
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2018 – 2022

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, December 15, 2020

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, December 15, 2020 at the Worthing Corporate Centre, Christ Church.

PRESENT

His Honour A. E. HOLDER, B.Sc. (Hons.) MSW, LL.B. (Hons.) L.E.C. (Speaker)
His Honour Mr. N. G. H. ROWE, (Deputy Speaker)
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)
Mr. T. A. PRESCOD, B.A.
Lt. Col. the Hon. J. D. BOSTIC, MVO, B.A. (Hons.) (Minister of Health and Wellness)
Mr. E. G. HINKSON, LL.B (Hons.) L.E.C., LL.M
Hon. D. G. SUTHERLAND, B.Sc., M.Sc., M.B.A (Dist.) (Minister of Youth, Sports and Community Empowerment)
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 Housing, Lands and Maintenance)
Hon. W. A. ABRAHAM, LL.B. (Minister of Home Affairs,
Information and Public Affairs)
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 Environment and National Beautification)
Hon. C. McD. GRIFFITH, B.Sc. (Minister in the Ministry of Water Resources)
Hon. P. R. PHILLIPS, (Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security)
Hon. J. A. KING, BSS (Minister in the Prime Minister's Office with Responsibility for Culture and the National Development Commission)
Hon. G. P. I. GOODING-EDGHILL, (Minister of Transport, Works and Water Resources)
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 and Investment)
Ms. T. N. S.-A. MOORE, M.B.A.

ABSENT

Mr. G. W. PAYNE, Q.C., M.P.
Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS, B.A., LL.B., M.P.
(Minister of
Energy, Small Business and Entrepreneurship)
Prayers were taken by Rev. Father Mark Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: This House is in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, December 01, 2020.

Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes for the Honourable the House of Assembly for its Meeting of Tuesday, December 01, 2020, be confirmed subject to any omissions, corrections and/or observations.

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

Mr. SPEAKER: If there are no corrections or observations, then let those Minutes stand confirmed.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, December 08, 2020 are to be deferred.

Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes for the Honourable the House of Assembly for its Meeting of Tuesday, December 08, 2020, be deferred.

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

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

PAPERS

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Leader of Government Business.

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemption) (Innotech Services Limited) Order, 2020.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, I beg to give notice of a Resolution to grant the sum of \$31 212 530 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.8, 2020-2021.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

Ministerial Statement by Dr. the Hon. W. F. DUGUID,

(Minister of Housing, Lands and Maintenance)

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

Dr. the Hon. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure on the behalf of the Government to rise in this Honourable Chamber to redress what we see as a wrong perpetuated against many tenants of the National Housing Corporation. Simply put, Mr. Speaker, this Government plans to return just over \$5.6 million to nearly 600 existing and former tenants of the National Housing Corporation who paid towards the purchase of their units when almost 2 500 of their neighbours would be receiving theirs free of charge.

In April 2003 when this Barbados Labour Party Government was in office, the National Housing Corporation conceived and implemented a programme called “The Sale of Terrace Units Programme” to enfranchise qualifying National Housing Corporation tenants by allowing them to purchase their units at reduced market prices. I am told that when we left office in 2008 approximately 580 persons had paid moneys either in full or in part towards the purchase of their respective units. Subsequent to this initial programme, the Cabinet at a meeting held on March 27, 2008 agreed to the introduction of a 20-year divestment programme which permitted the free transfer of ownership of housing units to tenants who had been residing in their units for a period or more years. The Cabinet also agreed that those tenants who had paid either the full price or made a deposit for their unit would be entitled to the free transfer of ownership.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, while we have no quarrel whatsoever with enfranchisement of tenants, after all it was a Barbados Labour Party Government that passed the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act, what was particularly disappointing what that Cabinet decision is that it did not take into account the matter of refunding those tenants who had paid moneys towards ownership. It was therefore obvious, Mr. Speaker, that a review of that anomalous situation was necessary. The anomaly was created by persons largely low-income workers paying moneys for their units up until January 2008 whereas another set of tenants were to receive their units free of cost just two months later beginning in March 2008. Thus, tenants living in the same accommodation area in the same physical districts and paying the same rental units were treated

differently on the matter of ownership of public housing units. We, therefore, as a Government, took the decision to redress what was simply an unfair and unjust situation whereby the Sale of Terrace Units Programme on the one hand and the 20-year free transfer programme on the other had different sets of operating procedures.

I am aware that in the private sector, Mr. Speaker, some department stores have certain promotions whereby customers may be offered special discount prices today but if they had waited a little longer they might have received a larger discount, but you cannot treat the distribution of National Housing Corporation units in that way. You cannot treat public assets, public policy and friends and neighbours living in such tightly-knit communities in such a fashion. It simply is not right or equitable. We promised we would correct it and we do so now.

Accordingly, at its meeting held on November 19, 2020 the Cabinet agreed that the Minister of Housing, Lands and Maintenance should give policy direction to the National Housing Corporation to completely refund all tenants who paid monies either in full or in part towards the purchase of their units. These directions were given in accordance with Section 23 of the Housing Act, Cap. 226, which states:

“The Minister may give directions to the Corporation as to the exercise and performance of any of its functions under this Act, and the Corporation shall give effect to such directions.”

It is estimated that the total cost of \$5 645 700 would be refunded to 576 tenants from 21 of the National Housing Corporation's 49 housing estates. In keeping with the guidelines of Barbados Economic Recovery and Transformation Programme, the BERT Programme, persons who paid \$5 000 or less will receive cash, while tenants intended to be refunded more than \$5 000 will receive Bonds. As you know, these Bonds may be in cash at any time at a discounted price. By our calculations, a total of 100 of certified persons will receive cash refunds, while 441 persons will be refunded by way of Bonds. Of these, 212 persons would have paid between \$5 000 and \$10 000, while a further 128 persons would have paid between \$10 000 and \$15 000.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, you can therefore see the difference in savings between those tenants who paid in money and those who have been receiving their units free of cost is not insignificant in the scheme of things. In fact, 11 persons paid in excess of \$30 000 and as a matter of interest, the highest amount paid for a unit was \$45 600. Therefore, I am very happy, especially in this festive season, to be able to bring this measure to this Honourable House. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have already instructed the National Housing Corporation to prepare the necessary

paperwork so that moneys and Bonds can be paid by Christmas. It is my fervent wish that this can be done.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it would be remiss of me, though, if I did not say something about the National Housing Corporation's enfranchisement programme itself which was started all those years ago: the transfer of units. At last count on October 30th this year the number of terraced units still to be transfer to qualifying tenants was 2 574. This is a significant number of units which the National Housing Corporation is maintaining free of cost to the tenants, who no longer have to pay rents for them, but more importantly, the delay in transferring legal title to the tenants prevents them from using these properties as collateral to enhance their personal circumstances and [to] otherwise fulfil their dreams. I want to assure this Honourable House, however, that this Government plans to ensure that almost 100 per cent of tenants will receive the titles to their units within the next two years. We have already assembled a team which is working feverously on this solution and soon will be returning to this Honourable House to amend the relevant legislation to fast-track this process. Mr. Speaker, Sir, 17 years since this project started is much, much too long. These tenants deserve to have the security of tenure we had promised and to exercise their full rights of ownership, like everyone else.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am conscious, though, of commitments the National Housing Corporation has given to ensure that the units are safe and secure prior to their transfer and I wholeheartedly endorse those objective, so that, for example, within the last year the Government has spent \$2.23 million to upgrade the electrical work in 313 units, particularly in the building estates at Haynesville, Thorpes and Bagatelle. This is a pilot programme which the National Housing Corporation has since expanded, by engaging the services of an additional 11 electrical contractors to carry out similar work on various housing estates.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wholeheartedly endorse these objective so that, for example, within the last year this Government has spent \$2.23 million to upgrade the electrical network in 313 units, particularly in the building estates at Haynesville, Thorpes and Bagatelle. This was a pilot project which the National Housing Corporation has expanded by engaging the services of an additional 11 contractors to carry out similar work on various housing estates. Works relating to electrical upgrades commenced at Ferniehurst and Rosemont estates earlier this month. The Board has indicated that approximately 500 units will be upgraded annually over the next five years, but because of the timelines we have set ourselves for the transfer of units, I

have challenged the National Housing Corporation to double that output.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to report that the National Housing Corporation has made steady progress in refurbishing its wells and sewerage systems in order to make the surroundings more wholesome and safe for the tenants and Barbadians as a whole. During the Third Quarter of 2019, the National Housing Corporation was tasked to carry out the sewerage system refurbishment programme at an additional cost of \$2 million. Under this programme critical repair work had been undertaken and unsafe and/or unsanitary sewerage systems in at least 10 housing estates, a total of 135 of the most critical sewerage systems, wells and septic tanks were identified for rehabilitation. As at October 31st this year, 73 sewerage systems had been rehabilitated at a cost of \$1 706 475. We still have our challenges with the work because it is painstaking and messy work, much of which had been neglected for year but we will stay the course and get the job done. Mr. Speaker, Sir, you will be happy to know that we have established a WhatsApp number, 266-1854, which allows tenants to report urgent complaints so that they can be addressed speedily. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to thank those several tenants who have so far brought urgent issues to our attention, and I encourage all to continue to highlight any serious problems that they may be facing in or around their units so that we can address them. We are all in this together.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in closing, in the spirit of the season, I want to take this opportunity to wish all fellow Barbadians and my constituents from Christ Church West in particular God's blessings during the season and a prosperous New Year. Mr. Speaker, Sir, with those few words, I am obliged to you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Leader of Government Business, you have the Floor.

Hon. S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that Standing Orders Nos. 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44 be suspended for the rest of today's sitting.

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

The question was put to the Honourable House and agreed to in the affirmative without division.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 2 – BARBADOS HUMANITARIAN SERVICE AWARD BILL, 2020.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister, you have the Floor.

Hon. Miss Mia A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, at the outset of this debate I would like to make an application to you to treat to the two Bills as a cognate debate: The Barbados Humanitarian Service Award Bill, and the Gold Award of Achievement (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

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

The question was put and agreed to in the affirmative without division.

Hon. Miss Mia A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I consider my participation in this debate this morning both an honor and a privilege, but equally I am humbled by my responsibility to speak in this debate. The Bills that are before us are occasioned by extraordinary achievements on the part of perhaps one of the largest groups of persons to act in concert pursuant to a single mission, probably since Independence. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I say so conscious that the mission of which I speak is the protection of this nation state. There is no doubt in anyone's mind now, in December, 2020, that what the entire world has faced in this year 2020 is comparable to only that which happened 100 years ago with the Spanish Flu. With that, I bypass what our grandparents and others would refer to as the "Great War". I bypass other difficulties and challenges that we would have faced as a nation with the 1937 revolution, and you note I refer to it as a revolution and not "riots" because riots really belong to lawbreakers. A revolution belongs to nation-builders. What is significant is that for the first time in probably 100 years, the people of this nation, like others across the world, were called upon to raise defences to protect our lives and fundamentally our nation states, our communities and our families. We were not sure where this virus was taking the world; not only Barbados. We were not sure where this virus was taking the world, and as it spread doctors and scientists were learning a little more each week, some things they were confident about, and other things they were not confident about. For instance, does Vitamin D and sunlight make a difference? Does fresh air make a difference? All kinds of speculation. What kinds of therapeutic sub-medicines would work? Were ventilators the appropriate modality for treatment for persons presenting with it or is it now that we look at other forms of treatment rather than ventilators as the first "rush-to" modality? All of these things were just whirling all around us, and we had to navigate our way through the fog while at the same time ensuring that the

basic needs of human life could be met day by day as we confronted this reality.

