
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2018 – 2022

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Friday, April 24, 2020

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 11.00 a.m. on Friday, April 24, 2020.

PRESENT

His Honour A. E. HOLDER, B.Sc. (Hons.) MSW, LL.B. (Hons.) L.E.C. (Speaker)

His Honour G. A. CLARKE, J.P., B.Sc., Dip. Ed. (Deputy Speaker)

Hon. G. W. PAYNE, Q.C., M.P. (Minister of Housing, Lands and Rural Development)

Hon. R. St.C. TOPPIN, LL.B. (Hons.) (Minister of International Business and Industry)

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, Q.C., LL.B. (Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, Economic Affairs and Investment, Minister of National Security and the Civil Service)

Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE, J.P., L.C.P., (Minister of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs)

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL, Q.C., LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C.,

(Attorney-General and Minister of Legal Affairs)

Hon. T. A. PRESCOD, B.A., (Minister of Environment and

National Beautification)

Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS, B.A., LL.B., M.P. (Minister of

Tourism and International Transport)

Lt. Col. the Hon. J. D. BOSTIC, MVO, B.A. (Hons.) (Minister of Health and Wellness)

Hon. E. G. HINKSON, LL.B (Hons.) L.E.C., LL.M (Minister of Home Affairs)

Hon. D. G. SUTHERLAND, B.Sc., M.Sc., M.B.A (Dist.)

(Minister of Small Business, Entrepreneurship and Commerce)

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW, LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C.,

(Minister of Education, Technological and Vocational Training) (Leader of Government Business)

Bishop J. J. S. ATHERLEY, J.P., B.A., B.Sc., PgD. (Leader

of the Opposition)

Dr. the Hon. W. F. DUGUID, J.P., B.S.S., F.D.S.,

F.D.R.C.S., M.Min. (Minister of Transport, Works and Maintenance)

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAM, LL.B. (Minister of Energy and Water

Resources)

Hon. Ms. C. S. V. HUSBANDS, B.A. (Hons.), M.sc. (Minister

in the Ministry of Foreign Trade)

Mr. R. A. THORNE, Q.C. LL.B., L.E.C., Dip. Theology

Hon. I. A. WEIR, M.B.A. (Minister of Agriculture and Food

Security)

Hon. A. R. FORDE, RPh. (Minister of Youth and Community

Empowerment)

Hon. C. McD. GRIFFITH, B.Sc. (Minister in the Ministry

of Housing, Lands and Rural Development)

Hon. P. R. PHILLIPS, (Minister in the Ministry of

Transport, Works and Maintenance)

Hon. J. A. KING, BSS (Minister of the Creative Economy,

Culture and Sports)

Mr. G. P. I. GOODING-EDGHILL

Hon. C. E. JORDAN, B.Sc. (Hons.) (Minister of Labour and

Social Partnership Relations)

Dr. S. E. BROWNE, M.B.B.S. (Chairman of Committees)

Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY, B.Sc., M.Sc., M.P.A.
(Minister
of Maritime Affairs and the Blue Economy)

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN, B.Sc., M.Sc. M.P.
(Minister in the
Ministry of Finance)

Hon. Miss M. K-A. CADDLE, B.A., M.Sc.
(Minister in the
Ministry of Economic Affairs)

Mr. N. G. H. ROWE, (Parliamentary Secretary in the
Ministry of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs)
Prayers were taken by Rev. Father Mark Harewood.

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

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of the Meeting held on
Wednesday April 1, 2020 to be deferred. Honourable
leader of Government Business.

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker I beg
to move that the said minutes be deferred.

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

MESSAGES FROM HER EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL

PETITIONS

PAPERS

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker I beg
to give notice of the Barbados International Business
Promotion Corporation Inc., Invest Barbados and the
Report of Financial Year April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

PRIVATE MEMBER'S NOTICES

NOTICES TO QUESTIONS

REPORTS FROM SELECT COMMITTEES

FIRST READING OF BILLS

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of Government
Business.

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker I beg
to give notice of the first reading of the Criminal Justice

(Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, 2020 and the first reading
of the Control of Disposable Plastics Bill, 2020.

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL: I beg to second that.

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

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

MOTIONS FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

ORAL REPLIES TO QUESTIONS

NOTICES FOR MOTIONS FOR THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE ON MATTERS OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL: I beg to second that.

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 16 – SUPPLEMENTARY ORDER PAPER – IN THE NAME OF THE HONOURABLE ATTORNEY GENERAL TO MOVE THE PASSING OF A RESOLUTION TO EXTEND THE PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of Government
Business.

Hon. Miss. S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, I
rise in relation to a Resolution to invite the Chamber to
permit the Honourable House to extend what we have
describe as a public health emergency in relation to
COVID-19. Mr. Speaker I believe it is well known to the
entire country and what the World is facing and indeed

Barbados. A few weeks ago we came before this Chamber to declare under the Emergency Management Act Cap. 160A that we were engaged in fighting a public health emergency. We believe that acting on the advice of the public health officials in particular the Ministry of Health and Wellness, that while we have done a substantial amount of work in relation to containing the virus that we still appreciate that we are in a very fluid period at this point in time. Even while we have a number of cases, in the last couple of days we have not had a number of positive cases, although I believe today we have had on more additional case, we do not want Barbadians to rest on their laurels and believe that all of the efforts of our health officials should now be cast aside and that we should rest and be complacent in how we deal with this virus.

Mr. Speaker, as a consequence, it is our view that while we continue to ready our various facilities, we have Harrison's Point facility which has already been able to receive a number of patients from the other two facilities that have been stood up. We appreciate that while that facility is getting itself ready we are still receiving supplies and donations from various territories to ensure that we have adequate supplies on island, in the event that there is any community transmission, that as a country we are able to fight this dreaded virus.

Sir, that notwithstanding, I think Barbadians have recognised how serious a crisis we facing. I think that even though there was a lot of concern initially about the long lines at supermarkets and concerns over the systems that were employed, I think there is a general feeling now that we have settling down across the country for the most part of the rush to get item from the supermarket. I think Barbadians have now understood that we are not running out of food but we appreciate that we have to take measures that are necessary at this point in time to be able to keep our population safe.

This virus has presented us with a number of challenges, it has changed the dynamics of change repeatedly over the course of the past few weeks. We have been told on different occasions that medical evidence has thrown up some different dynamics and as a consequence we have also had to respond to those challenges and the new information that has come to hand. We do not believe that we are out of the woods as yet and I think that the advice is sounded from the Ministry of Health and Wellness in relation to guiding certainly the government of Barbados and the people of Barbados to a position of safety.

With that background Sir, I wish to read the resolution to you, which says as follows:

"Whereas by virtue of section 28 A subsection 1 of the emergency Management Act Cap 160 A the Governor-

General was satisfied that an emergency has arisen as a result of person or an animal having a communicable and notifiable disease. The Governor-General made a proclamation on the advice of the Honourable Prime Minister, after the Honourable Prime Minister has consulted or has been advised by the Chief Medical Officer declare that a public health emergency exist. Whereas by section 28 A subsection 2 of the said Act, a proclamation is issued under section 28 subsection 1, and shall unless previously revoked remain enforce for one month or such longer period not exceeding six months as the House of Assembly may determine by a resolution supported by the votes of a majority by the Members of that House.

Whereas the said proclamation has not been revoked and is due to expire on the 27th day of April of 2020, and whereas the House of Assembly has by a vote of the majority of all the Members thereof, determine by resolution to extend the said proclamation--- that the proclamation and fore said is hereby extended until the 30th day of June of 2020.

Mr. Speaker, in essence, we hope that shortly that we will review at the end of the last directive number 3 that has been issued that we will be in a position in a couple days to be able to do a full assessment of where we are, and on the advice of the public health officials be in a position to speak to the country again with respect to that directive or any future directives that may become necessary. Again, we ask Barbadians to be mindful that the imposition of a number if these measures are not to create any additional stress or any addition burden on them, but really as the world continue to grapple with COVID-19 and all of the dynamics of COVID-19 Barbados has not been left behind in the fight against this virus. As such it made us call on all Barbadians of all walks of life to be strong in this fight and to come together to look after the most vulnerable in the society.

The Government of Barbados has put in place a number of measures to be able to assist persons to provide relief through the welfare department, the household mitigation unit, we have been trying to reach out to the persons who are most vulnerable in communities, we have been trying to put in place measures to ensure that no person is left behind. We have continued to appeal to all Barbadians to be their brothers' keeper during this crisis. If you know of someone who is elderly that requires assistance, we ask that persons look out for them and try as much as possible to assist them as they require essential items and essential services to be able to assist them as best as possible.

Mr. Speaker, throughout this period, we have to speak with one voice because this is not anything that is partisan in nature it is certainly something that we have never as a country had to face, but I do feel and it continue

to assure that given the support that we have had from all sectors, our healthcare workers, essential workers, various supermarket owners, and certain the persons who work on the frontline in the supermarkets, the banks, the hardware stores, all of the institutions where, we have allowed for relaxation. We have had tremendous corporation from them in relation to health protocols that we have put in place, I think on behalf of the Government, I want to again say thank you to all of them who are engaged in the frontline. The persons at the port, airport, everyone who has been a part. Our police who have been a part, whether a big way or a small way enabling us as a Government and as a country to be able to fight COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, I therefore beg to move that this resolution do now pass.

--- I beg to second that, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

BISHOP J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin with contribution by publicly again offering my sympathies to the relatives of those Barbadians at home and abroad who have been lost to this pandemic. I pray for God's sustaining mercies with respect to them that they will know a sense of peace that comes of Him. Let me also take the opportunity again to express appreciation to those who service and the frontlines of this fight who themselves expose themselves to serious risk to protect the well-being of all of Barbadians, and to protect the interest of this country. I will continue for as long as I am permitted and as loudly as I might to champion the cause of those who service and the frontlines whether we are face with this type of threat, which immediately confronts us or any other threat that portends injury to our national wellbeing, social, architecture, economy.

