on a well is about \$3 million and on that well in particular \$2.5 million was spent. If you pass next time you are in that area you would see that the lights are on, et cetera. They are still doing some studies. They have not given up. I almost confess where you would be going.

The serious point I am making is that it is really unfair to the public and to this Parliament to just say things for the sake of saying things because they sound good. I keep calling all the time in this Parliament for a truth barometer. There should be some mechanism where people are held to the fire and when you check the facts and the

facts are not true they should be made to come and confess to all of us that what they said unfortunately was not correct based on the information that they are usually given by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

Mr. Speaker, you heard again from the Honourable Member for St. Michael South that the majority of the users of National Petroleum Corporation gas, or the commercial users and manufacturers, are about 20 000 to 21 000 private consumers, and we would dearly like to take that up to more private consumers. I am one, for example, who every couple of months have to remember to leave the cheque to pay Rubis or whoever when the guy comes. I would rather not have to do that, not because of the question of cost but the question also of convenience, but we really need to have the resources and stuff.

Mr. Speaker, you heard me say when I got up on a point of order when the Honourable Member for St. George North was speaking that LPG is produced in Trinidad and it is made available to the private sector only at one-thirds of the cost, and that is one of the reason why our manufacturers in Barbados complain that it is not a level playing field, so rather than the Honourable Member for St. George North bragging about the difference in cost of electricity he really should be looking at it from our perspective and calling for a level playing field so that in fact if you produce a crate of eggs in Barbados and a guy produces a crate of eggs or whatever product in Trinidad that you could really compete because the cost, except maybe for the labour cost, are about the same, but the input cost cannot be the same because they are very heavily subsidised.

Little Barbados, the past Administration and this present Administration, should actually be commended for the fact the even with our limited resources that we said that we have to find some mechanism that as many Barbadians as possible should be able to receive natural gas.

The hypocrisy about some of the presentations that I have heard from time to time is that on the one hand you complain that about the inefficiencies, about the lack of Government revenue and the lack of Government resources and then when it suits you, you get up in the same presentation and say that you want natural gas for your people in Cats Castle and all over Barbados, but where are they going to get the resources from if they are not available. Again, this is a very simple thing. Give us some credit. Give the persons at the National Petroleum Corporation some credit.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, just a minute please. Sorry Honourable Member, continue please.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I was on a point and I have forgotten what the point was now.

Mr. SPEAKER: Sorry for disturbing you.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Yes, but can you go back and remind me what I was speaking about.

Mr. SPEAKER: Do you really want me to do that?

Asides.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Speaker, we took a decision as a Government, I believe the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central mentioned it, I heard his presentation, that in fact that we knew that when this Bill comes to Parliament that the first thing we are going to hear is you are raising the cost of something again, we knew that. I have to say to you, Mr. Speaker, that there are some of us here who because they knew that that argument would have come forth were a bit nervous but you got to give us credit for having the intestinal fortitude for doing the right thing for all the people that I spoke about in Union, Ruby, Ruby Development et cetera, who now cannot get natural gas because the resources are not available and unless we make the resources available they would never be able to get natural gas and therefore I will have no hesitation in supporting this Bill because I understand why we have to do what we are doing. We cannot continue to kick the can down the road.

Mr. Speaker, I have said continuously, and I think we need to accept and I believe that Barbadians have accepted it, that we have taken Barbados as far as it can go with the level of subsidies that we have provided in education, in health and at the Urban Development Commission and the Rural Development Commission, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, my friend from St. George North, and I am sorry I have to call him very often given the fact that it is only him in my eyesight, et cetera, will tell you that they had a Housing Credit Fund the purpose of which was to make sure that resources were available for anyone who wanted to put on a toilet or add on additions to their house.

Asides.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: It did not matter whether or not they would repay it, that is the point I want to make. It did not matter whether or not the money was repaid to the Housing Credit Fund. That is the kind of approach they had. Bear in mind, Mr. Speaker, that when these resources are given away for political purposes that you deprive the country of having resources to do other

things, to be invested in education and healthcare and that is the challenge, and we have to address this.

We are elected, Mr. Speaker, to lead and to govern and if it is one thing that I have learnt from the Honourable Member for St. Michael South is that you cannot govern and be afraid to make the right decision because people elect you make the tough decisions on their behalf, so the Barbados Labour Party whose governance model -- I hear this thing about governance you know - is really let us do what would make us popular, we will figure it out down the road, will say privately that they understand the educational issue, they understand the housing issue and they understand why the National Housing Corporation cannot continue subsidising housing for every one and that in fact that the National Housing Corporation needs to be placed on a footing where it can make some money. In fact, the irony is I believe that was one of the reasons why they got involved in the Barrack Building, but when it suits them they come and keep noise in the public's domain that we are doing wrong, that the purpose of the National Housing Corporation is in fact just to produce low-cost housing, subsidised housing, et cetera. We have gone, Mr. Speaker, to repeat myself, as far as we can go subsidising everything in this country.

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Mr. Speaker, my final point again is to the Honourable Member for St. James Central, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West has given the Honourable Member for St. James Central some credit. I think the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West said that he believes that the Honourable Member for St. James Central has the intellectual capacity to analyse things, et cetera. Mr. Speaker, if I were to accept that argument, then I would have to wonder how it is that the Honourable Member can begin his presentation and by saying that, in fact, this is not a matter that should be before this Honourable House, that, in fact, we set up a fair competition regime 13 years ago, and that automatically it should go to the Fair Trading Commission.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member knows that no utility company can just get up and say let it go to the Fair Trading Commission. Mr. Speaker, simply put, it has to put its house in order, it has to ensure that it has the financial structure in place, it has to ensure that it has the IT systems in place, it has to ensure that it has its accounting and governing structure in place. Mr. Speaker, it cannot just get up and say that it is going to the Fair Trading Commission for an increase in rates, without being able to do the type of analyses that the Fair Trading Commission can say that based in terms of their revenue, based on the production cost, this is what the Fair Trading Commission thinks is a fair return on their investment. Unless they have all of

these things in place they cannot go to the Fair Trading Commission.