Mr. Speaker, I vaguely remember around New Year's Day hearing something about some unusual virus that they were looking at in China, and I put it at the back of my head and every few days I kept trying to listen to see what I could hear. Like with SARS and other viruses that went before, including MARS and so on, you knew that it had potential to do great damage but, like with most, I think there was a general feeling that the world would contain the spread as it had successfully done with Ebola and SARS. Historians will spend inordinate amounts of time in the future trying to understand why this one went rogue as compared to the other potential epidemics that would have broken out in the course of the last few decades. It is fair to say that the kind of panic which then ensued, once persons realised that death could be quick for some, was unparalleled in our lifetime.

What did it teach us, Sir? It taught us and reinforced in us something that we used to say all the time but we now know it intrinsically and can feel it through every aspect of our bodies; that each one of us matters. I used it as my theme and title when we produced the White Paper on Education Reform back in 1995, and for my entire political career I have believed it, but I recognise that it is sometimes hard to get others to live it, to walk the walk and not just talk the talk. I have never seen anything else in my 55 years that has driven home the fact that each one of us matters more than this COVID pandemic, for when the time came to impose restrictions on movement and when the time came to do that while taking care of those who were most vulnerable and particularly with the understanding that those with comorbidities would be literally facing a moment of deep peril should they be found positive with this pandemic....

Why would that bother us? We all know that Barbados regrettably has had too high an incidence of chronic non-communicable diseases in our population for which, especially with this Minister of Health, we have been trying to run a programme -- and I want to salute Sir Trevor Hassell and others as well -- to get people to take their wellbeing seriously, physical and mental, and to recognise that lives are being cut short or compromised as a result of having to fight life-threatening and debilitating diseases; the worse, perhaps, of which for many Barbadians is that thing called "sugar", formally known as diabetes. From amputations to blindness to dialysis to irascibility; all of those and more are the side-effects with which thousands of our citizens have to contend with respect to their lives. What makes it even more difficult is that for you to have that and then to find out that this thing which is enveloping the world will have a worse impact on those who have chronic non-communicable diseases or, as we have come to call it, comorbidities. It is amazing how new

words enter our lexicon depending on what is happening in a society, because none of us would have talked about comorbidities before but now even "Ninja Man" will talk about it. Such is the reality of 2020.

Sir, I was making the point that 2020 taught in a very real way that each person matters, that some of us are hardwired differently. I tell people this all the time. If you ask me to go and fix a solar water heater, you might as well say that you are dead because I would not know where to start. I would not know what to do, and equally I recognise that things which I may do well as an attorney-at-law others may not be able to do either. They could not get the first word out of their mouths if they stood up in court. In fact, they would be subject to what a Chief Justice did to a lawyer once when he said, "Take the man from the dock away. Take the man who is representing him too".

Asides.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Believe you me, we know it and we tell our children that, especially when it comes to doing the Common Entrance Examination and so on, but deep down this society never really embraced it sufficiently and I believe that 2020 will cause those of us who were alive and well to have a different perspective on the value of labour of each and every person in this world and in this country, in particular. Why do I say so? Mr. Speaker, how are you going to get groceries if the ladies who pack the shelves are not choosing to come to work and face the risks of the pandemic every day in packing the shelves overnight so that people can eat in this country again? How would you get to go to the supermarket if the people who were responsible as dockers and other workers in the Port were not moving the goods off the ships, or those who were responsible for trucking the goods from the Port to the wholesale facility, or those who continue to face the reality of noxious fumes in pumping gas and diesel for people? If you did not have the fuel, the trucks could not move the goods. If you did not have the fuel in some instances where generators were required, the generators could not work. If you did not have technicians to come and fix a refrigerator which had broken down, all of the meat and all of the fish and the cold goods would have spoiled.

I hope Members are understanding where I am going. It is incumbent upon us to recognise that when that supermarket worker or that gas station attendant or that customs officer or that immigration officer or of course the nurses, orderlies, doctors, lab technicians and all of the allied medical professionals which we obviously know immediately for being on the front line. If they and all of the allied other skills like the person to open the bank, because you are 78 years old and you do not have an ATM card and you are only accustomed going with your bank book to the bank and all of sudden now the bank have also

shut down and you have to go and stand up in a line and expose yourself. Thank God for those who were still prepared to come out on a modified basis to facilitate those persons who were either technologically incapable or technologically illiterate with respect to the conduct of their own bank and businesses.

Mr. Speaker, these were the things that confronted us in April, May and June in particular in this country. When you compound all of that with the empathy and sensitivity that was required to deal with persons who were anxious because they have lost their jobs or anxious because they were put on short time or incapable of doing better because they had somebody at home who was particularly and acutely vulnerable and requiring attention, while at the same time having to earn to keep food coming into the house and keeping the light and water on in the house. These are the complexities of what many of our citizens faced and it is significant to me that those persons who went beyond the call of duty particularly in those early months, did not stop and ask, “Am I going to get a reward?”, “Am I going to get an honour?” or “Am I going to get extra pay?” No. What they did was to rise to the occasion conscious that in rising to the occasion they will be funding the people of this nation. Mr. Speaker, the people of this nation owe a significant debt of gratitude to those who step forward, particularly in those darkest of months to do their job, but in doing their job to keep this country safe and stable as we went through that period.

Mr. Speaker, you must forgive me for a minute, if I therefore say that I find it incomprehensible that they are persons in this country in this month, in this year of our Lord who would want now to contend that they should not be any determination by this Government for the establishment of a national minimum wage to ensure that people whose work we value are properly rewarded in this country. It is incomprehensible especially in this year when we know they had persons who were responsible for packing shelves and taking money at the supermarket till and cleaning the supermarkets late at night in order to ensure that persons can go back in next morning. Cleaning took on a different meaning because of the pandemic and because of the need for sanitizing and extraordinary measures for that. Then we are going to look at each other in Barbados in the year 2020, in the month of December, 10 months into a pandemic affecting our part of the world and query whether there should be a national minimum wage?

Mr. Speaker, I want to make myself very clear. Come April 1, there will be a national minimum wage in Barbados. I am prepared to listen to everyone on quantum and that is why we set up in addition to the National Minimum Board, the Blue Ribbon Advisory Committee for Cabinet. I am prepared to listen to persons who are not in there as well, but what we cannot dispute is our need to

protect those at the very bottom of the earning scale in this country whose jobs are nevertheless critical. If the person collecting the garbage or the persons literally cleaning or the persons serving gas were not doing their jobs, what would happen in the context of this pandemic Mr. Speaker? Study your heads, I beg you to do. When we study it, we realise that that is why the reform of the Common Entrance Exam is also so critical because every person in this country can do the best that they can do so long as they apply their head to it. It does not matter what your job is, so long as you also know how you do your job is what will distinguish you. So long as what you are doing is legal and morally correct, then it matters not. Each of us must respect persons for that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go forward, recognising therefore that that motto that so exemplifies so much of what we have done in this society trying to fight against historical journey over the centuries that we are as strong as the weakest link among us became all and more real for us in COVID-19.

Sir, the Bill that is before this Honourable Chamber therefore, seeks to provide for persons who have given of their best literally, who have meritorious humanitarian service to be recognised by this nation and to be appropriately accorded with the medal under this piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, a person will receive what is known as the Barbados Humanitarian Service Award, and as I have been instructed for those who will get the badges at the top of the badge will have the words “COVID-19” inscribed on it because it is intended that this piece of legislation can be used again for other humanitarian disasters or challenges. We pray that we will not have to deal with them in a hurry, but our sense of history and knowledge of life causes us to recognise that these things will forever be with us particularly in the world with the world facing a climate crisis as it is doing. Typically, one would expect this and the Member for the City of Bridgetown who has a long and distinguished military career would be in a better position to speak to some of these issues (inaudible).

However, typically we would expect for these types of awards to be issued for people who would have provided service in the event of a mass casualty or hurricane or the recovery efforts in trying to bring stability to a country that has been ravaged by an earthquake. It is not limited to service here, but service on behalf of the nation wherever the national deems it appropriate, so that if you have a lot of Barbadians living somewhere else and we have had to send in people to rescue them or to get them offshore or whatever, then, typically this is the kind of reward in addition to the gallantry and bravery awards that are available under the order of Barbados, this would now be available. Why is this?

Mr. Speaker, we simply needed something that would allow us to recognise scale. My Cabinet has come to know that I use that word often, because if we are going to transform a nation and change circumstances and most things you need to do it to scale to ensure that the scale is appropriate to the task which confronts us. To that extent in Barbados in 2020 the scale of the gross bonds by those who were on the medical frontline, doctors, nurses, lab technicians, orderlies, and persons feeding persons and all of the other things that we take for granted to keep a clinic or hospital functioning, they all responded. While I am here, let me inform the Honourable Chamber that I was happy to receive news this morning from the Member for St. Michael South Central and the representative from the European Investment Bank that the application which the Government made to have all of the works which we did at Harrison's Point, as well as the equipment and other things that were critical for us in the early stages of COVID-19, we have been able to secure decent and good funding in order to allow us to pay for it over the next 20 years rather than having to absorb it all in this fiscal year. Why do I say decent and good funding? It is because there is a four-year moratorium on the loan and then, the rate of interest is 1.25 per cent which is extraordinarily concessional and the loan is over 20 years with that moratorium, as I said.

I want to thank publicly the former Ambassador to the European Union (EU) who has left us; Daniela Tramacere. I will provide the spelling for the Clerk of Parliament. I am not sure that my pronunciation was as good as it should be but the bottom line is that she really went out of her way to meet with me and to trigger our interest in being able to spread out that funding over a period of time. This Government will speak frankly always and when we say what we have to, it does not preclude us from thanking who we have to. I say that in the context of other comments that I would have made recently with respect to the EU.

We thank them for this concessional funding because it takes the pressure off of us with respect to paying for that building which, by the way, as a matter for history has now seen its third repurposing in the last 30 years under us. The first purpose- I see the Leader of the Opposition smiling because like I, he knows about the second purpose- was the Barbados Youth Service which was done literally about over 20 years ago. The second purpose would have been for the temporary location for the prison when Glendairy Prison had burnt. Of course, the third purpose is when we went there at the end of February.