We have called in the past for a careful look to be taken at those who service in these ways. It is not because they are special people but because they are doing a special job. When you are in the frontlines in security life and limb is at risk. When you are in the frontlines in the health sector life and limb are at risk and I believe that we need to with loud voice as a nation ensure that those who are serving us now in this cause are aware that we appreciate their service. The notion of hand clapping is appreciated but as a token gesture and I believe that when we get pass this a more tangible way or ways must be found to express the appreciation of this country for what these people have done for us. Whether it is a one off or financial gift, if the country can afford it and if the country cannot afford maybe a token of appreciation in kind maybe a period of time off from work but somehow beyond the clapping of hands and the making of noise. The use of words we must

find a means to tangible express our appreciation to the hundreds who serve us in this immediate way and beyond this immediate moment. I will like to take the opportunity again to urge Barbadians to listen to the voice of reason to take the lead as signal by the Government of the day, which we imagine and presume follows the advice of the medical and security professionals. I again treat Barbadians to take this matter as seriously as it obviously is and follow the protocols as outlined and outlined repeatedly. We have had some hiccups and some issues thread implements some of the regimes and the protocols that will always happen when they give him situation, especially one of this urgency and of this magnitude. We expect those who lead us to bring sober judgment to the cause and to the table and to the situation. We rely on their professionalism to get us through this. So, I urge Barbadians to do that, which is asked of them to ensure that each of us stays safe and that each of us contribute in his or her own way to a resolution of this problem in the shortest possible time.

Mr. Speaker, let me be clear, I support the move to extend this period of public health emergency from the perspective that we are dealing with a very fluid situation which is the presence of a virus which is not fully understood, its spread which has been rapid and global, and has now impacted us here both in terms of those who are infected and others who have already lost their lives. The impact behind infection and loss of life is tremendous right across the country, resulting in dislocation and loss of jobs, et cetera. Therefore, I support the extension of this period of emergency. I think under the legislation, Government could have opted to go for a longer period of time, I think the law provides for a period of six months once the Parliament approves it by a majority vote of its Members.

I am happy to see that the Government has not gone for the longer period and has gone instead for a period of about eight weeks. It is understood in terms of the fluidity of the situation and the nature of the threat. We have observed over time that Governments further afield have used instances of states of emergency, public health emergency and other forms of emergency cover to extend its life to implement measures which otherwise perhaps would not find the approval of the public, and perhaps otherwise would not find the consents of Parliaments. I would just want to advise and encourage this Government not to be so disposed as to use the cover of COVID-19 to attempt to be the type of administration that in the darkness of this hour implements measures or strictures which would not under normal circumstances find concordance from the public of Barbados.

I advise very strongly that Government not use this COVID-19 threat as cover for any such enterprise. This Government is also in a position to use the power of numbers if it is so disposed to achieve such nefarious ends and I would want to counsel against that. I want to be very

clear that I am not charging the Government with that. I want to be very clear that I am supporting the measure before us. I am simply saying from my limited experience on this earth and my appreciation for political history that there have been many instances and some ongoing right now, where Governments would have used the power of numbers and cover of state of emergency to engage in policy positions and other positions which otherwise people would not get approval.

Government should ensure as is indicated by the move for only eight weeks or so, that there is a continuing signal from its benches that it appreciates the significance of the institution of Parliament. The institution of Parliament is the highest law-making body in the land. It is not the Cabinet of Barbados; it is the Parliament of Barbados. The situation with which we are faced legislatively now puts some inordinate powers in the hands of the Cabinet that it should never be let in sight of.

The highest policy-making body in Barbados is the Parliament of Barbados. Therefore, nothing should be done or suggest that we are trifling with this institution. Though we have not perhaps met as we usually want to do which is traditionally weekly, I would want to very strongly urge Government to make sure that the signal is not picked up by Barbadians that we want to trifle with the Parliament or that we want to use the immediate threat of COVID1-19 to cover any misdeeds which may be uncomfortable to the palates of Barbadians. In saying all of that, I support the measure.

Mr. Speaker, thank you.

Lt. Col. the Hon. J. D. BOSTIC: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do not intend to speak for a long period of time because obviously there is a lot of work to be done but I really felt that I needed to say something in support of the extension of the emergency as we are here to do this morning and debate such. I do so because one of the things that I would like to say upfront to all persons in the Chamber and those who are listening outside that this is not something that those persons who are in public health, especially those who are on the frontline, would wish to do because the authorities are there to do it.

I can say to you that those on the frontline who are involved in contact tracing are doing it from early in the morning until late in the evening. They get very little time to spend with their families and loved ones. I say that because even though there are restrictions, the restrictions do impact on the lives of those who are working on the frontline because even during those hours that are made available for them to do their shopping at the supermarket, they are quite a few of them who are unable to take advantage of that because they are on the frontline.

It is impacting on them as well but they do it, and they do it because they recognize the importance of us being able to do what we are doing. If we have a lock down on its own, and I have said this elsewhere before, it will not help us to get out of this situation. It will facilitate the process of us getting out of the situation but on its own it does not. It is vitally important and the Public Health imperative in terms of what is happening now, is to give public health officers the opportunity to make contact with as many people as possible who through the Contact Tracing Programme would have come into contact with a confirmed case and this is the importance of it.

The faster we are able to reach those persons and the more of those persons we are able to reach, the better we will be able to contain the spread of the virus and therefore, properly and adequately manage the public health emergency. This is a very vital part of this entire exercise. In order to simplify it because of how complicated and complex it is, if you take a confirmed case as the trunk of a tree, those contacts that we are looking for become the branches. However, if one of those branches becomes infected, that creates other branches and it spreads. This is how it is and it makes it even more difficult to cover, trace and adequately service all of those contacts.

This is why in some countries, especially larger countries, and I know people follow Cable News Network (CNN) and other news media, it is very complex and complicated for them. It requires a large number of persons given the spread of the virus. What we are trying to do here in Barbados is to fight desperately for us not to reach that stage where this virus becomes unmanageable. This is why we have to do it now and we have to take these measures now. When I say that, we believe with some degree of certainty and obviously things can change. We are not absolutely sure as to where we are in terms of a spread and we are doing everything to find out.

The available evidence suggests that we do not have that spread. We are trying all kinds of things to do so by testing, contact tracing and utilising our polyclinics and other private health institutions to determine if there has been a spike in respiratory cases throughout the system and whether they are none COVID-19 related or normal influenza cases. We are trying all sorts of things and we said that we will be ramping up the testing. It is very important for us to do so because we firmly believe that if we are able to continue on the current trajectory and manage this thing now that we may be able to get out of the worst of it much quicker than might have previously been anticipated as long as we can do this now. This is what we are hoping for, this is what we are working towards and hence the reason why we are asking for the extension. The extension is not design to really stop people from enjoying their normal way of life, it is a necessity. Why? Because of we visit homes and districts and areas looking for people

and we are unable to find persons because people are out on the streets in other areas and we cannot find them, each time that happens, it makes us more vulnerable as a nation because it makes it more difficult to round up the contacts. It is through the contact tracing that about 39 of the current set of confirmed cases resulted from contact tracing and the ability then to monitor quarantine or isolate and do the testing. It is very vital that we do so and I am asking the public to cooperate in this regard.

The other thing is this, I am appealing to all of us on this island. If you know or you feel within you that you have come into contact with someone who have been confirmed, if you start to feel ill, please call and let us know. Let us know because it is vitally important. We would like to get to you for your own sake before the problem becomes so serious that a public health or medical intervention may not necessarily be all that is required for you. Also, we are asking people to act responsibly, because if you know your situation, it is imperative that you do not expose yourself to people and certainly to many people because then you are putting all of those persons and communities, families and the nation at risk. We have to do this together. It is vitally important that we do so.

The next few weeks as I indicated some time ago, we will be ramping up our testing. I am happy to report that we were able to conduct 100 tests yesterday. That is the first time we have reached that figure and it will continue to climb. I am also happy to report as a result of those tests, well not happy to report, but I should report that one person tested positive and when I say happy it is only because one out of 100 gives us a clear idea that we are on the right track and that there is hope and promise and if we continue doing what we are doing we will be able to get out of this and get the country back to as normal a state as is possible.

Public health people understand the situation that we are in. It is a delicate balance, because right now nothing is coming into the Treasury and there are other health care services that require the normal funding that Government would provide. For example, the health services contribution, that goes to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital to take care of all of the other things. Person requiring dialysis treatment, cancer patients and all other patients. It is not only COVID. If money is not coming into the Treasury it means that those contributions will not be there in the numbers that the country would require in order for the normal health care service to be able to function.

We understand the balance here and I can say to you that the officers in public health will continue to work very hard because it is in the country's interest that we do so and I ask all Barbadians to bear with whatever restrictions that are in place, because as the good book says, weeping may endure for a night but joy cometh in the morning and we expect to bring joy to this country by the end of the

exercise that we are conducting. With those few words I am obliged.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of Government Business.

Hon. Miss. S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Thank you Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the last Member who spoke as well as the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. It always pleases me when the Honourable Leader of the Opposition supports anything that this Administration put forward, but I think it is testimony to the times, it is testimony to Government's response to the crisis and the inclusive nature in which we have been dealing with this crisis that not only the political leaders of other parties are engaged, but also all stakeholders across the country.

I want to just give him and the entire country the assurance and that this Administration has no intention of using this crisis to cover up or use anything in this period to its advantage or to the disadvantage of members of our society. I want to remind the Honourable Member that I think this Parliament and certainly under this Administration has perhaps met more since coming to office and has done more pieces of legislation than any other Parliament I believe in the history of this country. I think that is testimony to an Administration that is prepared to blaze a trade in relation to legislation and to take the necessary measures to transform Barbadian society, but also governance as we have come to know it.

I would go so far, Sir, as to indicate to the Honourable Chamber that it is our intention as well to look in the direction of moving to have Parliament in a virtual way. Little later today I will be looking to go in that direction at least to give us the option, in the event that during this State of Emergency that the situation so requires it that we will have that option available to us. Because we do believe that while at this point we may be in a situation where we can still visit this place we do not know that the future holds but we intend that as we need to obviously do the people's business that we must do so in whatever mediums that would come available to us.

I also want to let him know with a known uncertainty that the institution of Parliament will continue to be respected. I think it is fair to say that all of the Supplementaries thus far that have been brought in the course of the past few weeks during COVID, since the Estimates debate have related to the Ministry of Health and Wellness or to the Ministry of People's Empowerment. Again it is not any frivolous spending that the Government of Barbados has been putting to the country or seeking to engage in, but all things would have been relevant in the fight against COVID-19.

With those few words Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact that we have the solidarity. I encourage Barbadians to continue to pay attention to the messaging, be patient with us as we get through this period and to appreciate that while we are in the process rolling various measures that there is no perfect system, but what we certainly have always done as an Administration is to listen to the people and we are prepared at every juncture to continue to do so throughout this entire crisis. With those few words Mr. Speaker I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS: I beg to second that.

The question was put and a Division was called.