Mr. Speaker, this is part of the reason why at this juncture we are trying to put the National Petroleum Corporation on the financial footing that, in fact, it will be able to go to the Fair Trading Commission eventually. We do not have a problem with fair competition in this country. We do not have a problem with utility companies going to the Fair Trading Commission, we believe in a fair rate of return and the best way to determine a fair rate of return is to let the professionals do the type of analysis that is required, but it is uncharacterable to create the impression that you simply have to turn up at the Fair Trading Commission and say that you want an increase and that increase would be determined. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. James Central knows that it does not work like that but it sounds really good and such.

I sit here continuously and I look forward to the day when I can pay to go to the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre or somewhere else to see the Honourable Member performing because in fact that is what the Honourable Member is best at. Usually when I sit here I see performances, I do not see serious debates and serious contributions to the life of this Parliament and to these issue and I am very disappointed, Mr. Speaker. These are times where the people of Barbados are looking to us to lead them, they are looking to us to make the tough and the right decisions.

Mr. Speaker, we have not enjoyed the best of times in terms of the decisions that we have had to make, as a Government or as a Member of the Cabinet of Barbados, for the last numbers of years I will say to you that we do not take these decisions lightly or easily. The type of analysis that the Honourable Member for St. James Central accused embarrassingly or tried to accuse the Honourable Member for St. Michael South of not interrogating the information, et cetera - these nice-sounding words - I was embarrassed because the Honourable Member knows differently, the Honourable Member knows why we are here, the Honourable Member knows that we cannot go to the Fair Trading Commission, the Honourable Member knows that his own constituents cannot receive the natural gas that he wants for them, given the financial footing of the National Petroleum Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, in fact, before we came here, we felt that this debate would not be a contentious one, given what we are trying to do, we felt that commonsense would say that the National Petroleum Corporation cannot continue on the present trajectory financially, that we cannot continue subsidising natural gas to the extent that we are now doing if we want to expand the numbers of persons, et cetera. Mr. Speaker, this is where it becomes a laughing stock, even to the community, the Honourable Member for

St. Michael South simply said that based on the information that has been provided to him by the management of the National Petroleum Corporation, presently with the resources available to them they are now able to do 350 connections a year but with a slight increase in price they can move that to 850 connections, but even 850 connections are not enough and so we are going to have to find some way or to find some other mechanism to give them the resources.

Mr. Speaker, one final point is this, we took the decision to import natural gas about two years ago because we had a bit of a crisis but as a Government we also said that we would ensure that we would never allow this country to be faced with the same challenges again. Mr. Speaker, what Members on the other side should know and if they do not know let me say this to them, is that as a purchaser of the product you can fix your price in terms of forward contracts from now, so that you can, in fact, purchase your product for the next five or ten years and know very well that that price will remain for whatever many years to come. Therefore this question in terms of where would you find the natural gas if other people are brought onto the grid, et cetera, but it is quite obvious where we are going to get it from, we are going to purchase it in advance because you would already know what you want to do, you would already know how many people you want to add, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, I support this Bill, it is not a very difficult Bill to understand, it is not difficult to understand what the Government is trying to do, we do not enjoy increasing rates, et cetera, but as I said you come from a culture from 14 years of kicking the can down the road and at some point in time it had to stop. Mr. Speaker, what brought us to our senses was the 2008 oil crisis which said to many countries in the region that no more, that we needed to pay the true cost of what we were providing, that we needed to pay the true cost of living in our respective countries and that is what we have been fighting with for the last nine years.

Mr. Speaker, this increase, whenever it comes, from the information that has been made available to me, will not be significant, certainly users of natural gas will still be paying less than I pay for my bottled gas, will still be paying less than my friend, the Honourable Member for St. George North who pays for about three or four houses...

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading this House. Mr. Speaker, I have pointed out to this Honourable House today that even though the rates of the National Petroleum Corporation were to increase it still will not help the expansion programme and I will show you why, because in 2008...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I am not going to let you to do a second speech. Thank you. Please continue, Honourable Member.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Speaker, it is very simple, your choice is either to accept the word of the Honourable Member for St. George North who has never dug a well in his life, furthermore an oil well, or accept the management of the National Petroleum Corporation who are professionals and who, God forbid, if the Barbados Labour Party becomes the party tomorrow they themselves would depend on but would stand today and say that their analysis is flawed, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, tell me when I have had enough because every time I am remembering something else. Mr. Speaker, I heard the Honourable Member for St. George South this morning, for example, parading as though someone else had given him something else to read saying that the price of oil is going to go up to \$250 per barrel some time soon. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South then said something to him and the Honourable Member for St. George North then said cement, the Honourable Member was confused. Mr. Speaker, this type of analysis the management of the Barbados National Terminal Company does, the Ministry of Energy has been guiding us in terms of a policy. We understand where we want to take Barbados, we understand that we cannot continue to rely on fossil fuel, we understand also that natural gas is the cleanest of the fossil fuels, that is why we want to move in this direction to enhance its capacity until we can also simultaneously advance to renewable energy.