In fact, the Attorney General and I went there immediately after the naming of the bypass road in Speightstown after your predecessor, Sir, Sir Kenmore Husbands. When we went there the Friday Night about 6.00 p.m., within 24 hours the officials from MTW and other departments literally moved bush that was in some

instances 12 to 15 feet high across acres of this land. Little did most people realise that within less than a month, we would have had a hospital functioning with equipment on that site and expanding for the first time in decades this country's primary Intensive Care Unit (ICU) capacity to more beds than we have at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital(QEH).

In the first instance, there are 38 in the primary ICU with negative pressure to protect the medical officials and then, the secondary one without the negative pressure in the event that we really had to face serious numbers with another 40 beds in that secondary ICU facility which brings a total 78 beds at Harrison's Point alone as we speak today in this Honourable Parliament. We are grateful. We understand that the loan will be signed in early 2021 but the word of its approval literally came this morning. I wanted to salute the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Ministry of Public Works and, indeed, the Project Manager; Mr. Joe Steinbok who did stellar work in ensuring that the project was delivered in an efficient way within the time-frame required.

Also, I want to thank all those who donated significantly to the effort. Barbados has been lucky in that we do not only have people born here who feel this country is their own but others who have come to live here, and embraced this country as if they were born here. The significant amount of charitable donations, indeed, the last amount I was aware of was US \$1.2 million that was pledged last Friday to our overall vaccine effort from the COVID-19 charity established in March or April 2020. We are grateful to that donation because it will provide a significant amount of vaccines for thousands of Barbadians when it becomes available.

On the issue of vaccines, Sir, let me say for the record that this country will do it in its right time. I want to say that there are those who doubted our pathway in the management of this COVID-19 pandemic and who put tremendous pressure on the Government, both internally and externally, to do differently and otherwise. We have a way of doing things. We consult. We follow the science. We listen to persons. We go back to see who is falling through the cracks not intentionally but very often these things happen in almost every area of activity in life. Therefore, we go back and look to see if there is anyone we need to pause and pickup before we continue the journey.

We do that recognising that we will not always have the luxury to be pioneers, particularly when the pioneering efforts may cause persons to be compromised one way or another. What we have in Barbados is a small nation-state not a village. A small nation-state does not allow us to inappropriately, injudiciously or arbitrarily take actions that can compromise the entire population. It is for that reason that we act on very solid ground when we say that we await

the outcome of the assessments by the global experts at the WHO and at the PAHO. Small states like ours, do not have the kind medical research facilities or medical regulatory facilities to do this work on their own. This is why we participate in these global and hemispheric bodies.

This is why those bodies have a higher percentage of experts than almost any other institution hemispherically or globally because they pool together the resources necessary to deal with all of the countries in the hemisphere and indeed in the case of the WHO, all the countries of the world. The reality is that, and it is not only for this pandemic, I am actually co-chairing with the Prime Minister of Bangladesh a One-health Global initiative on what the Director-General of the Food and Agricultural Organisation has described when we launched it on November 22, as the slow motion pandemic.

Those who are hearing me would do well to listen because it is likely to be one of the major problems facing the world. Indeed, there are persons well known to many of us in this Chamber who have already fallen victim because the anti-microbial resistance which is the topic we are dealing with is really a recognition that whether it is through the manner in which we have been tending to animals and livestock through over supply of antibiotics to help treat and grow them, whether it is with respect to what we are doing with our plant life for food or what we do as human beings by taking antibiotics for almost everything, such that the body has developed an immunity.

All of us learnt in primary school and secondary school about the wonders of penicillin, and what a difference that made to the lives of persons across the world. All of the “cillins” and “illins” that the Honourable Member for St. Philip North would do better quoting than me, but when I call the ‘cillins’ and the ‘illins’, and I learnt it the hard way a couple years ago, probably about 12 years ago when I went for an extraction and they did not give me an antibiotic and, of course, my face remained swollen for about two weeks and had all kinds of issues. What is significant is that that antimicrobial resistance can in fact lead to serious complications and death because the super viruses that are being discovered especially in hospitals with hospital acquired infections are literally resistant to many of the existing antibiotics that we have, therefore, if the world does not get this right it threatens to reverse a century of medical progress for the most basic medical and dental procedures, but equally, it is projected to be responsible for more deaths globally by the year 2050. I want to put this in context. Ask yourself where you were in 1991 because that will cause you to understand how soon 2050 is in the context of our lives because if we can remember with ease the last 29 years, then we will project with dis-ease the next 29 years. I do not mean to pun on ‘dis-ease’, but that is our reality in this world in which we live today.

Mr. Speaker, coming back to the Bill, we also felt that there were some people, as is natural, whose responsibility it was not to sleep and not to drop the ball and from the middle of January, most people globally and in this country only started to take this thing on at the end of February and March, but mercifully the health officials in Barbados, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Attorney General, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology, and the Minister of Information all were engaged. The Ministry of Health from the middle of January, and those other persons by the last Friday in January which I think was 31st January and even on 1st February - I do not want to mislead on the dates so let us look and see so that I can give you the exact date -- 1st February there was a meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with those Ministers and officials to which I just referred. The Health Emergency Operations Committee (HEOC) had been established and functioning for two weeks when others were still not even talking about this pandemic and we were fortunate enough that Barbados has in its midst a well-qualified infection specialist in the form of Doctor Corey Forde. We were also fortunate that the Best-dos Santos Public Health Laboratory with the help of the American Government have been completed and indeed, Doctor Sandra Beckles, who is an extraordinary dedicated scientist was also there to be able to lead this effort. For those who believe that her work is only within the lab, then you would not know that almost every day for this year, she and other doctors, Doctor Ingrid Cumberbatch, Doctor Singh from the Port Health department were literally at the Grantley Adams International Airport (GAIA) for any day flights have been coming in and remember flights were also leaving with respect to the 21 000 cruise ship passengers and crew that this country facilitated from the Bridgetown Port to the Grantley Adams International Airport in order to be able to go back home to their homes.

Mr. Speaker, I say these things and we are fortunate that number of persons Doctor Singh and a number of the Barbados Defence Force have already in the Independence Honours received rewards for their gallantry because I would not know how to even look at a ship and to climb on a rope ladder in protective equipment to get up to the top of the ship to go and take swabs to get back down with the swabs and back down the rope ladder on to a Barbados Coast Guard boat that bobbing up and down and might or might not receive me when I step off the ladder into the boat. That is the reality and if you can find 100 people in this country who could do that easily, then I say well done but I know it would be difficult so to do. The aspect of their gallantry, we isolated at Barbados’ Independence deliberately because it was extra-ordinary courage for them to be able to do so and I say so conscious that in those early days too when people did not know what this thing was, these people were taking their lives in their own hands,

therefore, this Parliament has a duty in passing this legislation today to recognise that the legislation is literally there for us to be able to bring honour and to say to others, “well done thou good and faithful servants” and to ensure that those who watched on know that this is a country that does not take people for granted or extraordinary actions for granted but salutes those who are prepared to defend it.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, where would we be without the Czar? There were things that needed to be said and needed to be said in a manner that did not in any way mince words and what was amazing is that Mr. Carter was singularly and blindly focused on the mission at hand. How do you change people’s behaviour, how do you protect people from one another and get them to refrain from things that feel so natural? For us it is natural to hug, for us it is natural to be up underneath one another, for us it is natural to lime, for us it is natural to sit down together and eat, for us it is natural to go into church and sing lustily, for us it is natural to do all of these things and all of a sudden everything that is natural they tell you now is unnatural.

Mr. Speaker, I realise that when I walk, I walk so, slightly with my toes apart. I have been trying to walk with them straight. Have you every realised how difficult it is. After decades of doing something one way just to change the slightest thing is so difficult to do. I give that example to show you that when you now ask human beings to change how everything they do, and I am satisfied, Mr. Speaker, and I have said this to the Minister of Health, that the issue of mental wellness has to be on the front burner because I know that they are a number of people who are suffering elements of posttraumatic stress disorder by being cut off from people they love, from things they were accustomed doing, from all kinds of things that gave them that sense of purpose and sense of being and sense of wellness and this is something that is likely to have a long, long, long, long shadow and hence, the Ministry of Health and all of our officials must be ready to treat to it. Regrettably, we saw what it did with one of the persons committing suicide on the cruise ship so we know and when I had to say to the persons over 70 to stay at home in late February, recognising that even my own parents -- I do not think my father has left the house often for the last six or seven months or whatever it is and most people I know over 75 years old in particular, who may have some kind of comorbidity, they have taken it serious, but I want to reach out also and say, bravo and thank you to their family members and to the people who live next door to them or to the people who may be helping them as a gardener or to the people who may be coming to the house or to the people who they just... You know how they got some old people that just ‘tek’ to young people and like them and the young people ‘tek’ to the old people and like them too, for those kinds of people who continue then to be their bridge to ordinary daily life whether at the shop or the supermarket or getting a pension cheque change or doing all of the

things that would otherwise expose our seniors who helped build this nation to extraordinary risks.

Mr. Speaker, I feel strongly that therefore that the God Medal of Achievement, which was passed when we passed the National Heroes Act as well, and I know because I was the Minister who was responsible for pulling together these things on behalf of the Government at the time - had a limitation that would allow you to issue one Gold Medal of Achievement for persons rendering extraordinary service in the preceding year.

Mr. Speaker, we do two things with this Bill: One it allows us to offer more than one Gold Medal of Achievement because it took more than one person at the level of leadership in order to bring us to where we are today in December 2020 - and one death is one death too many - where we were able to limit the number of persons passing in this nation to seven and where most importantly we have then, and I knock wood, (Knocking on wood), the Ministry of Health and Wellness knows it each time when I say it because only those who have to take reports each and every day know that you do not literally pray in vain or speak in a way that is inappropriate and boastful because there is nothing boastful about saving lives, it is about compassion, it is about doing the right thing it is about being able... The fact that the United States of America has now lost 300 000 people yesterday. You heard when I spoke when it had reached 250 000, it is now beyond our population, it is incomprehensible, it is incapable of reasoning and rational thought that 300 000 people especially in circumstances where the question would be asked: Was all done to minimise the exposure and the incidence of hospitalisation and deaths or could more have been done? Among those 300 000 people regrettably are many of our sons and daughters. In fact, more than we have lost on this land, we have seen more Barbadians lose their lives in North America and in the United Kingdom than have lost their lives in this country.

Mr. Speaker, these are not words that fall easily from my mouth. It is a matter of grave, grave, grave regret that the world did not follow the kind of solid, coherent policy framework that was needed to fight back this pandemic and that at the time when the world needed global leadership the most regrettably it has been found wanting. I do not get tied up therefore because this is not about boasting or anything so this is about recognising that with each day the battle is real and with each day you start the day as you did the day before conscious that you have to take the steps each and every day. It only takes one loose moment, it only takes one weakening of your resolve for you and your family to be exposed. We see it here in the region with the recent difficulties in Grenada and in other parts of the region where we saw spikes emerged where there had been relatively good management of the pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, if we want to make real the words of the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, the Honourable Minister of Health and Wellness that there shall be no retreat and that there shall be no surrender, then it requires us being vigilant each and every day until the vaccines that have been taken can bring about herd immunity necessary to be able to protect us as human beings. It is no wonder that the Spanish Flu took two years before they could tame it and we expect, as I said, that when the time comes vaccines will be delivered as long as we can access them and as long as we are satisfied from the WHO, the World Health Organisation, and PAHO, the Pan American Health Organisation, that they are safe and ready. There is nothing to be gained by being the first, there is something to be gained by being the most informed and the most ready in terms of roll out when it comes, and that is all I have asked the Ministry of Health and Wellness to do for us. We follow the science, we consult and we educate and sensitise, and those things are critical to the protection of this nation.