Ayes: Hon. Miss. S. J. O. BRADSHAW; Hon. D. D. MARSHALL; Hon. G. W. PAYNE; Hon. T. A. PRESCOD; Lt. Col. the Hon. J. D. BOSTIC; Dr. the Hon. W. F. DUGUID; Hon. A. D. FORDE; Hon. E. G. HINKSON; His Hon. G. A. CLARKE;

Hon. R. St.C. TOPPIN;

Mr. N. G. H. ROWE;

Bishop J. J. S. ATHERLEY;

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS;

Hon. C. MCD. GRIFFITH;

Hon. P. R. PHILLIPS;

Hon. P. R. PHILLIPS;

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN;

Hon. K.A. HUMPHREY;

Hon. J. A. KING and

Dr. S. E. BROWNE.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Philip can you turn off your microphone.

Mr. DEPUTY CLERK: Eighteen Honourable Members voted ---- (NO AUDIO).

The Resolution was passed.

Mr. DEPUTY CLERK: Mr. Speaker, that was actually Order number 18, there was an error on the actual order paper.

Mr. SPEAKER: Number 16?

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is actually order number 18 not 16.

ORDER NO. 16

To move the second reading of the Criminal Justice Miscellaneous Provisions Bill, 2020.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Joseph.

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, I hope that I am perfectly audible there is a strange feeling trying to speak through this fabric. It will force me therefore to be brief in my presentation.

MR. Speaker, we are currently in the state of emergency and at this point in time there are no criminal cases being done in the courts. In fact, the only matter that are being done in the Courts are matters that are urgent and in every case these are being done remotely. We anticipate that at some point, we are going to move out of this crisis and when that happens, I anticipate that we will be looking to start back criminal cases in earnest.

The Chamber will know that we currently have five High Court judges doing criminal matters. The judges and the Bar have considered a number of issues, which are attendant with the conduct of clause at this point. Certain representations have been made to the Attorney- General asking that these among others be addressed. Sir, today the Chamber is being asked to deal with only three small matters. One of them is to repeal of small enactment or small amendment that was previously made in 2018. The genesis of that amendment was under the last administration in 2017, and having no policy variance between the last administration and this one on that particular issue, we brought it to Parliament and passed it. Sometime Sir, we recognise that the theoretical thing is very different to how it operates in practice, and even though we try as we might to get it right every time that is sometimes difficult. That piece of legislation had to do with what we call fitness to plead. It required a High Court Judge doing a criminal trial to conduct an assessment of whether an accuse person when he comes to trial is mentally fit to plead. It was recognised that the best time for that to happen is not when he shows up at his trial but when the matter is being investigated. It is the mental capacity of an accuse person at the time of the offense that is of paramount relevance. To then go through a whole inquiry on the person's fitness to plead at trial, while could be important, it was felt that it was helping the system. It also meant that whether or not it was ready for trial, a judge instead of being able to commence the trial had to then engage the psychiatric hospital to determine whether an accuse person was fit to plead and that of course then delays matter. Consultation with the Bar the DPP and the bench it was recommended that really, we ought to revert

back to the original system and therefore, we are seeking to repeal that amendment to the legislation and to replace it with what was there before.

Sir, the other two matters, one of them relates to the right of an accuse person to give what is called and unsworn statement from the dock. In the course of a criminal trial, remember the first principles. An accused has the right against self-incrimination. It is for the prosecution to prove its case. So an accused has an option of saying nothing or of bringing evidence. There is a common law right that exists and is followed in Barbados for an accuse person to give what is called an unsworn statement from the dock, which is to say that during the course of his trial after the defense has concluded its case, the accuse person can stand and make a statement without taking an oath that is why it is called an unsworn statement. The practical impact of that Sir, is because it is not sworn he cannot be cross examined on it. In fact, there is a lot of jurisprudence which says that it is not a statement at all it is more accurately called an argument because if you cannot be cross examined on it all you are doing really is exposing a particular position.

Sir, unsworn statements from the dock have long been abolished in England, there have been abolished in Australia, I think they have been abolished in South Africa, in fact, I am sure they have been abolished in South Africa. There have also been abolished in several other Caribbean jurisdictions. It has been the recommendation of the criminal Bench after discussions with the criminal bar that the time has come for us to remove this anachronism from our law. Simply provide of an accuse person, he can either say nothing but if he wants to say something he has to go on the witness stand give his evidence and be subject to cross examination. It does no harm to the accused person, in fact, the accuse person if he gives his unsworn statement, the judge in his summation must say to the jury what the accused has said must not be given the same weight as if it was sworn and tested. You cannot ignore that he said it but it is not too treated with the same evidential delicate.

Moreover, Sir, there are some constitutional considerations would not be a guarantee if you are on a fair trial. Where two people are accused, one person may give an unsworn from the dock and say it was not me it was actually him and try to deflect the attention of the jury and the Court to his co-accused. His co-accused is in the position because his co-accused cannot challenge him on it. His co-accused cannot say hold on a minute, you say it was me it was not me. His co-accused is not in position to attest the statement given against him. A substantial amount of jurisprudence has evolved, which says that to allow in a case where you have more than one accuse, one accuse to give an unsworn statement, which can have the effect of telling the jury it was not me it was him is to

deprive that person who is now had the spot light shone on him have a fair trial. It is for the Crown to prosecute him not for his co-accuse to turn prosecution. We have considered his arguments and I am very happy to say that Cabinet has agreed with the Attorney-General and with the bench and the bar that the time has come for us to remove this from our law. We believe it will be a salutary, certainly a modern approach. I can serve notice that over the next two to three months we will be removing from our system a number of the anachronistic practices that have been with us going back a hundred years. They were kept but really served little value in today's world.

The final amendment that we want to do is an amendment which will address the issue of majority verdicts. In the case of an accused person for murder, you must have a unanimous verdict to convict that person. The challenge arises when you cannot get a unanimous verdict but you can get a majority verdict. A judge in those circumstances finds himself in a bit of a pickle because there is no unanimous verdict of murder. In order to convict the person of murder, you must have a unanimous verdict but there may be sufficient evidence to demonstrate and find the person guilty of a lesser offence. The difficulty is that a judge may have to agree that someone could be convicted of manslaughter in circumstances where the evidence of manslaughter is just not there.

The practice that has evolved in other common law jurisdictions is that you could always get a unanimous verdict but to allow a majority verdict in circumstances where the death penalty is not being sought. In our Offences against the Person Act, you have a number of instances where a death penalty is going to be very seriously considered and then, you have other instances where a judge has total discretion. Therefore, what we are trying to achieve is a situation where when a death penalty is not being sought or the case does not merit the death penalty, then we are amending the law to allow for a majority verdict. This is in keeping with current criminal practice.

It is fair to both sides and we think that this will be a practical way of getting rid of an anomalous and awkward situation. Often, with a lesser verdict, you are convicting a person of an offence that the evidence does not disclose. It may not support self-defence. It may not support any of the things for a lesser charge but you will accept a majority verdict in a case where the evidence simply does not support it. I strongly support these measures and I ask the Chamber to give your fiat so that we can make these slight amendments to the three legislative instruments that are there. I wish we had more time to go into matters in relation to the criminal bench and the courts, but that is perhaps a discussion for another day.

As I said, there will be other legislative instruments coming to deal with criminal practice and procedure and I expect that by our next Sitting, whenever that will be, we should probably have a piece of legislation dealing with judge-only trials and this is currently being actively considered. It has been commended to the Government of Barbados by the Chief Justice.

With those few words, Sir, I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY: I beg to second that, Sir.

On the motion of Hon. D. D. MARSHALL, seconded by Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY, the House resolved itself into Committee, Dr. S. E. BROWNE in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Madam CHAIRMAN: This House is now in Committee.

Clauses 1 and 2, were called and passed.

The Schedule was called.

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL: I move, Sir, that the Schedule be the Schedule to the Bill, Sir.

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

On the motion of Hon. D. D. MARSHALL, seconded by Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS, Madam CHAIRMAN reported the passing of one Bill in Committee and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. D. D. MARSHALL, seconded by Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Criminal Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, 2020.

ORDER NO. 17 – SECOND READING OF THE CONTROL OF DISPOSABLE PLASTICS BILL, 2020.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Michael South:

Hon K. D. M. HUMPHREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have no intention of delaying the House unnecessarily. Sir, although we have had several conversations on the Disposable Plastics Act, when the Government took office, we came with a plan to protect our marine space, to largely protect our environment, to

implement changes that we knew would result in behavioural changes for individuals and for people that would redound to the benefit of the country.

Sir, as Minister, I had the pleasure over the last year or so of watching the country make very positive changes as set out on a policy side of value driven Government determined to protect the environment. This Bill before the House is indeed a very similar Bill to the one that was last here. Sir we as a Government have had a series of consultations with various stakeholders and we sought only to bring clarity to the issues already outlined in the Bill. Having spoken to a number of our partners and having brought clarity to these issues, we then consulted with the necessary places in Government like the CPC, and we were told that we are making a few changes and that perhaps it would be best that we just bring a new Bill although it speaks to the exact same issues. What we really sought to do was to identify and itemise a number of things we have banned under the Bill, so as to make it clear. We got fortunate in a way because Customs is also going through a similar exercise in terms of clarifying a number of the tariffs heads that were used, and so we sought to align the Bill with those tariffs.

Sir I will go through the Bill very quickly. I really do not to occupy the Chamber for long. Sir, Section two of the Bill which looks at the definitions, it contains the same things we had previously banned under the Bill. The only amendment I would have to make in Committee is that we wish to add stirrers in the definitions although stirrers I mentioned throughout the Bill, it is not mentioned in the definition. It is the same things that we had previous banned Sir. We should state that it does affect the Returnable Containers Act and the Honourable Minister of Environment will speak to that in due course, but it does not relate to the Returnable Containers Act which was previously brought here.

It is also important to note Mr. Speaker that in the course of the last year Barbadians have made significant changes. Most people now do not even think about these things. When you go to buy a drink, you expect that the container you receive is going to be a compostable or a biodegradable container. Sir you expect that when you engage in almost any transaction, if you are given a fork you expect it to be a biodegradable or compostable fork. It has just become something now that we do in the course of our business. I am pleased to see the way Barbadians have responded over the last year to the changes that we made.

Sir, in Section 4, we speak to the single use plastic bags, and as you are aware on April 1, 2020 under the previous Act we banned the use of petroleum based single use plastic bags either for manufacture or for import. This Bill continues in the same vain. Those bags are still banned under the Act, of course unless you get a special exemption

which we will speak to very shortly. Those things overall are still banned like cups, plates, forks, stirrers, straws for the most part.