6.13 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, our policy is very clear and our policy continues to be the best policy for Barbados at this point in time. Similarly, this is why at this juncture --even though many persons would ask, "With elections looming, how can you want to increase something to the public of Barbados again?" -- we are aware that there are other publics. There are the hundreds of people in St. Philip South who I want to be able to go to and say, "Help is on the way. We should soon be able to provide natural gas for you." I am obliged.

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

Miss C.Y. FORDE: Sir, I am no authority on anything to do with natural gas and so on, but I heard Honourable Members speak of the communication coming from our side, and I do not know if this is the time to say it, but I want the public to hear if it is allowed that I have grown tired, Mr. Speaker. Every week we do not get to learn on the Barbados Labour Party side the items on the

Order Paper that will be discussed so that proper research can be done for our contributions to be made. Since Tuesday, we were waiting to hear from the Honourable Leader of Government Business. It throws everything in a tailspin, and that is the reason we will get the kind of reaction we are getting. We must become a more mature Parliament doing the people's business as efficiently as possible, and it is more than a year that it has been going on, Mr. Speaker. If there is another forum that I should put this through, I would gladly accept your advice, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, let me say that I support any initiative that is being made by any Government for the use of cleaner energy for Barbados. We all see what happens in our society, with all kinds of black smoke and so on coming out of vehicles. We know that in some homes persons use domestic gas, the liquefied bottled gas, and sometimes the odour is so overwhelming throughout the entire period that the person has that bottle of gas, since it might have some kind of leak. Therefore, any effort to be able to minimise or mitigate such would be supported, Mr. Speaker. There is so much asthma in this country. People suffer with so many respiratory problems, and I believe that the cleaner way to go for a Green Economy is well supported and it has always been the mantra of the Barbados Labour Party to work towards such initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, I understand the call for natural gas prices to be increased, because I know the expansion is critical. Every household, as has been said by most Honourable Members here, has been asking, "When will we get the natural gas, because it is such a cheaper commodity?" I hurt when I hear the news at night.

POINT OF ORDER

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading the Chamber when she seeks to give the impression that she does not know what is on the Order Paper. Mr. Speaker, I have just dug up the emails which were exchanged between me and the person on the Opposition side with whom I have been asked to communicate about the Order Paper, and on Wednesday the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East asked in an email, "Hi, John, are you in a position to advise what we will be doing on Friday?" I replied: "We will continue with the items we had for the Sitting on the 25th," and the response from the Honourable Member was, "Received, with thanks." I am obliged to you, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Miss C.Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, I would not want to go any further with it, because the Honourable Member for Christ Church South for the last couple of months keeps

saying if there are six items on the Order Paper, it could be any of the six. That does not make commonsense. Mr. Speaker, it is not enough to have a big voice and not use a big brain sensibly, and it bothers me that we are coming in here and the public seems to think that all 30 of us are out to sea, but more particularly the Opposition because our contributions are not in keeping with the standards that we have grown accustomed to delivering, according to my time in here. Mr. Speaker, it is nowhere near that of the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, which is minimal. I will carry on, and I will deal with that in another forum, Sir.

Sir, I wanted to say that I agree that access to the funds would be critical in helping to facilitate the needs of others, and I heard the honourable presenter, the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South, the Prime Minister, speak to the whole matter of 25 per cent or so of the public and the householders in Barbados not having access, and highlighting St. John, St. Lucy and St. Joseph. I know that life in Barbados would be easier for all householders were everybody able to have access to natural gas. It makes it easy on the lives of Barbadians, especially at this time when so many people have been sent home, and overnight you hear that liquefied petroleum gasoline has gone up by X amount of dollars. Very seldom will it come down by a \$2. Sometimes it goes over \$11 and so on, and it is difficult when ordinary poor persons have to get in a minibus to come from St. Thomas to Eagle Hall or wherever and then the gas station is out of bottled gas. We are moving from pillar to post, paying \$2 for bus fare and do not have the access. Mr. Speaker, this is not the time in our history where we go back to a three-pronged pot with stones, but some people are actually doing it. I have constituents who are doing it because there is no money, and sometimes when they make contact with the agencies, they get no benefits. Therefore, every household receiving it will benefit as a result. I support that 1 000 per cent, Sir. It makes life easier for all.

I spoke just now of the dangers of the bottled gas in the households and I spoke of the fluctuation of costs on consumers, and I understand that the rates have not been changed since 2002; but we know that life in 2002 was 20 times better than life today, and we know the decay we have seen in this economy and the poor conditions which Barbadians are living under over the last nine years. It hurts, Mr. Speaker. I do not know if the Honourable Members on that side do not canvass or if people cannot access them on the phone or cannot go to their houses to be able to express the hurt and the poor conditions under which they live. Everybody in Barbados should be able to light a stove and cook a meal and make a cup of tea and sleep at least with something in their stomachs. It is not happening right now.

Let me go on, Mr. Speaker. I would love to see the customer numbers increase from the 350 to 850, because it

would be less people calling on all 30 of us asking for help, even though that would only be a drop of water in the sea. I also pray that the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) loan of the US\$34 million will be accessed so that the institutional strengthening can take place, so that the capacity building can be effected, and so that the merger of the two entities can be fulfilled in order that better services can be offered to us the public of Barbados and, of course, the business entities that are involved. There is an urgent requirement for the upgrade of any energy security in order for us to pursue or to use cleaner fuels, Mr. Speaker. I talked about the health challenges before. Barbados deserves a cleaner environment in which to live and to work.

Mr. Speaker, it is upsetting, very upsetting, to hear of the fluctuations when you have your budget down to a 'T' because you know you are paying more road tax so there is less money in your pocket. Insurance has gone up so there is less money in your pocket. Vehicles are being destroyed on the road every day so you have to change part after part so there is less money in your pocket, and then when you hear gas going up and this thing going down and so on, it creates quite an uneasy feeling and experience among people in Barbados, especially single women with children.