Mr. Speaker, I should say to you that amongst our frontline workers, however, are not only those who I have called before but there are also our tourism workers and our Port workers. As I said, the Immigration Officers, the Customs Officers, the Port health workers, the Customs guards, the Air Traffic Controllers, all of the people that keep the Bridgetown Port and the Grantley Adams International Airport functioning had to come out and risked being affected in the height of the April/May/June thing, and of course Mr. Speaker, the people who manned the quarantine hotels. Mr. Speaker, let us get real. The cleaners, the people who are cooking for people, the people who are guarding them, all of these people became a critical component and therefore when this Government says that we want to honour people in the public and private sector we do so conscious that it is important to say thank you and it is important to remind everybody in this nation that when we work together with a single mission what we are capable of achieving and how we can do it.

There is no doubt that Barbados has gained the admiration of many not just regionally but internationally. Indeed, the 12-month Welcome Stamp would have meant nothing if the brand that we have for our safety was not a credible brand. Sir, what do I mean by that? You could advertise as much as you want about a 12-Month Welcome Stamp for people to come and stay with you but if they are coming to stay and not be safe where they are coming they are not coming so that the notion of just having the product was not sufficient for it to be successful. What makes it successful is the underlying brand that any assertion we make with a brand has to be credible in order for it to be sustained or for it to be real, and you know exactly what I mean, Mr. Speaker, if you go and they tell you to drink this drink and every time you drink it, it tastes bad, they cannot tell you again that it is the best tasting thing or the real

thing, if it tastes bad it tastes bad. Now, Coke can get away with what it does because it tastes good and hence it has a wonderful... It is the real thing you understand. Nike can get away with a brand that has endured for decade "Just Do It" you understand because shoes are involved with motion and more often than not it is that motion and that comfortable and propelling motion that allows them along with the style to sell and be as successful as they are.

Similarly, Barbados' brand has to relate to safety and the 12-month Welcome Stamp was simply saying if you want to come here we are focusing on persons in particular whom may want to spend longer than three or four days because you have to spend the first two or three days in a facility with restricted movement. Some people like to use the 'Q' word, some people like to "RM" word. Quarantine, restrictive movement, whatever it is, the bottom-line is you are not mixing with Bajans until you spend some time alone.

Secondly, the Minister of Health and Wellness can speak at length to this and I hope he shall, that when we said we were doing a second test the only thing I did not do is lose my head. I had people coming at me from "larva" to "scarva" -- Barbados cannot do this second test, Barbados cannot do this, Barbados that, and everywhere else in the region opening up fully and all this. Mr. Speaker, Sir, we never closed down but what we said all along was safe work for safe people in a safe country. If you follow that motto, you break it down, you see where the science takes you, you understand the limits. We know already that we were going to get "lick up" economically. We knew that on March 20 this year when I stood right here and spoke to us when we had finished the Second Reading Speech of the Appropriation Bill, 2020. That is why we went to the International Monetary Fund and said: "Look, the targets which we have this year may not make it, let us do the adjustments from now, so that we are on the same page." We did those adjustments, initially moving from a primary surplus of about 6 per cent, down to 1 per cent, then to 0 per cent, then to minus-1 per cent because of the protracted nature of the pandemic, without the opportunity for a vaccine to be available.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, that Welcome Stamp Programme therefore was designed to allow people to come for long stays, because if you did not mind losing the first two or three days, then we are going to treat to you in the same way that we treat to all Bajans, that is, we will try to protect you as far as possible, and try to ensure (1), persons coming in who do test positive that we are able to isolate and that this country has had (I think we have done) over 50 000 tests in the last 10 months. I will ask the Minister of Health and Wellness to get me the correct number of tests to date, while I speak, as well as the number of persons. Also, for sure the majority of persons testing since July to now, more than 98 per cent of those persons testing

positive between that time and now have all tested positive on the second test. Mr. Speaker, Sir, on the second test. Therefore, can you imagine if I had listened and the Government had listened to those persons who said no second test, what would Barbados be like now? While recognising that our risks are even greater because in a country that is as dense as we are in certain parts of the island, we would have serious difficulties, particularly in the urban corridor.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I speak [being] conscious that this is not over, but that we are beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel, with the availability of the vaccines and with the COVAX Facility which is intended to be able to procure for countries of the world, particularly the ones that are not able to command, order and get four or five times what they need, as some of the G-20 Countries have done. I am not sure where that carries them because we all acknowledged that the world is not safe until all countries receive the vaccines and that as long as there are countries that can retain the virus without the vaccine and immunity curtailing its spread, then all of us remain vulnerable globally with respect to that.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I hope that the country recognises that as we go forward we will keep them engaged on the things that we do. I have spoken about that second test. I said on Independence Day morning as I addressed the country, that in addition to the second test is, in my view, the manner in which both Doctors Beckles, Forde and their teams, how they worked with each other, to be able to determine on the spectrum of the testing whether a person is emerging from the disease or whether a person is now going into it and by having that third or fourth test if necessary to establish trajectory, we are in a position to better protect those who are both treating them, as well as those who have to look after them once they come out of any facility. Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is against that background that I am proud therefore to be able to say that it is the right thing to do.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to address one other matter before I sit, that is, what goes along with the medal or the badge. Mr. Speaker, Sir, in a perfect world we would like to say everything but we do not live in a perfect world and we already know that the biggest hit that the country is taking is not on the public health front, but in fact on the economic front. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I say so [being] conscious that we can recover from debt. We have already recovered from debt. We can recover from restricted economic activity, but what we cannot recover from is death -- one is DEBT, one is DEATH. They both dastardly start with "de". Mr. Speaker, Sir, the bottom line is that we have to recognise that if we can keep people alive, then we can live to fight another day, but if we cannot keep people alive, it becomes a moot point. Mr. Speaker, Sir, that is why this Government has invested as heavily in an

approach that is fundamentally about testing and tracing. Sir, could you imagine if the Ministry of Health and Wellness did not trace when there was the risk of the National Assistance Board cluster, or when there was the risk of the other cluster in September that went to Ellerslie Secondary School? Sir, it is the aggressive contact tracing and testing, which is a sign of a stellar public health system, which has been the legacy of Barbados, Barbados has produced more public health experts in the 20th century per capita in the Caribbean than any other Caribbean country and that is why the scions of public health, the exemplars of public health are Bajan in the region: Sir Kerry Standard, Sir Ken Stewart, Maurice Byer. We can go on and on, all of the persons who have really made a significant difference in the quality of public health, and if you were to ask doctors who know about public health, they would tell you that the ability for this little rock of 166 square miles to [be able to] get on top of public health issues is one of the things that has been responsible for our development over the decades. Because can you imagine if an outbreak would otherwise wipe out large swamps of the population what would happen to this country's development and what would happen to the opportunities and indeed potential prosperity of the nation and families. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am conscious that this is critical.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, to bring it all back together, therefore, we would love to be able to say that we could give everybody something and everything, and we would love to be able to do it on an ongoing basis, but we cannot afford it. What we will do and we will sit with the unions and discuss it, as has already started in some instances, is to look at a one-off "ex gratia" payment for those who had to work on the frontline, either intensely, or on the second layer with respect to the level of risk exposed. We expect that if we can have sensible discussions that we can do something that is an "ex gratia" payment that the country can afford, in addition to the medals. We know that when people were doing what they were in March, April, May and June, that they were not looking for reward, that they were not looking for honor or award, and it is for that reason I feel that as a nation that in addition to the medals, that we find some tangible little way -- "ex gratia" payment - to say thank you in a way that matters. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I say so conscious that like with everything else we will never please everyone but that we will do right by what we believe. That is why I said what I said earlier about the national minimum wage; that it is incomprehensible to me that somebody would want to dispute that somebody should get more than \$6.25 an hour. It is incomprehensible to me. Mr. Speaker, I hope that this Honourable House will pass these two Bills. I want publicly, because it is a matter of public record, to state that a week after I had spoken in that same debate to lay out the economic package I did not even know -- on that occasion -- until days before that I would have had to go for emergency surgery at the height

of the pandemic. It was a difficult decision for me and I promised the country when I went that I would have talked to them within a week. In that first or second broadcast after the surgery, I made the point then that we would come back to say “thank you” to the frontline workers. I just want you to know that I have not forgotten you, and that this Government has not forgotten you, that my Ministers and Members of Parliament all agree that this action is the least that we can do.

Sir, I also feel a personal responsibility to say “thank you” to those Ministers who I called out earlier, but in particular the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East who acted on my behalf in those difficult days of uncertainty.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Those were difficult days of uncertainty and of us not knowing where the country was going, and I understood that I could not have chosen to go for an operation at a worst time. If ever I knew the meaning of Charles Dickens’ phrase, “It was the best of times and it was the worst of times,” trust me, it was that but I also knew another saying that saved us and that we were taught as little children: “A stitch in time saves nine.” Believe you me, with that I could change it to “a stitch in time saves lives” and not nine. I really want from this Floor and in the spirit of Christmas that is before us to say “thank you” to my colleagues. They will tell you that sometimes I am very rough but I have also learnt...

Asides.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: I have also learnt that you have to be gracious. I really, really do want to say that I am proud to lead the team which I lead and to have persons who are prepared always to step up to the plate and to put country first and country before their individual circumstances. It has not escaped me that as I stand here to thank those who worked from the frontline of the actual health aspect of the virus or in keeping bodies together through supermarkets and other facilities as we went through this difficult moment, I particularly want to thank, as I said, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East. The Honourable Attorney General who has left his seat -- I would not normally say so but I am calling him out because I hope he is hearing what I am saying -- also was placed under the most extraordinary pressure that an Attorney General has been placed under since Independence in this country, and it is my judgement that he has been equal to the task and that he has literally served this country with distinction, especially in this year 2020.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: I have said the same about the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the early part of this debate. Believe you me, we were living in the “wild, wild West”, Mr. Speaker. I have never known what it is to be at the centre of so much to and fro and trying to find out whether countries were going to impose export restrictions and legislative aids to block movement of goods and equipment and, in some instances, other things which were critical like medicines. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, in addition because he is an eminent surgeon, was able to add significant value to the stability of the decision-making of this Government. Mr. Speaker, I add to that as well the other Members -- I am coming to the Minister of Health separately - who would have supported the Minister. In some instances, it was the Minister in Finance and Economic Affairs and in other instances it was the Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology, and in other instances it was the Honourable Member for St. George South who was Minister of Commerce, Small Business and Entrepreneurship, and in other instances it was the Honourable Member for St. Thomas. Who were the most vulnerable members of the population? They were in fact the elderly, and in spite of her being one -- I do not want to say so because she does not look it -- and having some vulnerabilities, she never once said to me, “Not me. I may be among the class that you are trying to protect.” Not once did she say so. Mr. Speaker, I am conscious and grateful for those small mercies and for those actions by my Cabinet.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Peter was stretched out with the Social Partnership because, as I said, we consulted, we took decisions as a country and we tried as far as possible to ensure things went smoothly. I know it was done even for the few weeks that I was not fully involved. The head of the private sector I want to salute and thank, Mr. Ed Clarke, and indeed to salute the members of the private sector, the members of the labour movement who equally recognised that it was not business as usual and that their workers were being asked to respond in a way and to do things that were necessary to save a nation but it was not business as usual.