Under Section 5, we looked at the prohibition of the single use plastic bags and it is very clearly stated that from the first day of Mat, 2020, no person shall import or manufacture those bags, again Sir unless you get a special exemption.

In Section 7 of course in Bill and in any right thinking country and a right thinking Government, you have to clear about the things you are going to exempt from this ban and the reasons why. Sir in the previous Bill and in this Bill, we sought to exempt bags that we being used to store fish, meat, and vegetable, and for veterinary and medical purposes. We sought to allow Barbadians to continue to feel safe in the use of these things. Sir all over the World even where these things are banned there are exemptions to allow persons to continue to engage in these things because petroleum base plastic still provides in some cases the best protection in terms of hygiene and health. Sir we kept those exemptions in consistency with what happens across the World. Sir in this particular Bill, as I said we have serious consultations with a number of our partners during the course of the last year and I recall during one of our consultation we had representation from the persons in the disable community. Of all the things that I was told and of all the letter that I have receive, because persons know how I feel in relation to this, and all that I have heard, the most stirring and moving comment came from a representative of the disabled community who said that they had tried all of the biodegradable alternatives, they even tried using the reusable straws but for them they did not work. Sir we thought about it as a Government and I am pleased to report that we have adjusted the legislation to allow persons with disabilities to continue to use petroleum base straws so that they can continue to enjoy a standard of living that we would like associated with the persons with disabilities in this country, so that they are not disadvantage based on their own advice to me when we are having those consultations.

Sir, Section 8 of the Bill looks at the offence for persons who would seek to do things that they should not do and make a false claim. Previously we had asked if you were importing a plastic that we had already banned, the fine of the act was \$50 000, but as part of our consultations with Customs, they said if person import any other item under their Act that they have already prohibited, the fine is \$100 000. We have kept the fine at \$100 000 consistent with the Customs Act. However Sir, in that previous Act, we also had a fine of \$50 000 on individuals who were using plastics and as I said I often listen to the Members in this House including my good friend from St. Michael West, and I recall that there was some suggestion that \$50 000 on individuals might be too hard. In this Bill, we have

reduced the fine on individuals who use plastic bags from \$50 000 to a maximum of \$5 000. Sir, therefore to make it less burdensome for persons who come into contact with things.

However Sir, I should also say, even though we had this Act, it was always our intention to foster a kind of voluntary compliance. You would not find that during the course of the last year, even though we were very stoic as a Government in relation to how we brought that Act and how we defended it, we never sought to arrest anybody or any of those things. We sought to have conversation and we had several conversations over the course of the last year to help people to come around to understanding why we felt it was necessary. Sir I am please again to report that having had the consultations, I believe what we now bring reflects the larger thinking of the vast majority of Barbadians.

Sir, at Section 9, and perhaps this is the biggest difference between this Act and the last one. We have allowed the Minister some discretion, because in the previous Bill we did not allow it, to rely on the manufacture and it should say import, and I will correct that Committee, but allow the manufacture or import of petroleum based plastic bags in the event that those items are not available in Barbados. The reason for this Sir is simple. Barbados does not yet produce that organic resin, and I hope that we do in the very near future. That natural resin that allows these things to be biodegradable that allows them to be compostable. There are situations where our local manufacturers cannot source that resin on the international market it is hard, hard, hard to get. In fact, sometimes it is almost impossible for them source.

I would like to get to the point and perhaps this is the conversation we need to have as a Government about how we encourage our local entrepreneurs and innovators to be able to create a resin from something Barbadian, or at least Caribbean that we can continue to not only be involved in the move to being environmentally suitable, but to lead it. I think that is the direction in which we have to go. There are some Barbadians now who are making bioplastics from all kinds of things, potato skins, and other plants. There are people who are looking at sargassum seaweed to be able to do things. I think the time is going to come where Barbadians, or Caribbean people are able to manufacture these products from organic material that is sourced in the Caribbean. We have been working as a Ministry with all the International agencies to help support some of the brilliant young minds in this country to be able to do so. Sir, the discretionary clause reads like this:

“Notwithstanding any provision of this Act where this is no suitable material for the manufacturer of bio based items.”

B) or no bio based items available for sale by a wholesaler or retailer, the Minister may on application made to him in writing setting out the reasons for unavailability of such materials or items grant to the applicant permission to manufacture and it should or import, which you would add in Committee, item from petroleum based materials or to sell by wholesale or retail such items as the case may be.

So in the even that you cannot source these material Sir, you would have the opportunity, the flexibility to be able to do so.

Sir, the other reason is that there is a product called PBAT it is a random occurring polymer that basically it allows these polymer in a way to become biodegradable. Once these polymers are used in certain products, even though it contains petroleum, the greater a bio degradable state, Sir. This allows us to be able to use that because all over the world they have accepted it, this allows us to be able to use that clause. Also, equally important, I must tell you, Sir, when we started this conversation and when we use single used plastic bags on April first none of us and we had done that ban on April 1st but remember that legislation was passed since last year. None of us in this room, none of us across the world, no one had foreseen the mammoth task before us all in dealing with COVID-19.

Sir, what COVID-19 has served to do really is to disrupt supply chains all over the world, so that when we are able to source our biodegradable resin from China in a few weeks, it is now very, very difficult anywhere in the world to be able to source the biodegradable resin. In fact, even in cases where you cannot source it a lot of the different markets are closed and are not allowing to move product from one country to another. So it has become very difficult Sir, to be able to access it. Therefore, Sir, we find a situation where our local manufacturers, and here is the reality of things, I am the last person one would expect to come here and say anything about using petroleum based bags, anybody that knows me would know. The reality of a 2020 Barbados in April is a little bit different from the situation that we faced when we came here a year ago. That reality tells us, Sir, when I spoke to the manufacturers of plastics bearing in mind that I have just gone through great lengths that you cannot really source this organic resin, and they are being told that it is going to take them about five months to be able to get the quantity of the resin that we need. There is some petroleum resin from before. Sir, they source the biodegradable resin out of China but they source the petroleum out of the United States and they can still get it out of the United States, but it is going to take us months to get the organic resin. What that would mean if we were to come to this place and to say that under no circumstances are we going to make these adjustments it would mean that there would be no bags available in Barbados, because COVID- 19 has basically shut down the

supply chain in a lot of ways. It has one shut down the supply chain, it has made sourcing the organic resin very difficult. It would mean that we would come to this place and say despite the fact that we are asking Barbadians to be as cautious as possible there would be no plastic bags.

Now, I have spoken to all the local manufacturers, I was very clear with them that the country remains committed to a biodegradable future, a bio based future. Any adjustments that we make would be temporary. The Acting Prime Minister, in her statement when speaking today, said that we would allow it for some time. The great understanding Sir, that given the exigencies of the time and only given the exigencies of the time, and the fact that the supermarkets were complaining to the Acting Prime Minister that they were running low on bags, but only because of that would we allow it for a short time. The manufacturers tell me that they have resin in Barbados that they can only do 1.3 million supermarkets bags unless they get another supply of this organic resin and these are the t-shirt bags, this is not every plastic bag. Barbadians are now using in the supermarkets an average of three million bags a month. Our usage of plastic has almost tripled in the last few weeks, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, for me the thought of using so much of petroleum based plastic bags brings me to the core, but the idea that we would leave Barbadians exposed with no plastic bags at all because they cannot get the bio based plastic bags brings me to the core even more. So as a contentious Government, we made the decision that we would allow the manufacturers to be able to source that resin, but the law is very clear, it has to be through application. They have to make a case, they have to say their reason, and that we would allow it for a certain amount of time. I think during the course of the following week, perhaps, I would address it in more clarity about what the structure of that new arrangement would look like. We would not leave Barbadians exposed, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and that is in clause 9, sir.

Clause 10 speaks of the Committee to be established it looks at bio based innovation and I think that has to be one of the most important parts, so there has to be an end gain to this. If COVID-19 has not taught Barbados that all of us have to change the way we operate, if it has not taught us that we have to become a little bit more digital and a little bit savvy in terms of our understanding of technology requires of us. If it has not taught us, Sir, things about our humanity and that we have to be nicer to other people. If this COVID-19 has not taught us a number of things then I think nothing will. If Sir, we walk away from this disease the same persons that we were when this thing came upon us Sir, then we would find ourselves in a lot of trouble. It is for that reason that we are asking Barbadians to become a lot more bio based and to be able to generate these products on their own. Through the Ministry of

Commerce, Sir, the applications will have to be made for the licenses to allow people to import these bio based. Sir, in general that is the application and that is the Bill before the House and with that, I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS: I beg to second that.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

BISHOP J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the contribution of the Honourable of St. Michael South, Minister of Maritime Affairs and the Blue Economy.

Mr. Speaker, when it come to the policy re-importation of use of plastic in Barbados, what has been offered, and principally so, is the need as a reason for the policy is the need to protect our marine environment and we all understand that. We understand the importance of the marine environment. We understand the significance of the mandate given to the Honourable for St. Michael South with reference to his portfolio responsibilities.

The principal reason given for the policy position on importation and the use of plastics as related to the protection of the marine environment, I want to raise the matter of damage to our coral formation. I raise it because it is becoming topical again. I raise it because I heard my Honourable friend who last spoke making a response to some concerns which have become public in recent days. He was not speaking with his usual fierce voice and I was a bit concerned as to what his concerns might be and perhaps not being spoken at the time. I raise this not to be mischievous in any way. It has to do with the coral formation which is a tremendous asset around the coast of Barbados.

I raised it in recent weeks in this Honourable House with respect to the discharge of sewage at the south coast. I tried to evoke a response from the Honourable Member for Christ Church East at the time, the Minister responsible for Water Resources and Energy. I raise it again in that context and not to be mischievous, but some questions will have to be asked. We had as much as 12 cruise liners parked in our territorial waters. Government has defended its policy position in terms of allowing these cruise liners to park within our waters where other jurisdictions have denied them that privilege. I would really want to ask the Honourable Member of St. Michael South the extent to which it would be considered that the sustained presence over this long period of time could potentially result in damage to the coral formation off Barbados when the position was adopted by the Government.

The cruise liners are no longer populated by tourists but certainly by crews and I am not even sure these are skeleton crews. These cruise liners can have large complements of crew members onboard. The presence there would have to be sustained. There would have been some discharge obviously from those vessels. Perhaps, some discharge in unusual ways seeing that the vessels actually lie outside of the former port area. To what extent was it considered that potentially we could have had some damage to our coral assets? The Minister have indicated that there would be some investigation of this matter and I would want to urge that it would be a serious investigation and it is not a token exercise.