6.17 p.m.

Insert s39 juliette

Friday, May 05, 2017

Miss C. Y. FORDE: In 2008 the \$200 million in that Budget for road tax and all of these different things and the roads are the worst in the world right now. I am not seeing any benefits in St. Thomas with my roads being repaired but yet we are paying a whole lot of money in road tax and our vehicles are getting destroyed and buses are breaking down every single day. There are challenges.

I know that the Democratic Labour Party promised the sun, the moon and the eleven stars and we have seen them mismanaged this economy in a way that startles everybody. For me some of the millions of dollars that were spent to pay for the constituency councils, the football tournaments, the summer camps that were failures and a number of other projects that are in progress could have gone to the National Petroleum Corporation to help to improve their quality and to give them the viability, the infrastructure, the equipment and the staff to be able to have the natural gas in there. Some of those millions of dollars for me could have been invested in that particular entity. Mr. Speaker, I would like to encourage Government to start looking at cutting back and scaling back on some of those projects that you cannot see with the naked eye any improvement where millions of taxpayers' dollars have

been spent on and invest it in entities such as the National Petroleum Corporation because a cleaner environment is what all of us desire and deserve and want to have happen in our society. Mr. Speaker, cognisance must be taken too of the numerous persons who have lost their work. That is paining many.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask a question: What plans are there for sinking new wells? I do not know. The Reports are not available. I understand that the Reports are up to 2009. I want to know what wells are being sunk to let us know what plans the National Petroleum Corporation has. As a young child I know that there were wells in Springvale and people talked about the derrick and we would go in that area and play because it was very close to where we live and we had to work really hard in the agricultural belt. I know it has been abandoned but has Government been able to get the experts to go in the area to explore what might be the possibility. I had a great uncle who died in a well digging for manjack. There is still local knowledge, not all of the seniors have died out, and there are persons who would be able to advise the experts and to guide them to go down in the tracks as to where the derrick was so that they would be able to come up with something that would help to ease the situation because certainly the people of St. Joseph are close enough to the Springvale area that is at the back of the Flower Forest and so and perhaps we never can tell what might be able to develop from it.

As I come to a close, Mr. Speaker, by what increase would the rates have to be in order for the Government to make this National Petroleum Corporation a viable entity? What are the plans for the sales because we were being told about the sale of the National Petroleum Corporation and so on and then we were hearing about the Fair Trading Commission and all of that?

Asides.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: I do not mind if I am confused. I want the Honourable Member for St. Philip South to deal with the persons who are squatting that he gave assurances that he would support them and they supported him. Leave me alone. Go and run the police. Every minute somebody is getting murdered. Leave me alone, please, good. I did not interrupt you Sir, stop interrupting me. Mr. Speaker, I beg your pardon.

Mr. Speaker, I would like the Honourable Prime Minister to please tell us to what extent the increase could be because if the water bills were increased by 60 per cent and we did not get any proper benefits I would like to know what would be the increase for the National Petroleum Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, in the final analysis I would want to express commendation to the staff at the National Petroleum Corporation who were readily able to respond to the queries I made to them on more than one occasion. However, I want finally to say how disappointed I am that the Ministry of Energy has not given the courtesy having received correspondence on the matter that was taking place where everything was there. That is not good governance. If we are talking about good governance, if we are talking about accountability and if we are talking about equity and all of the other things that go with it simple responses help to ease the burdens and the concerns that individuals have and therefore any effort that is being made to ease the plight of Barbadians and to help them to have access to natural gas and so on in their homes, in their businesses, in the district hospitals and in the other places where it is now unavailable would be supported by me on this side because at the end of the day everybody wants happiness, they want peace, they want joy and more particularly great health and safety.

It is with those brief comments, Mr. Speaker, that I want to thank you sincerely for giving me the moment.

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

Hon. R. D. JONES: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am not going to be long because I think we have had excellent contributions from this side on this matter of the National Petroleum Corporation (Amendment) Bill. We are making what should be a relatively simple matter a very difficult one. The last time I spoke in this House I spoke to the politicising really of everything under the sun in this country. This is another matter, Mr. Speaker, that has been heavily politicised.

Mr. Speaker, I have been the recipient of service from the National Petroleum Corporation through the provision of natural gas for the last 26 or 27 years and I do not know one month when the cost of the gas that I received registers on my mind because it is so reasonable - I was going to use another word but nothing is cheap - that it does not register on my mind. I am also thankful for the convenience that it offers because it is just a simple matter of turning on your stove if you want to cook, boil water or do whatever.

Mr. Speaker, we have to make up in our minds in this country whether we are dealing with a commercial enterprise that then employs a bit of a subsidy for its customers or whether we are dealing with a social welfare agency. That is the first decision that we have to make. My mind is that we are dealing with a commercial enterprise that has built into its cost structure some subsidisation of the services that it provides. If you look at what people pay for what people refer to as bottled gas which you get from

either Sol, ESSO or Rubis because they all carry the name or the brand on the bottle which you go somewhere down Fontabelle or Spring Garden or at the various service stations to purchase you would find that the disparity is so significant in relation to the cost that those very fortunate citizens of Barbados who has access to natural gas pay. I count myself as one of those fortunate citizens and I know that the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown also counts himself as very fortunate because he has access to natural gas and he knows just as I have said earlier that the cost of this does not register on our minds. When you look at it, that paying either \$12, \$15 or \$17, because you are paying on your usage per cubic meter... Let us say that the average is around 10, 11 or 12 cubic meters being used by what you can call an average household containing four or five persons, that is \$17.76, plus the cost of the meter.