Then of course came “the General”. I am sure that you are not committed to going back and give promotions in the Defence Force or the military when a man has retired for over 15 years, but if it was possible I would like to tell you that the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown should be a Brigadier General.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: If the military is not prepared to give him that, then I know the rest of his colleagues are willing to give it to him.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: We therefore take those words and use them liberally in the same way that he used his own military metaphors liberally. When he said to the nation, "There shall be no retreat, there shall be no surrender", it was almost a Churchillian moment for many, and to that extent I want to say that we are not only grateful for that kind of advocacy and moral leadership, but we have come to understand now that whether the news was good or bad, the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown never shirked from his responsibility for talking truthfully and honestly with the Barbadian people.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: That, in my view, is going to be one of the things that will be regarded as one of the reasons why Barbados has been able to generally contain this virus. He set out the objectives. The first thing was "if you cannot stop it, you have to minimise and contain it." Whether it was in his press conferences or whether it was in his meetings or whether it was on the platform -- because I think he was involved somewhere along the line in something called a by-election -- his message was the same. More than anything else -- I end on the point -- I salute him and the members of the EOC (Emergency Operating Centre), whose names I will ask him to read into the Record of this Honourable Chamber today. Why? Because come sun or come rain, come Bank Holiday or come work day, that team has met effectively almost every day since the middle of January of this year, not quite every day, but almost. I would say 98 per cent of the days. They have executed their task with diligence, they do not always necessarily have an easy road. There are times when they have to disentangle, deconstruct, reconstruct and try to work out what are the principles and the public policy that we are trying to support, there is no manual or not even the play book that George Bush and Obama left could hurt them in this without tweaking. That is because we were in uncharted waters and a country with limited resources in the middle of an IMF program with an island torn with tourism and travel dependent. That is why the tourism workers also have to be on the frontline with the health worker, because one protects our lives and the other protects our livelihoods, simple. For our lives to be meaningful, we need livelihoods, so you cannot separate the two.

However, in my view the Member for the City of Bridgetown merits the acclaim of his prayers for an extraordinary year of service. Mr. Speaker, I am not the first one receiving the calls but I am probably among the first few. Every morning the first thing I do is pick up this phone and look and see the state of play. Every afternoon, I pick the phone again and I look and see that state of play. I tell you, it requires extraordinary mettle and courage to keep your head above water, to keep hope alive and to continue to contain what will be regarded as the greatest

threat to global stability for a century in the form of this pandemic. We are not out of the woods, but it is the judgment of this Government that rather than wait for Heroes Day, it is now that you need the extra wind in your soul to keep going, that coming out of Christmas, Christmas is a reflective time. Christmas is a time when people think about families and consider what they have gain and loss. New Years is a time of resolutions. We believe that in the month of January, we want to salute you for a job well done in protecting your country in the year 2020, and in our small and modest way, in our Barbadian way, this is how we do it and this is who we are. We say to you, that more than anything else, we are rising to the challenge, we are treating to the task and you are containing the virus in the manner in which we have done makes this country among those few in the world, who are being admired for being a safe place to do safe work in a safe way.

On behalf of a grateful nation, Mr. Speaker, we ask that this legislation be passed so that we may now complete the task of pinning on the chest those who have come to help us. By I say those, I do not only mean those Barbadians who are here, but I also give thanks to the Cuban brigade of nurses and doctor who is here with us and have been here with us for more than eight months and we fight this thing. The date for the actual ceremony will be announced, only because we are trying to fine tune some things, but the Government and the Ministry of Health and my office will announce the date for the ceremony, but it will be in early January. As I said, we will continue the discussions with the unions as to what is an appropriate one-off (inaudible) payment that we can look to make in January for persons who were on the frontline in protecting this nation that we love.

Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you and ask that the Barbados Humanitarian Service Award Bill be read a second time. Thank you, Sir.

Hon. C. Y. FORDE: I beg to second that.

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

Lt. Col. the Hon. J. D. BOSTIC: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I rise to lend my voice to this debate and I do so with a sense of joy and pride. That sense of joy is not only associated with the season that we are in, a season that I really do like very much, but a sense of joy because of what I have been able not only to experience, but to observe over the last several months. Also, a sense of pride that I am part of a Government that would move so swiftly to be able to honour some extraordinary people in this country or also some ordinary people who did some extraordinary things. I say so because if you are able to view it from my lens, I think you would get a very good

perspective of really what is going on here. I say that because in my other life serving this country for close to 27 years, I would have been trained locally, regionally and internationally for what I am doing right now. I would have been exposed and would have been able to gather a lot of experience having served in humanitarian missions here in Barbados, even though they were localised and not at a national scale, but regionally with St. Kitts and Nevis, Antigua and Grenada in even assisting in the planning for the response for Monserrat after the eruption of the volcano.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying to you that with that experience, exposure and training, I do not even count myself in what I am saying in the sense that I was able to observe a number of persons who would have been trained in their own fields of technical specialties, but not for a crisis of this magnitude. A crisis in my opinion, this has to be the largest national humanitarian crisis in a post Janet Barbados and even longer than that. We have generations of Barbadians who would never have been exposed to what we are exposed to now. To see the response coming from so many sectors of this society that is what really gives the joy in terms of what we are doing in recognising that response.

Barbadians have always traditionally shown the humanitarian side of this nation in helping others. Whether it was through telethons or radio-thons, we have contributed to every single effort where countries in this region and even beyond have been impacted. However, to endure what we have been enduring here in this country for the first time, I think that that is where the joy comes from in terms of the fact that we are recognising that response.

In the very beginning and we are already blessed in a lot of ways, because, in the middle of the pandemic and at the worse time possible, the Prime Minister was talking about stitch in time, but we have a person who was leading this effort in terms of the testing and coordinating. That doctor was then sent on an attachment to PAHO to become the regional officer responsible for the regional immunisation programme. We had someone who was able to come and take up manta and within a couple days that doctor then started to lead the charge and is still doing so. I think that speaks volumes as to exactly the depth that we have in the country and the public health sector.

We had situations where, for example, our Chief Medical Officer (CMO) was unavailable due to certain personal issues he was dealing with but he came out fighting. Even when the chips were down for him, he was still at the forefront of the battle. This is why I am feeling the way that I am today to be honest with you. We had situations where those persons who were all females working in the laboratory day in and day out, and

sometimes when they were ready at the end of a long day to go home to look after their children or be with

their families, then another load of samples arrived at the last minute.

They remained at work for an additional three or four hours to ensure that they did what they had to. These things really mean a lot to me as the Minister of Health and Wellness. We had those four persons who were honoured during the Independence Awards Ceremony. I can tell you that that too was a sense of joy. Why? The Prime Minister speaks about climbing the ropes in order to get on board the ships but that happened at a time when other people did not even want to touch the ropes and that is the value of the effort displayed by those persons. It really touched my heart. I have attended several awards ceremonies as former Aide-de-Camp to a Governor-General and as a member of the military, but that one was special for me.

It was special because of what they did. My understanding and appreciation for the effort, and also for the fact that that award to the best of my knowledge although it is within the national awards, I do not think it was awarded before. For the Government of Barbados to recognise those persons at this time, I think that was a very noble and special undertaking, Madam Prime Minister. We are here today and recognise that the effort of those persons really should be rewarded but I know also that it was not only within the Ministry that I have the privilege of leading. I remember the night when the same ladies who were operating at the laboratory wanted something eat and they had to go to the gas station.

If you do not have the “gas” to continue and I am not speaking in the figurative sense, then they would not have been able to do what they did. All of the other persons who gave and rendered support, we had people who volunteered in the beginning, for example, doctors. The medical officer responsible for the polyclinic at Six Roads, St. Philip has not seen that polyclinic for the year because he is the person who has spearheaded the swabbing in this country. He was working seven days a week from day one. He volunteered. We had a lot of persons like that who said to send them because they were ready to go and do it.

At a time of great uncertainty which existed then, it really makes it very special today for us to be doing this. We salute all of those persons. We had persons working with us who are members of the Seven Days Adventist faith but at the time of the crisis when they were required to work even on that day, they came out. These are things that you really have to appreciate; really have to appreciate. The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) worked really hard and there are a number of persons which includes the CMO to the doctors who are senior officers of health such as Dr. Best, Dr. Phillips and Dr. Rollock. We had Dr. Broome,

Dr. Beckles, the Senior Environmental Health Officer and the Deputy Senior Environmental Health Officer.

We had the Senior Public Health Nurse and some additional persons that helped us on the EOC that were not from the health ministry, such as the Chief Immigration Officer and the Joint Regional Communications Centre representative. We had even tourism officials, the Royal Barbados Police Force (RBPF), Barbados Association of Medical Practitioners (BAMP), the Head of the National Mental Health Commission; Archdeacon Lynch, and others. Dr. Singh and others were part of this process and the EOC. These are the people who really have been helping us to manage the pandemic.

There is another side of this for me too. Having served on humanitarian missions abroad and I know the Prime Minister eluded to this in terms of what we are presenting now, I am happy to see the award being created because it can be used, as the Honourable Prime Minister said, for other occasions. In the past, if you had a humanitarian mission in Haiti there was a local award. If you had a humanitarian mission in Dominica, there was an award. Now, we can have one humanitarian award and this award can have different class which indicate the year or the circumstance. I think this really makes a lot of sense. It is a really prudent decision that we are taking here this morning by debating and finally approving this Bill.

Of all the things that we would have done, continue to do and we have to continue to keep our guards up because it is not over. It is not over by any stretch of the imagination. Even with the vaccine I want to really make this point and make it very strongly, that the vaccine will enhance what we have been doing for the last several months but if we continue to do exactly what we are doing, we will get out of this. The vaccine will only make it faster, safer and better so that economic activity can resume, and our way of life could have resumed in this country. This is an important point because I attended a few events at schools recently and there are a lot of people who would like the children to return to schools in the physical sense.

This is recognising, of course, that school is more than just the academic side. It involves socialisation and interactions. These are all the things that I think having the vaccines would allow us to get to that point quicker but it is still up to each of us to continue to observe the protocols, and to do what we have been doing all along. We are not only our brother's and sister's keeper, but we are responsible for our individual actions, health and safety. I urge Barbadians even during this festive season not to forget to enjoy but remember we are still in a pandemic.