Indeed, if damage has occurred we need to learn from this experience and to have a proper response perhaps from those who are responsible for the damage if in fact it did occur and to what extent. I am wondering about the level of seriousness which would be associated with this investigation and I am concerned that it not just be a token exercise to say to Barbadians that we have looked into it and then, it passes as yesterday's news. Subsequent to a serious investigation, my concern would be as to the level of reporting and when will Barbadians learn as to the outcome of that investigation. The level and forum at which such a report will be given.

Are we going to see a published report or a ministerial statement in the House? Is it simply going to be words uttered to the Barbadian public through media saying that it has been looked at and the damage is minimal? I am just wondering about seriousness of the investigation and the context in which a public report on the matter will be given. Perhaps, above all else, if there is liability on the part of those cruise liners, would the Government be prepared to tackle seriously the issue of compensation? You could easily take a view that Barbados is dependent upon the cruise industry. We could easily take a view that post-COVID 19 we will have to do our very best to get the tourism sector up and running again.

Therefore, we will not be disposed to offend. I am pressing the case that if there are found to be liable outside of Barbados, compensation ought to be sought in very serious terms. As I said, Mr. Speaker, I raised the matter not to be mischievous but it is a concern being raised in the public arena. I think it is a matter to which we should give attention. I am sure the young Honourable Member for St. Michael South will. I look forward to see what comes out of it.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. T. A. PRESCOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a small intervention but I believe that what is happening today in relation to the amendment to the legislation is imperative. Also, I believe that it is an issue that is just part

of all the metrics that we are witnessing at this specific time in our history. Mr. Speaker, a lot of cataclysmic issues are slicing through the fabric of the national landscape. It has happened so suddenly in the society that even the laws that we consider to be recent, the word “obsolete” can be applied. These changes affected almost every institution and every living entity. It affected every living organism in the society.

Institutions that we recently reformed and legal instruments that we have put in place that we thought were relevant to contemporary times, we are now struggling to see how we could apply and interpret those instruments. Education at this point, for example, is a good issue that we can highlight. What has happened in the educational system two months ago was not even part of the imagination of man in Barbados. It has happened so sharply that we are still trying to find means of how we are going to allow our children to keep up with the required standards at a specific time in order to meet the conditions in relation to our CXC examinations, in manner in which we will be able to treat to what is called the 11-Plus by most Barbadians. We are now trying to see how we can make the required adaptation in his environment where children can go a new form of home learning, not the traditional form, but now using modern technology and we are also confronted with concerns about do the parents have the necessary cash in order to purchase the required equipment like computers in order to be able to keep up to date with what is required of them.

We are facing problems of health, problems that none of us in here ever saw before in our entire lifetime. Just a few examples. Some might believe that we have been paying a lot of attention to issues related to the issue of polybags, bags that are not biodegradable, and that we have actually touch on this legislation a number of times and made a number of adjustments to the legislation. However, as I attempted to do in my introduction or my preamble those uncalled amendments did not escape the challenges and the conditions of the hour in which we live. I believe that the Minister had no choice, because no man born of woman had the specific foresight to be able to determine that we would be in the position that we are in today. We gave and importers manufacturers of plastic containers, bags, etcetera extensions after extensions. We made adjustments to various forms of legislation, but we never even believe that the demand for the biodegradable materials would be as such that business people across Barbados would find themselves in a position where they would not have the appropriate. They thought they had surplus. When they check their inventory they could not believe anything could occur so severe in the society at this point that demand would not have met supply. Life must still go on, so as a consequence we still have to make sure that containers and bags must be available to people in the supermarkets across Barbados. There are different types of

items and products that must be used in the circumstances and in some cases the biodegradable bags cannot be use for the specific purpose. We have had a number of social issues in some of the supermarkets and it caused the Minister to reflect on the concerns. He is not a Minister living in total isolation of reality. These are demands at present that Government must respond to. Sometimes within 24 hours you have to make a change. Rightfully, the Minister respond to the concerns of special. Some people might consider it to be none point because some people do not even know that disable people exist in society. It is the kind of society that we live in every day. We talk about doing all different kind of things sometimes. If you design a house you do not study if a disable person would like to come to see you. You do not study if when you constructing a house if a disable person would need to use the washrooms. They are people who are transparent in the society itself, but the Minister took all of that into consideration and he said if there is a necessity for me to allow the importation of straws out of poly material that will be best suitable for the disable community, he decide that he would be liberal enough to import those things for the disable community. That is a clear example of a Minister with a caring heart.

I personally believe that there is no need for any extensive discussion on this. I strongly believe that the Minister adequately explain why he had to make these changes. It is not a lack of foresight. These things are not judged by lack of foresight, as I said these are unforeseen things. No man could have seen this. COVID might be 19 years old but he is a mischievous individual. The things that happen in this society, as I said to you before Sir, we would not even think something like this would happen. We were contemplating just before this, I wonder what kind hurricane season we will have. The Ministries were preparing themselves, we just went through the Estimates and everything. We thought that we had put down the new paradigm that we had this year, when we went into the well. One time we never use to use that word anywhere in Parliament, but now we have it in the form of a metaphor in the Parliament in itself. We were involved in what we consider to be revolutionary changes even at the level of Parliament. However when COVID struck this society and struck the international community as a pandemic, you could not believe that a virus could have caused all of the changes that we are dealing with. Yet we do not even know the causality of this demon called COVID. I think that the Minister like any other Minister that worth his salt recognise the importance of responding immediately to the required conditions. Not deferring it to next year or at least later. We had a problem that was urgent and he gave it the kind of treatment that is required especially when that call for urgency is required.

I want to give the Minister of Maritime Affairs and the Blue Economy the full support, not only the support as

being Parliamentary Representative for St. Michael East but as Minister of the Environment. In many of the other areas, we have ventilated our views about how plastics we affecting the ocean, the coral reefs around the country and many of the other ills that came as a result of the use of the plastic, but at this moment we are doing the best that we can in order to respond to the present conditions. During this period, it is not a period of unchangeable circumstances, it is not permanent. This is an interim period where we have to make a number of adjustments just like we have to sometimes make adjustments on whether it be a 24-hour curfew or whether it be 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and all different kinds of interpretation which all bends various logic determining what is right even in the area of the highest levels of the Judiciary. Everybody is trying to wrestle with the logic of modern times, the same fact before the same men who went to the same institutions learn the same Standard English language and they have many different interpretations. So this is where we are, I do not want to say in a state of confusion because that would not be giving any credit to what we are attempting to do, but I believe in a genuine sense everybody is trying to wrestle with the tide. The Minister's position in these circumstances is no different. So, I want to thank the Minister for bringing this document to Parliament at the correct time. I also am happy although we are practicing social distancing, we found it a necessity to be here today to make sure we respond to the concerns of the Barbadian public with the urgency that it deserve. I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity just to say a brief remark.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of Government Business.

Hon. S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not wish to detain the Chamber, but I do feel it necessary to respond to any concerns of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition particularly in relation to the issue that he is raised regarding the damage to the coral reefs. I, like him, too share the concerns, anything that presents a challenge for us as a country and adds to not only our economic burden, but certainly also to the natural environment, I think it must be a concern to all Barbadians. I can give him the assurance certainly, as well as the country, the Minister has already spoken to this issue but Cabinet's attention has been engaged up to yesterday as well regarding this matter. I am happy that the Honourable Minister has been very proactive and so is Ministry in speaking to not only the cruise ships but also in speaking to Coastal Zone Management as well on this matter. I know that the investigations are ongoing, I believe, he is also about to prepare a Cabinet paper for circulation to Members to consider in terms of the way forward. I do not think any of us could have anticipated a situation where they would have been of damage of this nature to the coral reef, but given that it has taken place, again like most things, just like COVID-19 it has made us reflect on the

way in which not only our legislation, but certain the way in which we interface with cruise ships and the potential impact as well. Sometimes even being humanitarian can have in terms of a long term consequence for the Government of Barbados. That said though, I think that we have still been proactive once it has been drawn to our attention. The Ministry is working very closely with the various partners with the divers with the Coastal Zone Management and the cruise liners. I hope that the Honourable Minister, would be in a position within the next couple days to be able to report to the country, the outcome of those discussion.

I just want to support as well, the substantive legislation. When we made the announcement last week, I believe in relation to plastic bags, it was against a background where the retailers who have been working closely with us, would have pointed out that there were some challenges in relation to persons who are bringing reusable plastic bags into the supermarkets. In many cases the bags were not quite sanitary, as a consequence, I think we recognise that a number of the frontline workers, the actually packers in the supermarket who had agreed to come into the supermarket would have been place at tremendous risk, if we had allowed a situation to continue where something is coming into their environment that certain the retailers have not been allowed to address. We took that on board, I am happy that the amendment is being made to allow, the Minister to have requisite discretion to be able to deal with situation like COVID-19. Also going forward because of any emergency or any great need that he may have to make such concessions in an environment such as this.

The fact of the matter is, that all across the world there are countries who have moved away from these petroleum bags. During this COVID-19 environment they having to go back to a temporary use of the bags being placed into circulation, it as a result of the use of reusable bags and obviously the same concerns that all retailers would have here. I assure the country that this is not a situation where we are back pedaling on a policy that we have worked tirelessly to be able to put in place. I made a comment to my colleagues, that I believe that in the course of the last year, certainly since the Minister has been working on this matter that we have actually seen a change in behaviour and the habit of Barbadians. We rarely see the petroleum bags with Barbadians now, but you see more the use of the reusable bags and I think that again, just like with COVID-19, we are going to see changes in behaviour that are to be encouraged. Somethings will have to be fine-tuned but I think for the most part Barbadians have accepted the new change in dispensation as it relates to petroleum bags. What I will also say, Mr. Speaker, is that I think that this is also a perfect opportunity for person, even in terms of business, being able to look at perhaps how the same reusable bags might be able to sanitized and maybe

create some opportunities in that area. I know there is some discussions ongoing as well in terms of being to find a way to collect the petroleum bags and also do some kind of recycling. So, there are some opportunities that in a crisis, we can take advantage of, and perhaps this is a prime time as the Minister engages to be able to look to the various business entrepreneurs to see whether there are potential opportunities for these things to happen.