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This brings it under \$21 and any increase which is envisaged is also a token increase, that is why I asked the question if you are running a commercial enterprise that puts some subsidy to those persons who use that natural gas, including myself or that if we are a social welfare agency. Mr. Speaker, I accept whatever cost they would have arrived at relative to the increase. I have calculated it, it is the cost of a 500 ml. bottle of water from the cheap end. That is what it is going to cost to persons like myself.

Asides.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Well, one has to understand that in every society there are people who are not working and there are agencies that are in the country to deal with such persons. I am not saying that they would be always dealt with adequately but that is every society, so that you cannot necessarily compare those on the outer end with the general numbers in the society. This country has a lot of people who are in fact working, some of them might need a realignment of their priorities but they are working and so we cannot use that as an excuse to run down an institution that we have said is important to the energy sector of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, if we do not give them the resources for the expansion, and in the constituency that I represent, there are still people who are asking for natural gas, on one side of the road there is natural gas while on the other side of that road there is none, so therefore I have a stake in this, they have a stake in this, they would willingly pay the additional price on a 500 ml. of bottle of water than having to be hustling up and down to gas stations and other places that supply that bottle gas? They would love that, they do not mind the road in their areas being dug up and pipes laid, in fact, Mr. Speaker, some have told me that they do not mind paying increase cost for the laying of those pipes as long as they can get the natural gas and the convenience

thereof. Mr. Speaker, in relation to the price at that time of what it was and the price that it will be now, this is a mere sneeze in the wind.

Mr. Speaker, we said that we were not going to discuss water, but a few months ago I looked at my water bill and broke it down again into the cost of how many bottles of cheap water that I could use in a day, an average 500 ml. bottle of water at \$2.50. Mr. Speaker, even with the increase in our water rates about three years ago, it is less than 20 bottles of water per month. If you are conscious of your health you would drink three 500 ml. bottles of water but we bathe, clean our homes, cook, wash down the house, wash down the car, among other things, yet we pay less than \$2 per day in the average household.

Mr. Speaker, that is what we as State entities have been doing, we have been fooling the people that somehow this is the real cost of running these entities, even if they do not make a profit, but they should. Mr. Speaker, they should have surplus for expansion, they should have some of those resources put aside to expand these businesses but when you are operating basically on the borderline you then have to call on the State to provide the resources or you have to go out and borrow these resources without knowing how you are going to pay back those borrowed resources, so that we need to move away from these fool and pretentious behaviours, fooling the people that somehow the cost to them is the real cost. Mr. Speaker, somehow this has to stop, if we say that this is the cost of bringing it to your homes and that we are going to apply a subsidy then so be it, that can be built into the structure but do not keep saying to people that it will cost them a few bottles of 500 ml. of water on the cheap side when that is not true, we have to import all of the pipes and fittings, because nothing is made here, so we have to import everything. We also have to employ the people to put the fittings down, to cut the tracks, to attach the meters, to attach them onto the gas mains running from your home, to repair if there is a detection of a gas leak and move quickly. Mr. Speaker, the National Petroleum Corporation must be praised for its action over time. I remember some years ago at the Combermere School with the mere detection of a scent they moved in as quickly as possible and dealt with that matter there. Therefore we had no complain at all to the school relative to the work of the National Petroleum Corporation in that area and so we have to give Jack his jacket and Jane whatever she wears, she might wear a pants, a big dress or anything else.

Asides.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is that I support the amendment to the National Petroleum Corporation Bill and whatever increase that comes as a result of the need to increase the rates to those 20 000-plus persons who have the convenience, the cheap cost of this

important product directly to their homes and businesses. Mr. Speaker, we cannot be saying to the other 80 per cent of the people of Barbados that only this select few should enjoy the benefits of this and that the others should suffer because we are paying a very heavy subsidised cost to the National Petroleum Corporation. Mr. Speaker, let us get real, let us do it real, let us ensure that the National Petroleum Corporation can survive beyond now and well into the future as it seeks to meet the needs of persons such as myself, many of my constituents who benefit but several more who need to benefit.

Mr. Speaker, I have a ridiculous situation in Wotton. I am just going to mention it because there is natural gas to many of the housing units there, but there is one unit, because of the distance from where the National Petroleum Corporation stops to their homes is just a little stretch. Mr. Speaker, to the east there is natural gas, to the west there is, but to the block that faces north they do not have natural gas but it is all within that horse shoe. Mr. Speaker, I am saying that whoever is within the hearing of my voice, I do not expect that matter to remain too long, even if the representative has to make a contribution to that effort, just run natural gas to the four other units because everybody else have.

6.56 p.m.

A word is all I give. I am asking, I am pleading, to just take care of those as well. Just like now the NPC is doing work, I believe, all through Whitehall and that area just up the road there. Those are only four. Come back and finish off those four units. I am talking about Wotton Terrace. They too deserve the benefit of the gas, and they would willingly pay the extra few cents to also have that convenience and the service from the NPC, Mr. Speaker. I thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: I am obliged. Yes, Right Honourable Prime Minister.

Rt. Hon. F.J. STUART: Mr. Speaker, I rise to wind up this debate, and I should like to thank all Honourable Members on both sides of the House for their interventions. I think that the interventions in the debate were all in their own way separate revelations of where philosophically we stand on issues in this society. The contributions on this side, of course, were substantially different from those coming from the other side of the House, for obvious reasons; because there is a philosophical divide between the two organisations. There has always been. In fact, that philosophical divide dates back to 1955 when the founders of this organisation -- the organisation to which we on this side belong -- had to take their leave of that organisation because the founders of this organisation could not any longer philosophically identify with what was being served up on the other side.