Also, I want to take this time to thank all of those organisations that would have been working with us throughout this year. We have had some really good advice

and technical support from PAHO. They have been with us all the way. The last donation I would have received from PAHO, for example, would have been a number of oxy-generators I think they are called. They are very critical in this fight and helpful for Harrison Point, and elsewhere. It is a nice vehicle that would give us greater capacity to get out our mobile testing teams and swabbing teams into areas that we want them to go.

These are the kind of things that we have been receiving. It is the kind of technical assistance that has been forthcoming as well and there are other nations which have contributed to the humanitarian assistance of Barbados. We thank those nations. Canada is one of those nations. India has offered assistance. The People's Republic of China has offered humanitarian assistance. The United States of America (USA) has offered humanitarian assistance. These are the major countries that have made contributions in terms of the Ministry of Health and what it is we have been called upon to do. The Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) has been there with us in terms of providing the logistic support at the regional level because CDEMA has that responsibility in humanitarian assistance and they are the regional experts and they have done a very, very good job in transporting and distributing things from as far as the United Arab Emirates and we want to thank CDEMA for the efforts that they have been providing. The University of the West Indies (UWI) as well which is the final one that I will deal with, they have been assisting the Ministry all along throughout this process in modelling and mapping out things and they are even giving us some assistance now, in terms of getting ourselves ready for the receipt of vaccines and the distributions of vaccines when those vaccines are made available to us, but it is really to the people of Barbados and the Prime Minister has indicated that we would love to be able to give to everyone but I am telling you there are a lot of people out there. I have met humanitarian from all walks of life. There are people who have come to me and said: "Look, we do not need the assistance but the old lady down the gap ..." or "the person in the alley there, they need the assistance more than I do or than we do." There are ordinary people and friends of all of who would have come up to us and said: "Look, I know things are tight. You all are trying to help people with vouchers and so forth, you are purchasing vouchers, take that, that is my contribution." These are the little things that have been really important in this country and then the entire country really have been a part of where we are today because generally speaking Barbadians have been discipline, they have cooperated, they have collaborated, they have exercised good judgment, there are some, of course, who would not fit into that category or that description, but that is life. Everyone will not do exactly what they are required to do, but if we did not have the collective response that we have been able to have so far, we would not be where we are at this point in time and we also want to thank those.

Why is the award important in my view? It is that it gives people a sense of pride and I can tell you beyond a shadow of a doubt that those persons when they started they did not do what they are doing for their country because of any award or any honour. It is they were honoured to be able to do what they have been doing for their country and by getting this award, it means that each time you look at it, you feel a sense of pride as to the contribution that you would have made to your country and then your children can see and see what their parents, their uncles, their aunts, sisters and brothers have achieved and have been able to contribute to their country so it also gives people the chance to aspire to great things and to be able to operate at the national level and putting others above self, putting country above community. These are the things that will stand out for me in terms of the year 2020.

We had an extraordinary year extraordinary efforts and those efforts are being rewarded and it starts right here by all of us in this Honourable Chamber giving our yes, our stamp of approval to this Bill that will then enable those persons who so richly deserve the awards to be able to do so in January.

I say in conclusion that having participated in many humanitarian efforts and having been trained at some of the best institutions on the planet, I still have not faced, personally, what we are facing now and I could imagine for the ordinary person who might not have been as blessed as I have been in terms of training and preparation to be able to do what they are doing and to continue to do it, this is an effort that will never and should never be forgotten in this country. This effort this year really say who we are as Barbadians and I like the phrase. The Prime Minister coined my phrase of “no retreat, no surrender” but “this is who we are.” This indeed is who we are and this has been our finest moment, so I give full support to this Bill and I urge every single one across the aisle, everyone in here to support this because it is worthy of support and it is the least we could do to say thank you to all of those Barbadians from all walks of life and others who have contributed to the cause because of humanitarian assistance at a time, more than any other time, when this country needed that support. With those few remarks, I am obliged.

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

Hon. C. E. JORDAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think a lot has been said already in relation to what all of us agree is a very appropriate piece of legislation, a Bill that is now before this Honourable Chamber. Much of what has been said speaks to something that is very dear to me in a personal capacity but also as the Minister responsible for workers in this country. I have had occasion to say to some of my constituents that one of the few people in St. Peter who would have been around

during the period of the Spanish Flu is a gentleman by the name of Mel Williams. He is 110 years old at this point and about 10 months, but I tell you, Mr. Speaker, he cannot remember anything about the Spanish Flu. What this country and what this world has faced is something that nobody had any road map, any guidance, any notes on how to deal with it and I first want in supporting this Bill and because it is a cognate debate supporting the Golden Award of Achievement Bill as well, but particularly for the humanitarian Bill, I want first to speak to the leadership that was exemplified in how this country, this 166 square miles, this 430 square kilometre island was able to handle a pandemic of unprecedented proportions and I think it speaks to the Honourable Member for The City of Bridgetown just reflected the phrase the Prime Minister uses often, “This is who we are” and I think Barbadians really ought to understand that within this country lies the capacity to handle almost anything that can be thrown at us and so I want to say to Barbadians, even as we speak to recognising those who are on the frontline that whatever lies in our future, we can handle. I think God has given us the capacity to do it and we are able to face whatever is in our future and so I would want also to agree with the mantra that whatever comes our way we should not retreat, as the Honourable Member for The City of Bridgetown would say, we should not surrender to whatever comes our way.

Mr. Speaker, we used to have, and I know this very well from my previous life in the tourism industry, there were always these issues which always happened when a storm or a hurricane was coming. There would be an announcement of a close down and there would be a lot of debate about who were essential workers so who were those persons who you had to specially look after as a storm approached. This pandemic, Mr. Speaker, has redefined for the world what is meant by an essential worker. Maybe for the first time we recognise that in order to eat somebody in a supermarket is going to have to facilitate the distribution of food to those who need food. For the first time and this is one that we had to deal with, the Attorney General and the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East and myself dealt with the issuance of passes and one of the early ones we had to deal with was a request from a company in Barbados that packages toilet paper and as interesting as it may sound we had to determine that those who package toilet paper in Barbados are essential workers because I think many of us would remember what was happening across the world as it related to something that we thought was as simple as toilet paper so we allowed the workers who package toilet paper to be able to leave home and take the risk, in some cases travelling on public transportation, to get to work so that they could provide for us.

Mr. Speaker, I really want to say that the pandemic has said to the world but it has said to Barbados and I hope

it is said to all of us that all work is honourable and all work is to be respected. This is not a situation where there are persons who are really important because they earn large amounts of money - and I am here not referring to attorneys practising at the Bar, I am referring to those and the others who may earn significant sums - and to remind us that there is really in my view now not low-skilled work but low-paid work because all work brings significant value to the existence of people and to the operation of an economy. All work is vital and all workers are important and as a country, we have to understand that and so we start to talk about supermarket workers, and so when the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East, acting as she was for the Honourable Prime Minister at the time, took me along to a couple of supermarkets it was at that point when we were looking at curtains being put up that we were recognising the danger that some of our workers were experiencing actually on the frontline and I for the first time having grown up in a supermarket environment had to think that the cashier who is attending to a customer has at his or her, but usually her, back the customer who is dealing with the other cashier who is getting really, really close and at that time the Honourable Prime Minister said there was real uncertainty about the virus. The question I remember us having to face on the Cabinet Subcommittee was like: Is this virus aerosol, is it only droplets? Mr. Speaker, we had workers in this country who were going to work every day to make sure that we could live not sure if when the person at their back coughed that there was aerosol that they could pick up the virus and take home to a family, they themselves infected and take it home to their family so all workers, transport workers, workers in the Port, really have to be saluted. Many of them mentioned before the construction workers at Harrison's Point. We spoke about Mr. Steinbok, the Project Manager, but those 400 construction workers worked day and night to make sure that our capacity to provide ICU beds was increased, a small country. We did not have state lines that we could send people across to use their hospitals. We did not have hospital ships that we could anchor in the Deep Water Harbour to take and to facilitate the treatment of persons who may need treatment because we run out of beds in our primary care facilities. These people we consider as ordinary workers dedicated themselves to making sure that the capacity of this country to face whatever was before us was put in place, so as I said whether it was providing food or toilet paper or constructing healthcare facilities or collecting the garbage that we sometimes so indiscriminately tossed out, these people were working and working hard to make sure that this lovely rock of ours was kept safe and that the people, the inhabitants of the country, were able to live at a decent level. Those workers, Mr. Speaker, must be congratulated.

I want to mention quickly those in the third sector because, Mr. Speaker, those in the supermarkets and construction were working but there were also a category

of persons who on a daily sometimes and often on a weekly basis left their homes to make sure that many of the vulnerable in our communities had food and so there were persons in many non-governmental organisations and faith-based organisations who during the shut-down were actually coming together purchasing, receiving deliveries of foodstuffs and toiletries and packaging these items and distributing the items to those who were very vulnerable especially the older members of our community. Mr. Speaker, I remember we were encouraging people not to go into the houses of the elderly. You know sometimes you had to put the bags on the step and the person would come out to receive the packages. Many people in our third sector, in civil society organisations and in faith-based organisations, took their time and in some cases put themselves at risk to make sure that people did not fall through the cracks. As a Government we recognised and we stated it publicly that our obligation was to our people to make sure that everybody was looked after. We may not have been able to provide everything that everybody wanted but we had to make sure that everybody was at least able to eat, and I want to salute those members of civil society organisations and faith-based organisations who made up in their minds that they were going to be their brothers and their sister's keepers.