Overall, I support the amendments, I believe as well that having been such a caring government and having such caring leadership that we have also taken into account a very key sector. The persons who are confronted with disabilities and relevant provision has been made in that respect as well. Again, a perfect example of a Government that listens and certainly is will consult and take the advice from its various stakeholders. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition would remember that well. With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I support the amendments and its entirety.

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

Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to thank as usual, my colleague from St. Michael East for his contribution to this debate. I believe, Sir, that we have had the opportunity to partner as men of very similar mind in Ministries that have very similar purposes and intentions. I want to thank him for his contribution as always. I also want to take the opportunity, very quickly to thank the Acting Prime Minister not only for her contribution this after, but for her incredible leadership over the last few weeks, Sir, in the absence of the substantive Prime Minister and for her support in this particular matter as well.

Last but not least, I want to thank the Honourable Leader of the Opposition as well for his contribution and his comments. I have always felt that when the Leader of the Opposition speaks, he does so with genuine and pure intent. I shall respond very briefly and light.

The Acting Prime Minister, has already said to the Opposition Leader, that this matter was given some consideration. I also am a little impress that the Opposition Leader can understand the intimations of my voice to the extent that he heard my voice on the radio and was wonder about my mood. I am thrill somewhat that he knows my voice so well. To answer, the truth is I spoke into a recording at the end of a very long afternoon. I think he was right, I heard it myself and I sounded like a man at peace with myself and perhaps the Opposition Leader does not know me to be so at peace with myself. On a serious note, Sir, the questions that were raised, the Acting Prime Minister has in a way already address them. When we were asked Sir, none of us foresee, of course, this incident

happening. We had a situation where it started with two cruise ships and then eventually, we had about fifteen cruise ships at different stages along the course of Barbados. So it started at its maximum it was fifteen, there is nothing to hide. We saw as a country to be able to service those cruise ship, primarily so out of humanitarian reasons. The Coastal Zone Management Unit and the Port in association with the Coast Guard they looked at the coastline of Barbados and they determine where they felt were the best locations for these ships. We put some on Carlise Bay and the others around Speightstown or closeby. As we speak, the situation is that the divers from the Coast Zone Management Unit (CZMU) are currently diving and assessing what is said to be some report of damage to the coral reef in the West Coast area.

The reality is that there are two reefs. There is the bank reef, the patch reef and a narrow space in-between. Most of the ships were within that narrow space. The Opposition Leader also made the point that cruise ships in their movement might have damaged the reefs. Sir, we will know that in the fullness of time. We have seen some reports. The Opposition Leader also hinted about the sewage onboard these ships. By law, if they are in line with the International Maritime Organization (IMO), they must treat their sewage onboard and then they are allowed to release treated sewage outside of a national jurisdiction. I think it is 12 nautical miles. They would have to leave to release their treated sewage and return which is allowed by international standards.

It is our initial assessment that there might be some damage but we cannot confirm or deny unless the officers of the CZMU has gone to take a look at the reefs and make an assessment of that damage. They are doing so now. I give the Opposition Leader, the country and all of my colleagues the assurance that once the assessment is done and the findings are known, we will inform the public of every single detail in relation to what has happened. Sir, there will be no secrets. I should also say, as the acting Prime Minister said, that I have already had conversations with the major cruise lines. I have spoken with the major cruise lines in relation to what perhaps could be because we really do not know for sure.

We had the assurance that we would continue to work in partnership with these cruise lines to address any concerns as they arise. The Government is already ahead of the game. Already, we have taken a very proactive approach in terms of resolving these issues, Sir. None of us will take lightly to any damage being done. I do not know if the Opposition Leader is familiar with Hamlet but there is a scene when Claudius says, "When sorrow comes, they come not as single spies but in battalions." None of us foresaw COVID-19. None of us saw this happening and had the opportunity to look into some crystal ball and see any of this.

We are working as the situation evolves. What is very clear in my mind, Sir, is that Barbados did the right thing in relation to how we engaged with the cruise ships. I am clear in my mind about that. Also, I am clear in my mind that if damage has happened to the coral, the Opposition Leader will be informed of it. The Honourable Member for St. Michael East as the Minister responsible for the Environment will be brought into any conversation and knowing the man that he is, he can only speak truth and certainly truth to power. They would understand how we feel in relation to any damage that might have been done to the coral reef.

I want to thank all of those who spoke on this Bill. I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS: I beg to second that.

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

On the motion of Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY, seconded by Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS, the House resolved itself into Committee, Dr. S. E. BROWNE, in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Madam CHAIRMAN: This House is now in Committee.

Clause 1 was called and passed.

Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY: I propose an amendment to Clause 2. Under the definition of “single-use plastic item” that in section (d) “and” is deleted after knives and replaced by a comma followed by insertion of “spoons and stirrers”

I move, Sir, with that amendment, Clause 2 stand part.

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that Clause 2 as amended stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Clauses 3- 8 inclusive were called and passed.

Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY: I propose an amendment to Clause 9 (b). I am inserting the words “or import” after the word manufacture.

I move, Sir, with that amendment, Clause 9 stand part.

Hon. P. R. PHILIPS: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that Clause 9 as amended stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Clauses 10 -- 13 inclusive were called and passed.

The 1st, 2nd 3rd, 4th and 5th, Schedules became the Schedules to the Bill.

On the motions of Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY, seconded by Hon. P. R. PHILIPS, Madam CHAIRMAN reported to the SPEAKER, the passing of one Bill in Committee with Amendments and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the motion of Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY, seconded by Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS, the bill was read a third time had passed and cited as the Control of Disposable Plastics Act, 2020.

RECOMMITMENT TO GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of Government Business.

Hon. Miss. S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Thank you Mr. Speaker, I beg to give notice of a Resolution to grant the sum of \$2 million for the Consolidated Fund and to place it at the disposal of the Government to supplement the Estimates 2020/2021 as shown in the Supplementary Estimates No.2 2020/2021.

RESUMPTION OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ITEM NO. 17

IN THE NAME OF THE HONOURABLE LEADER OF THE HOUSE TO MOVE THAT THE HOUSE RESOLVE ITSELF INTO STANDING FINANCE COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER THE GRANT OF SUMS OF MONEY FOR THE SERVICE OF THIS ISLAND

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of Government Business.

Hon. Miss. S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker I beg to move that you do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into Standing Finance Committee.

Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY: I beg to second that Sir.

The question that the Speaker don now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into Standing Finance Committee was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

STANDING FINANCE COMMITTEE

Madam CHAIRMAN: This House is now in Standing Finance Committee.

IN THE NAME OF THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS TO MOVE THE PASSING OF A RESOLUTION TO GRANT THE SUM \$2 MILLION FROM THE CONSOLIDATED FUND AND TO PLACE IT AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE GOVERNMENT TO SUPPLEMENT THE ESTIMATES 2020/2021 AS SHOWN IN THE SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES NO.2 2020/2021 TO FORM THE SCHEDULE TO THE RESOLUTION.

Madam CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown.

Lt. Col. the Hon. J. D. BOSTIC: Thank you Madam Chair. This Resolution is intended to place under the Ministry of Health and Wellness Head 86, the sum of \$2 million for Programme 360 which is primary health care service and particularly for subprogram 0363, laboratory services. This money is intended to give the Ministry the ability to be able to purchase re-agents as well swabs and other materials for the proper functioning of the Best Dos Santos public health laboratory.

For the 2020/2021 Estimates, monies were provided in the sum of \$2 996 900 for this subprogramme, but of course that did not take into account the current COVID-19 international health emergency and pandemic. What this is going to allow us to do is to be able to ramp up the level of testing that we want to do as a country. The Prime Minister, Honorable Mia Mottley would have given directions to me and to the Ministry to be able to do or provide for at least 100 000 tests and this is thinking ahead, not necessarily for right now, but obviously this things is likely to be with us for some time and so we must be in a position to be able to do the level of testing that will give us the comfort for some level of economic and other activities to be able to take place going down the road.

Part of the process of course is to establish some additional testing centres and we have started that around the country including several of the Polyclinics as well as the field medical facility at Jemmotts Lane which is being used primarily as a national respiratory center and that process has started. We are building it up gradually because training has to take place to bring more persons on board to be able to competently do the swabbing or taking of the samples and then at the lab itself we were fortunate to have receive some assistance through the Ministry of Agriculture in providing some additional lab technicians to assist those at the Best Dos Santos lab to be able to do more testing on daily basis. The provision of these additional supplies and materials will allow us to be able to

really ramp up and do the level of testing as I said that is desired and desirable.

This is basically what this is all about and there is not much more I can say about it, but what I can say at this stage is that the Ministry of Health and Wellness is really thankful that the Ministry of Finance, Economic Affairs and Investment, even in these difficult and challenging times, give the state of the Treasury in terms of economic activity bringing in the necessary revenue, that recognising the importance of being able to facilitate this for the country and for us to be able to get over this COVID-19 situation, we have able then to get some of the financial assistance that we require to be able to do the job. I would also like at this stage to really on behalf I would say the entire country and this Chamber, to say thank you to I believe there are five ladies at the Best Dos Santos lab who have been responsible for doing this work and they have been working very hard around the clock. Sometime they leave the lab at 5:00 in the morning to return later in the day, because they recognise the importance of their effort towards this national fight. Madam Chair we say thank you to them. With those few remarks I beg to move that Head 86 stand part.

Madam CHAIRMAN: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Bishop J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Thank you Madam Chair. I would just like to make a couple comments. We can become so concerned over the immediacy of the physical threat pose to Barbados that we sometimes perhaps may not be sufficiently moved by other aspects of the threat. I am simply trying to say that those who are infected by this virus, those who lose their lives regrettably as a result of that infection, and their relatives are not the only victims of this pandemic. I would want to encourage us to be reminded of the fact that there are other victims as well. They are those who are seriously dislocated. They are those who have always been considered to be the vulnerable class or classes in Barbados who are now made even more vulnerable. There are those who would have lost their jobs imposing even more hardship on families in Barbados. We must be careful not to forget that even prior to COVID we were in a very difficult situation causing stresses at the domestic level in Barbados. A lot of it induced by the economic misfortunes to which we have been subject in recent times. Trying to remind us that there are other victims today, those who have lost their jobs, those who are made even more vulnerable now and more exposed, those who have been dislocated.

I certainly want to urge Government that they bring similar level of urgency to addressing their situations as we do to addressing the matter, which are immediately before us relative to the health response, so that we were vote

money that we can acquire equipment and that we can acquire other resources needed in the fight.