I have tried to keep the debate out of that because when I made my introductory speech, I was careful not to mention Democratic Labour Party or Barbados Labour Party. I was careful not even to mention Opposition. I just talked about what the Government's policy was and what the challenges facing the NPC were and what we thought we had to do. I did not think that this was the kind of debate that should have become divisive. I did not think so. I thought that this was an issue of national importance. There are people in St. George South, in St. Michael South East, in St. Thomas, in the City, in St. James Central, in St. George North and all over those constituencies who want natural gas; so I did not think that this was an issue which should have been debated along partisan lines. The National Petroleum Corporation has made representations to the Government. It has been making representations for some considerable time, and that fact has been attested by the Honourable Member for St. George North who said that they had to deal with it too, but they rejected the entreaties of the NPC, and it just happens that the NPC has found more receptive areas in the year 2017 than they were able to find back in 2005 and so on when, according to the Member for St. George North, they tried to get the assistance of the then Administration. Then I heard all sorts of things in this debate, but I do not intend to consume the House's time with responding to everything I have heard.

Mr. Speaker, I was a student of the University of the West Indies (UWI) in the early 1970s. In fact, in 1971 it was my especial privilege to sit at the feet of a very distinguished lecturer who, at the time of his retirement many years later, was a Reader in Linguistics at the UWI. I speak of no less a person than the late Dr. Richard Allsopp. I am aware that he had a particular interest in the lexicography of the Caribbean, and he therefore authored a Dictionary of Caribbean Usage which has provided invaluable assistance to the people across this region. I came face-to-face with its value in a very interesting way, quite frankly, because I remember being in Fourth Form at the Boys' Foundation School and writing an essay on 'Sunday in My District'. Since I grew up not too far from a rumshop, I remember writing about some people on Sunday afternoons under the influence of alcohol behaving in a 'hostilish' way. The word 'hostilish' at that time was not known to conventional English, and I was made fun of by the teacher at the time and, consequently, by members of the student body for using this word 'hostilish' which I had heard my mother and some of my elder aunts and uncles with. Richard Allsopp's dictionary, though, has sanctified that word now, like so many others that we have used over time and we have thought to be incorrect and, of course, not fit for purpose.

I mention Allsopp to say this, though. One of the things he used to say that I have never forgotten is that any time you are listening to people around you, they are either speaking English, which means that even though they may

not have all of their words in the correct places, their thinking is sequenced, it is logical, and you can understand what they are saying. He said some people speak English. He said others used a lot of fancy language which, when you strip it of its integument or of its covering, it is saying nothing. He said those people speak 'varnish'. Then he said there are those who speak neither English nor varnish, but who content themselves with plain rubbish. Whenever you are listening to people, you are either hearing English, varnish or rubbish. Whenever I listen to the Honourable Member for St. James Central, the quite frank truth is that I think that Barbadians have to be grateful to that Honourable Member for consistently, insistently and persistently sparing them the trouble of having to decide into which of those categories he falls. Invariably, he is oscillating between varnish and rubbish, and today was certainly no exception. We heard the usual things from him: the Government using BNOCL like a piggy-bank, and he actually mentioned the word 'corruption'. I understand his atavistic and ancestral preoccupation with banks and corruption. I understand that quite well. He has to continue to be haunted by those concerns. It is an atavistic preoccupation, an ancestral preoccupation, this preoccupation with piggy-banks and corruption.

6.56 p.m.

Insert s43 juliette

Friday, May 05, 2017

Hon. F. J. STUART: I was very pleased to hear the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, the Honourable Minister of Housing, Lands and Rural Development, say that once he heard a presentation from the National Petroleum Corporation on the challenges faced by the National Petroleum Corporation in terms of supplying service to St. Lucy and that when he saw the connection between the ability to service commercial enterprises and being able to service domestic enterprises that as recently as today he called the Arawak Cement Plant in St. Lucy to have a discussion with them because if they can be serviced by it and of course can be responsible for some of the cost of laying the mains and of course dealing with the infrastructure that that could open the door as it has opened the doors in other parts of the Barbados. The Honourable Member for St. George North made the point about Charles Row Bridge and how it helped people around that area and the Honourable Member for St. Thomas made the same point and said that if at Lancaster it can happen because another commercial enterprise goes there she would be all happy, so we are trying to break a path that we can satisfy this critical need.

It is a clean energy consistent with the policies of the Government to create a green economy in Barbados and it is inexpensive energy as well in the context of the cost of

the fossil fuels that we have been so lopsidedly dependent on as I said this morning so the Government does not have to be apologetic about anything on this. There were clear choices to be made and we have made them as the Honourable Member for St. Philip South has pointed out. I have never belonged to that school of political thought that says that before you do the right thing and before you make decisions that are necessary you try to work out what would catch the winds of popular favour, that you hold up a handkerchief and see in what direction the wind is blowing and depending on which direction the wind is blowing you decide what you are going to do. Certain things in life are right, certain other things are wrong but in between what is right and what is wrong there is a category called necessary and certain things are just necessary.