Mr. Speaker, I started by speaking to the matter of leadership and governance. The Honourable Prime Minister, in my view, is not one who blows her own trumpet but in the world even at the time when she went on an international news cast to call for leadership the sense I got from hearing the responses of people not just in Barbados is that many people felt that our Prime Minister was helping to provide some of the global leadership that was needed at that time standing shoulder to shoulder with the World Health Organisation and its leadership that was under significant pressure by larger more powerful organisations and countries so that every time the leader of the World Health Organisation spoke and he felt he had our leader's support you could tell that he felt emboldened to speak. I say that to say, Mr. Speaker, that even a small country like ours can stand head and shoulders above everybody else and can come to the fore when those who we traditionally expect to lead retreat. We can help to provide the leadership at the global level that is needed in the face of these significant events, an event like a global pandemic that has taken the lives of so many thousands of persons. In our governance during that period one of the things that really stood out to me... Mr. Speaker, Sir, sometimes when leaders make pronouncements and they realise that something has changed, that they may need to change what they had said just a few days ago, there are some people who are so "puffed up" that they refuse to make a change. In this country, led by our Honourable Prime Minister, if we put in place protocols and we found out two or three days later that something needed to be changed, we change it, because we recognise that this was

not a time to stand on a “high horse” and get on like “yuh mek yuhself.” We are leading people; people are depending on us and so for me, almost the epitome of good governance, is when a country and its leaders are able to recognise when changes have to be made for the sake of the country and for the sake of its people and the leaders are willing to make that change. That, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is good governance. That is the governance that this Barbados Labour Party Government brings to the table.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this morning I was a part of an International Labour Organisation session which dealt with something in which we are not often involved, it is something with which the Honourable Member for St. Michael South would be familiar, that is, the International Maritime Convention. Mr. Speaker, Sir, as you know, across the world, those who work on ships were left to the whims and fancies sometimes of nature; ships were abandoned, their crews were abandoned because nobody wanted to take these ships; many people felt that everybody on a ship was a carrier of the virus and that they would infect the country. Ships, we heard were docked off of countries, sometimes people did not even want to provide the tendering, to take food and other supplies to these ships. This Government (and the Honourable Prime Minister spoke to this) in spite of all that did the right thing and facilitate the transfer of persons. I think the Honourable Member spoke to 21 000, but thousands of persons, both passengers and crew, this country facilitated the movement of those workers. Mr. Speaker, Sir, those who work on ships have families too. They are workers, they are subject to the same fears as all other workers. This country [has] recognised and continues to recognise that workers (the feeling of workers, the plight of workers) have to be taken into consideration and that we have to do whatever we can to make sure that workers are taken care of. Therefore, even though the vast majority of those workers were not Barbadians, we recognised ourselves, as a part of the family of nations, and whatever this country could do to assist workers, wherever those workers are from, this Government is prepared to do and we have demonstrated in the pandemic situation during the lockdown that we are ready to assist workers whenever workers need to be assisted.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am not able to sit without speaking a little bit about minimum wage. The Honourable Prime Minister said that she is (and I think all right-thinking people should be) amazed that three or four months after talking about how valuable particular categories of workers are, that there are still people who are contented to allow certain categories of workers to be in a situation where they are barely able to survive. Currently in Barbados there is a minimum wage set for only two categories of workers -- shop assistants and domestic workers. The rate is both \$6.25 per hour. Now, that is before deducting National Insurance contributions. That

will give \$250 if you work 40 hours per week before deducting National Insurance contributions. There are households, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that are expected to live on that amount of money every week. Mr. Speaker, Sir, \$6.25 in 2012 the economists advised that over the passage of time that \$6.25 per hour is now worth \$3.21 in 2019 (from the research we have.) That, Mr. Speaker, Sir, represents a decrease in purchasing power of over 48 per cent. Let me put it another way: What a supermarket attendant could have bought with their wages in 2012, they can now buy half in 2020 -- half of what they could have bought in 2012 with the income they are/were earning. Mr. Speaker, Sir, that is the equivalent to saying to Barbados [that] no longer is the parity US\$1=BD\$2, it is now US\$1=BD\$4. The workers of this country at the bottom have suffered what is referred to as an internal devaluation of a significant proportion and so Mr. Speaker, Sir, this Government has no reservation (none whatsoever) in spite of who says what, we will respond to all concerns and objections, if there are any, but this country has no reservation about insisting that those at the very bottom of the pay scale should be able, as the Honourable Member for St. Michael South-Central shared with us last week, to have and to be able to enjoy the notion of nutrition security; they must be able to at least eat properly in this country, and the Barbados Labour Party Government this Government will ensure that we do all that we can to make sure that people can eat properly.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, when we [first] came to office the principle remains the same: We recognised that those at the very bottom (and we referred then to the non-contributory pensioners) had to get an increase and that was what this Government did. We believe that those who are considered the most vulnerable needed to be looked after. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have always been of the view that there is no need for a Government if the power relationships are equal. If the power relationships are equal, then we can negotiate as equals and we can live peacefully amongst ourselves. The only reason for Government is because there are people who can be and will be and have been taken advantage of and somebody needs to look out for them. This Government will continue to look out for those who are most vulnerable, those at the bottom of the pay scale, those who need assistance in making sure that they can keep their heads or, as we say now, their noses above the water. Essential workers in this country are not just there to make sure that we can live. We have to make sure that essential workers can live. An increase in the minimum wage will not mean that those essential workers who we so celebrated during the shutdown will be able now to afford steaks every day, but we will ensure that they will be able to enjoy decent food, good food, nutritious food on a daily basis. It is as basic as that, and I want to encourage Barbadians to recognise that this is more than just dollars and cents. This is making sure that people can eat a healthy meal every day and that they can feed their children in a healthy way every

day. That is what an increase in the minimum wage means to ordinary people in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I again add my voice in full support of the Bill that speaks to the Barbados Humanitarian Service Award and after this, the Gold Award of Achievement. I believe that it is important to say “thank you.” As a Christian, I have said and I have often preached in my church about the Ten Lepers who were all healed by Jesus. Only one returned, and my Lord asked that one, “Where are the other nine?” Only one returned to say thanks. This Government, all of us, we are saying thanks to those who put their lives on the line for us and for this country. With those remarks, Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you and I support these Bills before this Honourable Chamber.

Asides.

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

Hon. Ms. C.S.V. HUSBANDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to echo the sentiments that have been shared today in relation to those who have served us so well during that pandemic, and I want to salute every worker, every person who has contributed. Indeed, as was said, Barbados could not have come through without the contribution of these very important citizens, each one doing his and her part, doing it with commitment, and doing it in a disciplined way to help our country get through one of the most difficult challenges that any country has faced in many years. I want to broaden the numbers that we recognised this morning, because in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade there was so much work that the team here at capital did in relation to the contribution to our fight with the COVID pandemic.

Sir, I just want to share a few thoughts on what was done so that we can also salute them warmly for the work which was done: From the Minister back to every ambassadorial representative across the world. Mr. Speaker, when this pandemic loosed itself on the world Barbados had to find very quickly where we could obtain the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE), where we could get any resources that would have been helpful to us in this fight, such as ventilators and the like. If we remember correctly, there was a panic across the world as countries were scrambling. People were taking shipments from each other, especially taking from small, developing countries shipments that were destined to help their citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I want to add to the list of persons who should be recognised. I want to recognise the businesspersons who called at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade and said, “We want to help. We have connections in China. We have been able to identify a

set of masks. We have been able to identify ventilators. We have been able to identify swabs. Can we help?” People in our diaspora, Barbadians, recognising that a small nation would be at risk in a pandemic such as this, called on our embassies and high commissioners, offered their assistance, offered introductions to people across the world to help us obtain that which we needed for the Ministry of Health to help us in this fight. I want to salute them for their contribution, for their commitment to Barbados, and for their efforts to help us secure very necessary resources. The ambassadors who worked day and night without regard for time zones to help us coordinate getting those supplies into Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to congratulate them on the support which they gave the Government in helping countries get their citizens back home -- people who had to pass through our airport and seaport -- and for their unrelenting efforts for Barbadians who found themselves stranded across the world, not being able to get home, being unable to get a plane, running out of money. They had to be nurtured, they had to be stabilised, we had to do what was necessary to assure them and assure their panicked relatives here that no stone would have been left unturned to ensure that Barbadians would have been able to get back to home base safely. I want to congratulate the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade for that excellent work in helping us to help Barbadians abroad.

Sir, it was a time when the best phrase that you could use to describe it was “a situation in which many people lost their heads.” Many people, leaders, panicked, but when all were losing theirs, we have to salute the Government of Barbados, the leadership that we had in Barbados, the Prime Minister and the Members who made up the team, who worked assiduously to guide us through this very difficult time and to keep their heads, to pay attention to the science, to not go off half-cocked but to sit and think through what needed to be done. Sir, may I also add that they provided guidance, support and partnership with our members in CARICOM, because indeed in CARICOM we were fighting this together? I therefore want to salute all of those who have made that possible for Barbados and helped us to be where we are today, so that we can stand as proud Barbadians because we have shown what mettle we have been made of.

Sir, I also want to say that while there is light at the end of the tunnel, there is still more to be done. Sir, for these months all of us as Members of Parliament have had to work with our constituents seeking to find the necessary resources to enable them to keep food on the table, to give them comfort and opportunities. Sir, it has been a very difficult time in many homes, and many people came under severe mental stress; not only from lockdown, not only from isolation but because of the financial pressures which this particular pandemic created for them as their

livelihoods were removed from under them. Parents and grandparents were faced with children needing a meal and sometimes not having it to give. I want to honour the members in St. James South and members of my team who have worked tirelessly at risk to themselves to assist in going out and discovering those who needed and helped in the distribution. Sir, I could not want a better team and I want to salute them for the contribution that they made to their neighbours and people who are still making contributions. Sir, I have people that are helping elderly people who could not get out to get their medication. They have been sharing their resources with each other. They have been giving information and seeking out advice and help for those who are unable to reach necessary governmental offices to get assistance.

Sir, while there is light at the end of the tunnel and I do not think there is anyone who is not relieved to know that a number of vaccines have been on the horizon that are being made available now, but as is noted for the developed world, our battle then is still on. Sir, just as we had to battle for respirators and PPE, there is battle over vaccines. Barbados has enjoined that fight again, the same motto, "No Surrender No Retreat." Sir, those vaccines are going to be important, we need to be able to access them. In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs we are helping to carry the fight, whether it is at the OACP, UN, World Health Organisation, Ministry of Health or any other organisation internationally. We have been carrying the message that if all do not recover nobody can truly recover, we cannot get the economic recovery that we need that everyone must recover so that the world can go on and people can live their lives. Hence, that battle is still enjoined.

Sir, however, there is another battle on the horizon and the again the leadership of the Barbados Labour Party will address this matter with the same fortitude, insight and practical wisdom, and that is the issue of vaccinations. We have seen across the media that a number of people have been skeptical, and so we have to care that that does not grow here, because vaccinations are important to our health. This is how the world defeated a number of diseases that used to carry off populations all across Africa and Europe, and vaccinations have saved lives. However, there is so much misinformation that is already out in the social media being spread abroad. Legitimately, people will have concerns, but I want to assure the Barbadian population that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Health and the team that will be working on our vaccination program will address it with the same precision as they did in coping with our quarantining and safeguarding our ports and ensuring that people have something to eat.

Hence, for those of us in the population, medical profession and who know and have better information, I make this appeal, let us start speaking with our neighbours, let us start speaking with those who are tentative and to

reassure them that we will present them with what is the best possible vaccine that can be used and will be safe and effective and that they need not have any fear in so taking.

Sir with those few words, I would like to thank you for the opportunity and to be able to add my voice in thanking every Barbadian for what they have done to make this little nation proud and to help us to survive a pandemic that could have taken and decimated us. However, today by the grace of God, we are here, we are still fighting and we are still trusting in him to take us the rest of the journey. I am obliged to you Mr. Speaker.

SUSPENSION

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of Government Business.

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Thank you Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Sitting be suspended until 2.10 p.m.

The question the Sitting be suspended was put and resolved in the affirmative without division. Mr. Speaker suspended the Sitting accordingly.