I believe that we need to redouble the efforts to bring similar level of urgency to addressing issues relative to those other victims which I just identify. Whether it is true that there is a greater level of efficiency with respect to expediting matters through the National Insurance Scheme, the Mitigation Unit in the Office of the Prime Minister, the Household Survivors Programme, the Ministry of Elder Affairs and Empowerment. Madam Chairman, and have been getting a lot of call from people around the country with respect to this issue, that they feel that the channels of communication are not necessarily working as efficiently as it might. So, you call numbers suggested, you call departments and agencies recommended and you do not get a speedy response or you do not get a response at all. There are some people who are relying on National Insurance benefits of various types who believe that their plight is being forgotten because of the serious nature of the immediate health related risk. Madam Chairman, calls also from person who feel that they are being victimised by employers in Barbados. This Government if it is to fully respond the present distress in Barbados must not only treat to the medical and the immediate health issues but must respond as well to the other social economic issues, which have been caused by the presence of this thing. I believe that there is a sense perhaps to widely felt in Barbados right now that this is something not being as fully addressed as it ought to be addressed. Now, you are in charge, Minister of Parliament, Madam Chairman, I am sure you get calls. I get calls from St. Michael West, I get calls from other places of people who fear of not being heard. I do not have the necessary recourse that I should have in my particular situation. People who feel that they are pressured now by employers who are taking this opportunity to do perhaps what they Always wanted to do in the first place, without regard to the legal and lawful processes. Before I sit, may I say this and it may appear to be unusual but let that be as it may. I want to commend the Honourable Minister of Health and Wellness, the Member for the City for the role that he is playing in leading this fight. Though a lot of it redounds to the advice, the counsel, the support, the leading of the health professionals and other public sector officials. At the end of the day, if we do not get on top of this, if things go wrong and people start to call for heads, the first heads they would look for would be that of the Honourable Minister of Health. People talk about governments, people talk about leaders of government, but at the end of the day, he is who charge with responsibility of health related matters in Barbados is the Honourable Member for the City. I want to commend him for the role he is playing in this particular fight at this hour and pray for your safety and blessing.

Madam CHAIRMAN: Thank you. We had a seconder last time?

The question was put before the Committee and Head 86 was called and passed.

Hon. J. D. BOSTIC: Madam Chairman, I beg to move that you do now report to his Honour the passing of one resolution in Standing Finance Committee.

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAM: I beg to second that.

The question was put before the Committee and resolve in the affirmative without division.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Chairman of Committee has reported the passing of one money resolution in Standing Finance Committee. Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown.

Lt. Col. The Hon. J. D. BOSTIC: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this resolution be read a first time.

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAM: I beg to second that.

The question was put before the House and resolve in the affirmative without division.

Lt. Col the Hon. J. D. BOSTIC: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Resolution be read a second time.

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAM: I beg to second that.

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

Lt. Col the Hon. J. D. BOSTIC: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Resolution be agreed to.

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAM: I beg to second that.

The question was put before the House and resolve in the affirmative without division.

Mr. SPEAKER: This Resolution now stands passed.

ORDER NO. 11

To move the second reading of the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

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

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It certainly is not my intention to detain the House further because as you can appreciate, the country is still in the midst of a very serious public health challenge. We have been doing all that we can do to first contain the spread of COVID-19, so that we can move to certain the

next phase with respect to how we want to lead an effective recovery.

Now, these amendments before the Chamber, and I want just before I get into it very quickly just reiterate something that the Honourable Member for the City would have raised in his contribution in the earlier debate. Whilst the extension of the notice for the Public Health Emergency, given where we are it is until June 30th. At this stage the Government certainly, and I want to just clarify because I have received some WhatsApp messages querying whether or not that relates to the extension of the curfew. I know the Member was quite clear to indicate that it was the extension of the Public Health Emergency and just to remind the public that as we have gone through this process, we went from stage zero to stage 1, 2, 3, which we are currently at. It is at stage 3 that we had announce the curfew. Certainly with the support of all Barbadians and the continued support of the public health officials, we hope to be in a position very soon to start to move back to some semblance of normalcy even though there may still be the presence of COVID-19 in the country. I want to just make it clear that the extension with respect to the public health emergency is not necessarily related to the extension of the current curfew. This relies very heavily on all Barbadians continuing to follow the directions from the public health officials because we certainly want to be in a position, as has been articulated, to say to the country how we will move back to some sense of normalcy during this time. Therefore, as the public health officials are now doing their work to ramp up testing and we have seen the vote for money to increase testing, we hope to be in the position to move back to a stage during that time so that we are able to jump-start the rest of the economy as a result of being able to move back to those stages.

The public will be reminded that during Stage 0 to Stage 3, we announced specific guidance in terms of gatherings and I know that going forward similar things will be announced. I wanted to make that abundantly clear that the extension of the public health emergency is not necessarily related to the extension of the curfew. As long as Barbadians continue to follow the advice of the public health officials and should anyone be feeling the effects of COVID-19 or other respiratory illnesses as the Member for the City has indicated, get yourself tested so that we could do the appropriate intervention should that be required, so that we can look to open up things sooner.

I think it is important to state that because similarly, the Member for the City indicated that as we have all recognized, we have to manage the public health issues first. It has a consequence certainly for the treasury clearly and, therefore, it is in that context that I wanted to make it clear that first and foremost the Government's responsibility is to protect all Barbadians. We will do what is required to ensure that we put the appropriate resources

to the full and effective management with respect to the public health crisis, so that whenever we emerge from this process we emerge as healthy given the circumstances, so that people could about their activities and do what they have to in a safe way.

Sir, April is normally Income Tax filing season and I do some tax clinics to help persons file their income taxes. BRA also does tax clinics in order to help Barbadians with their filing. While most person file electronically, there are still those among us who need assistance to do those filings. Given the fact that we were under curfew, certainly some of those person would be at a disadvantage and I want to report to this Honourable Chamber and the country that there will be an extension of the filing deadline beyond April 30 which will now be May 29.

Once we get through a stage where we can potentially lift the curfew, then it means that some of those activities can take place because not everyone has access to digital platforms. This is why you have the tax clinics in person. Therefore, once we can deliver not just some of those clinics digitally, we will be in a position to help assist those persons with respect to the filing of the Income taxes. The reality is that with the economy the way it is, we still want persons to be able to file their taxes and for a very specific reason. The amendments before the Chamber represent the budgetary proposals that were announced March 2019 by the Honourable Prime Minister.

As you would be aware, at that time we had announced the expansion of the Reverse Tax Credit threshold from \$18 000 to \$25 000. Therefore, as those persons who would now file for reverse taxes for the very first time because as you recall, Sir, the \$1 300 that would be given as the credit only related to those who earned \$18 000 or less. In this filing season, those persons between \$18 000 to \$25 000 would be able to file for those Reverse Tax Credit and we want to be in position to deliver for those persons. Especially at this very critical time where everyone requires much more assistance than they would before, part of the amendment reflect that change in the policy.

Equally, for those persons who would have earned last year between \$25 000 and \$35 000, these amendments give effect to giving those persons whatever taxes they would have paid as the compensatory income credit, those persons would now get that credit upon filing the income taxes this year. While there are many more amendments here, I just want to reiterate and encourage all Barbadians to file their taxes. They can do so digitally so that they are in position to enhance the processing in the same way that the National Insurance (NIS) has been able to accelerate their processing with respect to the obvious increase in unemployment benefits.

Let me take the opportunity to respond to something that was raised earlier. The reality of the circumstance is that there are a lot of demands placed on all of the Government departments. Given the immediate impact of COVID-19, the NIS a few days ago had received short of 24 000 unemployment claims. The reality is that those claims have to be processed and in the same way that persons are making contact with respect to the Household Survival Programme, the Welfare Department and BRA, we are working to ensure that the technological processes are efficient as possible. I do know that some persons traditionally do not remember their passwords or which email they used when they signed up for TAMIS.

The reality is that at this very frustrating time, I ask persons to be as patient as possible while the various institutions work through what they have to do, in order to respond to Barbadians. I know that BRA has not given a lot of Barbadians the build-up of tax refunds that were owed to them for some time and is not the most favourite agency of Barbadians. Sir, we have started to pay a significant amount of those tax refunds. There may still be a few persons who are owed and those will be resolved. As we go through this process, I want to appeal to those persons for who the Revers Tax Credit applies and the Compensatory Income Credit to file their income taxes as soon as possible, so that the processing of those refunds can be done as quickly as possible to start to respond to those persons given that a significant amount of those persons across the country would be the hardest hit with respect to the impact of COVID at this time.

Sir, I equally want to take this this opportunity to say to all Barbadians whether it is income tax, unemployment benefit, sickness benefit or whatever it is, I want to impress upon all Barbadians to use the opportunity to provide your banking or credit union account information so that the processing of these things can be much smoother. That is important because it means that you do not have to wait for a cheque to come in mail, it means the money goes directly into your bank account so that you will have greater access with respect to that. Because we are trying as much as possible to eliminate lines to wait to get monies for cash and therefore if persons supply that information then it allows for all of the agencies to better process and manage the distribution of these funds, whatever the funds happens to be. Whether it is your pension, sickness benefit or whatever so that we can do that as easily as possible so that especially at this time that these are some of things that can be done that would reduce certainly the risk with respect to the impact of COVID-19 or anyone as they seek to transact their business.

Sir, we have been in consultation with both the banks and credit unions to ensure that even at this time that they try to onboard as many of those persons digitally so that as part of the response of COVID-19, whether it is

National Insurance and pensioners that we encourage them to come online digitally in order to be able to help fight the spread of COVID-19.

Sir, they are much more amendments in this Bill, but I wanted to stress and all of it would have been announced with respect to the Budget of last year. The reality is that at this particular time we want to ensure that we can use the technology certainly in Government with the assistance of the citizens by providing the banking or credit union account information Sir that allows the Government to respond to you especially at this time. I know in the past, people like to come and sign and for the cheque and go to the bank and go through that process, but right now Sir your time is valuable and we want to be in a position to allow for ordinary Barbadians to be as protected as possible and therefore reduce the actually number of physical contact point Sir as humanly possible. Therefore, I want to reiterate and say to our Barbadians that use this particular time in order to ensure that your digital engagement with Government can be as serious as possible so that we can do the business as quickly as possible. It actually takes time to print the cheques and the reality is that the National Insurance goes through it every month with the pension cheques, unemployment cheques, sickness cheques and all of it. If the Barbados Revenue Authority have to go through and print as oppose to simply uploading batch file which goes to the bank and it is there. Therefore, we know that certainly under the circumstances with respect to the public health emergency and the extent to which person's movement have been limited with respect to the curfew, it is important that you spend your time now as efficiently as possible. I am therefore asking Barbadians to work with the Government in order to ensure that any monies that we pay to you that we can do so digitally so that you can go and spend your time literally doing that business that you want to be able to do.