The Government has looked at this situation. We have looked at it for some time, we have listened to the advocacy of the National Petroleum Corporation and we have listened to the advocacy of the Ministry of Energy and Telecommunications and we have come to the conclusion that, if Jeremy Bentham would allow me to pray his name in aid, the greatest happiness for the greatest number should be our guide on this occasion and that is why this Amendment is before the House.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the Honourable Member for St. James Central, never known to hesitate to make an unwise statement, say that with all of these competition mechanisms around power in being vested in a Minister to preside over rate changes. Once again we have the paradox of a politician telling a Parliament of politicians that you should not trust politicians. I marvel at all of this. Whenever a Bill comes to this House that gives an elected representative of the people of Barbados the power to do anything, cries break out on the other side, you should not give the Minister the power to do this or you should not give him the power to do that. Ministers cannot be trusted but we all want to be Ministers. We are politicians but we disavow any attachment to the standards to which politicians are subscribed. I really do not belong to that school of thought. I have said already that you cannot find 500 people in the 250 000 we have in this country, and you cannot find them in any other Caribbean country either, who are prepared voluntarily to get up and to do what we have opted to do. You cannot find them. You can join non-governmental organisations, little social clubs and so on, there is nothing wrong with any of that, but what we do is something of a completely different order. I do not belong to that school of thought that has no faith in politicians, that do not trust them, that believe that they are all thieves and that believe that they will all misuse power. I will tell you something, I have seen power used by people who get power from politicians to appoint them to boards and so on and that is where you have to watch how power is used, but I do not belong to that school of thought.

The Minister had the power to make regulations under the existing legislation passed in 1979 which commenced on April 1, 1981 and he has the same power now. It just happens based on what we heard from the Ministry of Energy and from the National Petroleum Corporation that we have particularised some of the areas to which the making of regulations should relate, and it all has to do with the challenges faced by the National Petroleum Corporation and challenges that can be faced by the National Petroleum Corporation. Some of its mains, as I have said today, dates back to the 1940s and the 1950s and we have seen the challenges posed by that aged infrastructure already. In the last quarter of 2015 we saw the challenges and we had to do some importation and we had to mobilise some resources to correct that problem and that will continue. If the Honourable Member for St. Thomas is concerned about the maintenance I want to assure her that the National Petroleum Corporation and the Government are committed to ensuring that the infrastructure upon which the supply of natural gas to households and businesses relies is a matter of concern for us and that we will make sure as best as we can that it is kept in as good shape as possible, and that is where the story ends.

It is not satisfactory that the National Petroleum Corporation should be in a position where it has to wait to see where the Ministry of Transport and Works is doing work to go and ask if they could piggyback on what the Ministry of Transport and Works is doing. It is not satisfactory that they should have to wait until the Barbados Water Authority is doing infrastructural work to go and have to piggyback on the Barbados Water Authority either. They should be able in their own right because they have resources to respond to demands being made for the services that they provide. All of this is not going to happen at the snap of a finger or by the incantation of any abracadabra, no magic, but we are making a start because we believe in a cleaner environment, we believe in the use of cleaner energy and we believe that as many households in Barbados as possible should have access to the use of natural gas.

House D10 Sequence 44

Mr. Speaker, the divide between the two sides of this House today is saddening, it is unfortunate that some people are more content with only 350 new installations per year while others want 850; it is unfortunate that some people think that the 25 per cent that are being serviced now should continue to enjoy their positions of privilege while others want the whole country to be serviced; it is unfortunate that while we on this side want the National Petroleum Corporation empowered, there are those who not too subtly are advocating its continued disablement, but that is where we are, Mr. Speaker, and that is nothing over which I can have any control.

Mr. Speaker, the contemplated increase as has been pointed is marginal. We have said it already, about 3 per cent of what is being paid at the moment, \$4.18, is marginal.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. F. J. STUART: You need to listen a bit more carefully, that was no secret.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading this House. I listened the Right Honourable Prime Minister all day and the Honourable Member has never said what was the increase that the National Petroleum Corporation was asking for. Mr. Speaker, I would be appreciative if the Right Honourable Prime Minister would tell this Honourable House, as well as the nation, what percentage of increase that National Petroleum Corporation is contemplating.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I thought the Honourable Member just did that. Please continue, Honourable Member.

Rt. Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Speaker, I quoted the figure this morning of \$4.18, no more than that, a percentage of the very modest charge that they are paying now. I said that the householders pay their bills and our businesses do and I asked why should they not and I cited the figure of \$4.18.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. F. J. STUART: No more than that, it can be less, depending on what people are paying at the moment. It is an average. It is not going to be more than that, it is going to be less.

Mr. Speaker, there are some things that were said by the Honourable Member for St. James Central that I am not going to deal with now, I will have a proper consultation -- this whole talk about investing money in Trinidad and Tobago, and losing all of this money, and sinking \$7 million in a well somewhere in Society. I was just reading the Barbados National Oil Company Limited last report laid in this Honourable House on Tuesday October 20, 2015, the 2013 Report, the Society well is mentioned and none of that is contained in this report, the explanation is given in this report. I am going to have a conversation with both the Barbados National Oil Company Limited and the National Petroleum Corporation and have contradicted in public, perhaps through a Government Information Service release, the audacious untruths of which the Honourable Member for St. James Central spoke in here today. Mr. Speaker, it is really unfortunate that it should come to this on a simple issue of trying to do better by Barbadians.

Mr. Speaker, I have people in my constituency who call me almost every week, people in Jessamine Avenue, Sandbox Avenue and elsewhere asking me about natural gas, people who have been doing that for years. We have to deal with these problems, in every single constituency in Barbados this is an issue for the households because they know that some people are enjoying it.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central was on good ground when the Honourable Member said that people no more want to have to beg anybody to have to drop them to a gas station to buy a bottle of gas and so on and in some cases they have to pay for the gas twice, we are trying to get away from all of that and to create a Barbados that is more socially balanced, more economically viable, more environmentally sound and a Barbados that is characterised by good and transparent governance. That is where we are and therefore, Mr. Speaker, without any further ado and against the background of all that I have said, I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second that, Sir.