Sir, these amendments before the Chamber as I said reflects the Prime Minister's announcement in the budget of March 2019. As you know Sir it delivered significant tax cuts all across to all Barbadians and therefore we know that even from this year the top tax rate went down from 23 per cent to 28.5 per cent. All of that is included, all of those amendments are here Sir, and there is elements with respect to the foreign currency earning allowing us as well Sir. Therefore, at this time it is important that we reemphasise that the Government wants to be in a position to focus on those persons who will benefits certainly from the reverse tax credit between \$18 000 and \$25 000 and encourage those persons to yes register and file for the reverse tax credit so that they can be paid the \$1 300 as well as encouraging those persons who have earned between \$25 000 and \$35 000 so that they can get back those monies as quickly as possible. Because Sir I know that with that increase in unemployment claims that obviously we anticipate that there may be a few more going forward

given that not all of the claims are in as yet. However, we want to be in a position to ensure that first the public health crisis is contained so that we can get Barbadians back to work as quickly as possible.

Sir the Government is prepared to work certainly with the officials of the Ministry of Health to ensure that we can first cover down COVID-19 in Barbados so that we can move to that very critical next phase which is really to start implement the recovery going forward. With those few words Sir I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY: I beg to second that Sir.

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

On the motion of Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN, seconded by Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY, the House resolved itself into Committee on the Bill. Dr. S. E. BROWN, Chairman of Committees, in the Chair.

Madam CHAIRMAN: This Honourable House is now in Committee.

COMMITTEE

Clause 1 was called and passed.

Clause 2 was called and passed.

Clause 3 was called and passed.

Clause 4 was called and passed.

Clause 5 was called and passed.

Clause 6 was called and passed.

Clause 7 was called and passed.

Clause 8 was called and passed.

Clause 9 was called and passed.

Clauses 10 -- 14 inclusive were called and passed.

SCHEDULES

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Madam Chairman, I beg to move that the first and second schedule be the first and second schedule to the Bill.

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS: I beg to second that.

The question was put before the Committee and resolve in the affirmative without division.

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Madam Chairman, I beg to move that you do now report to his Honour, the Speaker, the passing of one Bill in Committee.

The question was put before the Committee and resolve in the affirmative without division.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Chairman of Committees has reported the passing of one Bill in Committee. Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central.

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Bill be read a third time.

The question was put before the House and resolve in the affirmative without division.

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Bill be now passed and cited as the Income Tax (Amendment) Act, 2020.

The question was put before the House and resolve in the affirmative without division.

Mr. SPEAKER: This Bill is passed and so cited. Honourable Leader of Government Business.

Hon. S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With that we have come to the end of today's sitting. I therefore, beg to move that the House be adjourned for a date to be fixed.

The question was put before the House and resolve in the affirmative without division.

Mr. SPEAKER: This House stands adjourned for a date to be fixed.

CONTENTS

MINUTES

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW.....2

MESSAGES FROM HER EXCELLENCY THE
GOVERNOR-GENERAL

PETITIONS

PAPERS

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW.....2

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

PRIVATE MEMBER'S NOTICES

NOTICES TO QUESTIONS

REPORTS FROM SELECT COMMITTEES

FIRST READING OF BILLS

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW.....2

Hon. D. D. Marshall, 2.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY
SPEECHES

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

MOTIONS FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

ORAL REPLIES TO QUESTIONS

NOTICES FOR MOTIONS FOR THE ADJOURNMENT
OF

THE HOUSE ON MATTERS OF URGENT
PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW.....2

Hon. D. D. Marshall, 2.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 16 – SUPPLEMENTARY ORDER PAPER –
IN THE NAME OF THE HONOURABLE
ATTORNEY GENERAL TO MOVE THE PASSING
OF A RESOLUTION TO EXTEND THE PUBLIC
HEALTH EMERGENCY.....2

Hon. Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw, 2, 6; Bishop J. J. S. Atherley, 4; Lt. Col. the Hon. J. D. Bostic, 5; Hon. W. A. Abrahams, 7.

ORDER NO. 16.....7

Hon. D. D. Marshall, 7, 9; Hon. K. D. M. Humphrey, 9; Hon. W. A. Abrahams, 9.

ORDER NO. 17 – SECOND READING OF THE
CONTROL OF DISPOSABLE PLASTICS BILL,
2020.....9

Mr. Speaker, 9; Hon. K. D. M. Humphrey, 9, 15, 16; Hon. W. A. Abrahams, 12, 16; Bishop J. J. S. Atherley, 12; Hon. T. A. Prescod, 12; Hon. Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw, 14; Hon. P. R. Philips, 16.

RECOMMITMENT TO GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW.....16

RESUMPTION OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ITEM NO. 17

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW.....16

Hon. K. D. M. Humphrey, 16.

STANDING FINANCE COMMITTEE

Lt. Col. the Hon. J. D. BOSTIC.....17

Bishop J. J. S. Atherley, 17; Hon. J. D. Bostic, 18; Hon. W. A. Abrahams, 18.

ORDER NO. 11.....18

Hon. R. R. Straughn, 18; Hon. K. D. M. Humphrey, 21.

SCHEDULES

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN.....21

Hon. W. A. Abrahams, 21; Hon. Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw, 21.

SPEAKERS IN THIS ISSUE

ABRAHAMS, Hon. W. A.

ATHERLEY, BISHOP J. J. S.

BOSTIC, Hon. J. D.

BOSTIC, Lt. Col. the Hon. J. D.

BRADSHAW, Hon. Miss S. J. O.

HUMPHREY, Hon. K. D. M.

MARSHALL, Hon. D. D.

PHILIPS, Hon. P. R.
PRESCOD, Hon. T. A.
SPEAKER, Mr.
STRAUGHN, Hon. R. R.

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

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

EDITORIAL QUERIES

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

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

Q2. Order No. 16, Resolution to extend the Public Health Emergency. The Resolution is headed ‘ORDER No. 16’, but after the vote the Deputy Clerk says ‘that was actually Order number 18, there was an error on the actual order paper’, and the next item, the Criminal Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, is again headed ‘ORDER No. 16’. The line ‘It is actually order number 18 not 16’ is labelled ‘Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER’. Printed as in the source.

Q3. Division on the Resolution. The list of Ayes names ‘Hon. P. R. PHILLIPS’ twice and gives ‘Hon. K.A. HUMPHREY’ (elsewhere K. D. M. HUMPHREY); with the repeat the list has 20 entries, while the Deputy Clerk reports ‘Eighteen Honourable Members voted ---- (NO AUDIO)’. The result was lost from the recording. Please confirm.

Q4. Order No. 16, third reading. The Bill is recorded as ‘cited as the Criminal Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, 2020’, presumably Act. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Names in the procedural record. The seconder in Committee on the Control of Disposable Plastics Bill is ‘Hon. P. R. PHILIPS’ (elsewhere PHILLIPS), and the Chairman of Committees is ‘Dr. S. E. BROWN’ on the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill (elsewhere BROWNE). Printed as in the source.

Q6. Order No. 11, third reading and passing. No seconder is recorded for the motions that the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill be read a third time and passed, and in Standing Finance Committee the Chairman asks ‘We had a seconder last time?’ with no seconding recorded for the Resolution. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met at 11.00 a.m. on Friday, 24th April, 2020, with Mr. Speaker in the Chair; prayers were taken by Rev. Father Mark Harewood. The Minutes of 1st April were deferred. The Leader of Government

Business, Hon. Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw, gave notice of the report of the Barbados International Business Promotion Corporation Inc. (Invest Barbados) for April 2018 to March 2019, moved the first readings of the Criminal Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, 2020 and the Control of Disposable Plastics Bill, 2020, and had Standing Orders suspended for the day.

Miss Bradshaw moved the Resolution to extend the Public Health Emergency declared because of COVID-19, describing the Harrison’s Point facility and the easing of the rush at supermarkets. The Leader of the Opposition, Bishop J. J. S. Atherley, offered sympathy to the bereaved, called for attention to frontline workers in security and health; Lt. Col. the Hon. J. D. Bostic spoke of the long hours of contact tracers. Replying, Miss Bradshaw said the Government had no intention of using the crisis to its advantage and intended to give Parliament the option of meeting virtually. On a division the Resolution was passed, though the count was lost from the recording.

Hon. D. D. Marshall, Member for St. Joseph, moved the Criminal Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, 2020, dealing with three matters raised by the judges and the Bar: repealing an amendment made in 2018, abolishing the unsworn statement from the dock, already abolished in England, Australia and elsewhere, and allowing majority verdicts in murder cases where the death penalty was not sought. The Bill passed without further debate.

Hon. K. D. M. Humphrey, Member for St. Michael South, moved the Control of Disposable Plastics Bill, 2020, saying it largely re-enacted the earlier measure, under which petroleum-based single-use plastic bags had been banned from 1st April, 2020. Bishop Atherley supported it but raised damage to coral formations, the sewage discharge on the south coast and the presence of as many as 12 cruise liners in Barbados’ waters; Hon. T. A. Prescod and Miss Bradshaw also spoke. In Committee clause 2 was amended to add ‘spoons and stirrers’ and clause 9(b) to add ‘or import’, and the Bill passed as the Control of Disposable Plastics Act, 2020.

After notice of a Resolution for \$2 million under Supplementary Estimates No. 2, 2020/2021, the House went into Standing Finance Committee, Dr. S. E. Browne presiding. Lt. Col. the Hon. J. D. Bostic explained that the sum, for Head 86, Ministry of Health and Wellness, would buy reagents, swabs and other materials for laboratory services, against \$2 996 900 already provided, so that testing could be expanded; Bishop Atherley commented, and the Resolution was agreed to.

Hon. R. R. Straughn, Member for Christ Church East Central, moved the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2020, giving effect to the expansion of the Reverse Tax Credit threshold from \$18 000 to \$25 000 and a compensatory income credit for those earning \$25 000 to \$35 000; he

announced that the filing deadline would move from 30th April to 29th May and said the National Insurance Scheme had received nearly 24 000 unemployment claims. The Bill passed all stages, and on Miss Bradshaw's motion the House was adjourned to a date to be fixed.