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

On the motion of Rt. Hon. F. J. STUART, seconded by Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE, the House resolved itself into Committee on the Bill. Mr. J. D. PAUL, Chairman of Committees, in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is now in Committee.

Clauses 1 to 3, inclusive, were called and passed.

On the motion of Rt. Hon. F. J. STUART, seconded by Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE, Mr. J. D. PAUL, Chairman of Committees, reported to His Honour the SPEAKER, the passing of one Bill in Committee and His Honour the SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the motion of Rt. Hon. F. J. STUART, seconded by Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the National Petroleum Corporation (Amendment) Act, 2017.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, with that we have come to the end of Government Business for today. I now beg to move that this Sitting be now adjourned, and the Honourable Member for St. Thomas to hear this

clearly, until Friday, May 12, 2017, at 10 o'clock in the morning.

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

The question that the Sitting be now adjourned until Friday, May 12, 2017, at 10 o'clock in the morning was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the Sitting accordingly.

7.34 p.m.

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FORDE, Miss C.Y. (St. Thomas)
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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. Chamber. The source file is filed with the Senate debates, but the text is a sitting of the House of Assembly (Mr. Speaker presiding), so it is printed as the House. Please confirm.

Q2. Masthead. The session is not stated in the source, so no session line is printed.

Q3. Minutes. Mr. Speaker's words 'If there are no corrections or observations, then let those Minutes stand confirmed.' are run into Hon. A. D. Brathwaite's seconding under his label. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Order No. 15, missing takes. The source is incomplete: at ten points it carries a note instead of a reporter's take — 'Insert s4 juliette', 's10', 's15', 's19', 's23', 's27', 's31', 's35', 's39' and 's43' — and the text after several of them resumes in mid-speech (for example, the Prime Minister's speech continues at '...revenue from households', and Hon. C. P. Sinckler's at '...made available by financiers'). The notes are printed as in the source. Please supply the missing takes.

Q5. Order No. 15, Hon. C. P. Sinckler, take-slip House D10 Sequence 32. The source repeats the close of Hon. C. P. Sinckler's speech in a second version, run into Madam Deputy Speaker's call ('The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West. Hon. C. P. SINKLER: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise by saying that I associate myself...'). The first version is printed and the repeat (about 135 words) has been left out. Please confirm.

Q6. Order No. 15, Hon. D. St.E. Kellman. Hon. D. St.E. Kellman, who seconded the second reading, opens his afternoon speech 'I rise to speak in this debate to move the Second Reading'. Printed as in the source.

Q7. Order No. 15, before the luncheon suspension. The call to the Member for Christ Church South is labelled 'Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER'; later in the sitting the Chair is taken by 'MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER'. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met at 10.00 a.m. on Friday, 5th May, 2017, with Mr. Speaker, His Honour M. A. Carrington, in the Chair; prayers were taken by Reverend Mark Harewood. The Minutes of 25th April were confirmed, Hon. A. D. Brathwaite laid the Royal Barbados Police Force Annual Report 2013, and Standing Orders were suspended for the day.

Under Order No. 15 the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. F. J. Stuart, moved the second reading of the National Petroleum Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2017, to make better provision for natural gas rates and to bring natural gas within the definition of petroleum. He said the Act had been passed in 1979 and in force since 1st April, 1981, that households paid the Corporation only about \$450 000 a year, that its cash-flow difficulties held back mains expansion, that it was to be amalgamated with the Barbados National Oil Company Limited, and that St. Lucy, St. John and St. Joseph could hope for supply. Hon. D. St.E. Kellman seconded.

Mr. D. G. Sutherland, Member for St. George South, compared crude oil and natural gas output since 2008 and asked what transition strategy there was for the oil companies, including the proposed sale of the Barbados National Terminal Oil Company Limited to S.O.L. or Rubis. When he read from what he called a draft energy policy, Hon. J. D. E. Boyce objected, and Mr. Speaker ruled that Members must quote from authentic, identified documents.

After lunch Mr. Kellman defended the Government's green economy policy. Mr. K. D. Symmonds, Member for St. James Central, attacked the logic of the Bill and the lack of information on the sale process, and certain of his remarks were expunged. Hon. S. A. Lashley supported the Bill. Mr. E. G. Hinkson, Member for St. James North, said the energy import bill had risen from \$456 million to \$787 million between 2007 and 2011 and criticised a 60 per cent increase in water rates; certain of his remarks were also expunged. Hon. R. L. Sealy recalled the 2015 gas supply crisis, and Hon. C. P. Sinckler, Member for St. Michael North West, argued for cost recovery by State enterprises and paid tribute to the late Sir Harcourt Lewis as chairman.

Mr. G. A. Clarke, Member for St. George North, said the Barbados Labour Party believed in a low-tax regime and that Trinidad's business rate was a third of Barbados'; the Prime Minister, Mr. Kellman and Mr. Brathwaite rose on points of order and elucidation. Mr. Brathwaite answered claims about a \$7 million well at Society, Miss C. Y. Forde spoke on roads in St. Thomas, and Hon. R. D. Jones supported the amendment.

Winding up, the Prime Minister said the debate had shown where each side stood philosophically and repeated that the average increase would be no more than \$4.18. The Bill passed its second reading, went through Committee with Mr. J. D. Paul, Chairman of Committees, in the Chair,

clauses 1 to 3, and was read a third time. On the motion of Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, seconded by the Prime Minister, the House adjourned until Friday, 12th May, 2017 at 10.00 a.m. About ten reporters' takes are missing from the source at points marked 'Insert ... juliette'.