RESUMPTION

PAPERS

(RECOMMITTED)

Hon. M. K.-A. CADDLE: I am commanded to lay the following:

1. Loan Contract No. 5168/OC-BA between the Government of Barbados and the Inter-American Development Bank on the Programme to Strengthen Public Policy and Fiscal Management in response to the health and economic crisis caused by COVID-19 in Barbados.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

(RECOMMITTED)

Hon. Ms. S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, I beg to give notice of the following:

1. Resolution to grant the sum of \$32 754 030 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. 8 2020-2021.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS RESUMED

Bishop J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to lend my voice to the furtherance of this debate on the matter of these two Bills which both seek to give honour where it is believed honour is due and award Barbadians for service in the name of and cause of the country. Mr. Speaker, I do not believe in the kind of Opposition politics that opposes for opposing-sake or criticize just because you want to make a political point. Certainly, I do not believe in the politics of personal attacks inside or outside of here and even on the political platform.

I say that just to set the backdrop for my next comment. In speaking to the two Bills before us, I want to take the moment to applaud the Honourable Minister of Health and Wellness; the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown for his leadership in terms of the health response, managing of the health aspects in relation to the COVID-19 presence in Barbados, its potential threat and wider spread in the absence of good management.

As we all know, COVID-19 presents a serious economic challenge for us. It is a virtual mountain which we yet have to climb. It is a virtual valley of darkness and a shadow which we are yet going through. However, there is also the aspect of the public health threat that has existed to the well-being of the country. Of course, it would have taken some measure of astute leadership of that Ministry and marshalling the forces in connection with that Ministry, and the liaising with other ministries to stay on top of the situation.

I am of the view as many others are, and perhaps all of us, that we are not out of the woods and clearly through the valley, but I would want to go on record as extending my compliments to the honourable gentleman from the City, in terms of his role as Minister of Health with respect to management of the COVID-19 issue. I do not know what else he is doing relative to the portfolio for which I must compliment him or criticise him. I am not dealing with those things because that is not the point today. I do not know yet if I am to compliment him for managing situations relative to the QEH, the mental hospital, the polyclinics and the others. The day for that will come and if I find at that moment he is worthy of such credit, I will be so honest as to do so.

If I find at that moment he is worthy of some censure, I will do so as well but today I simply want to applaud him. I do not engage in platitudes and I am not necessarily easily moved by slogans and mantras. Simply to say, I think that he has set an example of leadership with respect to his Ministry over this matter and that example should be applauded. I want to commend him. I would admit publicly and I have said it to him privately that I have been quite concerned as to the effect it was likely to have on his own health; stress related to the situation and

any attendant exposure to the very threat over which he was trying to lead the fight.

I am glad that he maintains a good state of health physically and that he is untouched by that. I am glad that he is of sound mind and just want to compliment him. Before I overdo it, he assumes a bit too much. Let me say that and be on my way. I want to say that I support what the Honourable Prime Minister said this morning in relation to recognising the worth in the value of the contribution, especially those who have been on the frontline of this charge and fight when she did say that subject to consultation with the unions, the Government will seek within its capacity to provide at least a one-off monetary award as a show of appreciation on behalf of the nation and the Government for those who have given their energies in leading from the front against the fight against COVID-19 to protect the rest of us.

I support that notion. In fact, months ago when they were busy applauding frontline workers every Wednesday I said then in this House and elsewhere, and I still do believe that it should go beyond the applause on a Wednesday evening and there should be some monetary token of expression of appreciation. In a tangible way that appreciation should be expressed. I support that. I know that Government is limited at this time especially with respect to finances, although if you check on the monies being spent on consultants and professional services you would not think so.

Certainly, the Government is limited with respect to the finances available but I think it would be a worthy gesture if in fact that monetary token of appreciation should be given.

I used the word “token” at this moment for the lack of a better word. It should go beyond token and go to the extent to which the Government has the capacity so now to do in this moment. Also, I still believe that in addition to what we are able to give in the context of our financial constraints, we should consider giving these people some time off from their regular duties once we settle back down as a country because some of them as has been said in this very debate have gone beyond the call and worked extra hours, and worked even on their Sabbath to administer help to others.

I believe in addition to the monetary award which will come, there should be an award of some extra time added to their normal annual holiday to show them appreciation. It is where this side stands on that. I want to mention something in passing before I forget. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East; the Honourable Prime Minister, when she spoke made reference to some of the negative fallout from the COVID-19 situation vis-à-vis the protocols and prohibitions that

were put in place. Her focus was on the mental health, generally speaking, of persons who are affected psychologically and otherwise.

I share those concerns but I have a particular concern which I want to zero in on. The Honourable Prime Minister did not go there, so I would want to make sure that I put it on the table. As a pastor, Mr. Speaker, you know people come to you with various concerns and problems. One of the complaints that has been raised with me recently is the already seeming negative impact upon the emotional state of mind of our primary school children. I have been told by those who have charge of such children in a few instances thus far that there has been noted significant behavioural change. I have observed that also in our church, especially with reference to one young boy who is a very active bright young fellow but he has withdrawn to a state of relative quiet that troubles me.

These are the complaints I have heard from a few others. I want to say that if it is not already being done, some study perhaps or attention for sure ought to be given to the potential for negative emotional and psychological impact on our primary school children because the regime of teaching and learning with them has changed. The protocols impact them as well. The prohibitions are applied at that level as well. Out of force or necessity, we are denying children things which are normal and necessary to the wholesome balance and proper development as human beings.

I am really concerned about that and sure the Minister of Education; the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East, as astute and compassionate as she is or ought to be would have already had that registered on her own radar. It really does concern me because of what I see and have heard with reference to complaints or concerns raised to me by parents and guardians. It is serious implication for negative dynamics operating in the development of these children. In this age and context, I am no child psychologist but it would seem to me as a parent of small children at some stage that there are some serious aspects of behavior or behavioural development which will be impacted by the situation.

Positive peer rivalry from early is conducive and necessary to good human development. The growing child needs to be able to engage in that type of dynamic where there is rivalry, competition, contest, with his or her peers. We carry that beyond the primary stage into our young adult lives and the aspects around which we compete and contest and demonstrate rivalry may change, but that is a part of our life and those early formative years exposed to that type of positive peer rivalry in competition that helps to prepare us for this kind of setting here where we have to compete in terms of the exchange of ideas and views, where we have to contest positions, where we have to

counter arguments. It shows that some of us are a little bit deficient in terms of how we have developed around that and when one can say how we behave and react here when counter arguments are given, how questions are raised and arguments are posed, but that is so very important for developing children. The whole business of gender role, identity formation, and, Mr. Speaker, it did not suddenly appear to you one day in your young adult life that you were a male and very male. You developed that gender role identity, that formation took place from the time you were very small and you know that is a girl there; that is a female there. You may not have known what to do about that at that stage but that is a female there and I am a male over here and it may have taken you years to determine what you do about that particular situation. Some of us came to that a little later than others, some of us came to it a little earlier than others, perhaps some of us are yet to come to it but the point remains, Mr. Speaker, is in those formative years, boys playing with girls in a primary school situation and you get to learn what is a girl and you get to learn I am a boy and I am expected to behave a certain way. Those gender roles that formation is so very important. I wonder if some of that is not being missed out on. This may be a brief period but how long is too long before a child is forever negatively affected by that type of situation. We all have a big problem in Barbados today with the ability to resolve conflict among adults and we do not wait until we get old to learn conflict resolution skills and a school does not exist simply to teach us arithmetic and English and other things at the primary level, but the primary level teaching environment also allows us to learn other things and, Mr. Speaker, I am sure at primary school, you got engaged in conflict. I am sure you did not start it but it ended up at your doorstep and you had to be able to manage it and you learnt sometimes in pretty harsh ways that even if you are right and the other person is wrong, the fact that you got into conflict, which resulted in battle, in physical contact, then your teachers and your Headmasters or Headmistresses at that stage brought you to Christian understand. You know that even if you are right you ought to do your best to avoid physical conflict or conflict which leads to physical altercation and children learnt that from early. I still remember from primary school, Mr. Cuffley putting a flogging on me right after lunch. At St. Giles Boys' School and he waited until lunch ended and four classes were gathered in the Hall and that is when he chose to inflict the punishment with his leather belt across my back and I was right. George was wrong and Joe was right but we both got it and you learnt that even sometimes when you are right, perhaps you would do a better thing if you walk away and it is not only cowards who walk away, sometimes it is those who understand the uselessness of carrying conflict to a certain stage. These children today need to learn these skills because in Barbados we have a problem with our young adult people not being able to resolve their conflicts. Even mature adults are struggling with that in the Barbadian society today and social

engagement skills are so very important, we need to learn how to interact with each other in a social setting and children start to learn these things from very early and we do not recognise that. We take it for granted but we are now living in an environment where, perhaps, the distance that obtains between our children in the school setting, the protocols and the prohibitions, it could be that these things are having a negative affect which can be enduring and which would cost this society and economy much more down the road if it is not properly monitored so I am simply asking if it is being monitored, if it is being studied, if it is not, I really want to register my concern on the behalf of parents out there, some of whom might be struggling with this very issue, Mr. Speaker.

What we seek to honour with these two Bills and the awards that are entailed therein in my view, Mr. Speaker, is the real Barbadian spirit. I am not so naïve as to recognise that the Barbados in which I grew up as an adolescent, in which you lived as an adolescent has not undergone significant change with respect to what we call the Barbadian spirit, what is really the essence of being a Barbadian. There have been some positive changes and there has been some seriously negative changes as well and, I think, or rather I would hope, that what is intended here and what is being attempted here is really an initiative to recognise what is a true Barbadian spirit and to reward what is truly the real Barbadian spirit so that we might see it further encouraged in every possible circumstance. I say that because, Mr. Speaker, there are those who serve in the interests of this country without any consideration for material gain. Some of those persons are located right here in this Honourable Chamber today and I believe, from my experience over the past 22, 23 or whatever it is years in the parliamentary life, in the politics of Barbados, there are those of whom I have been impressed that this is the mindset they brought to this business, that they are here to serve not for material advancement. Now that is quite contrary to the popular view that exist out there. People believe that everybody who comes to elective politics is in it for some material gain, some material advancement and they have been clear examples of those who were so possessed, clear examples of those who were so motivated, clear examples of those who succeeded at that, but there are also some glaring examples of those who are not in that way motivated and those who have not, after many years of service, been in that way blessed because the material acquisitions that have come their way during the life of public service are not such that anybody can easily and honest say you have got that because you served in this way. I think that is part of the real Barbadian spirit, that they are many who serve without any concern about material. We have heard it said in here already in this debate, I think it was the Honourable Minister of Health who said it, that there are those who served, not asked, how much I am going to get out of this, what about overtime and all of that, and that is a part of the real and true

Barbadian spirit and I think that these Bills are intended to salute that and to honour that. There are those who serve without recognition. Of course, there are the boys in the village who, at the prompting of no one, once an emergency situation breaks out will respond. You have seen them in St. Michael Central, Mr. Speaker, you have seen them in the City of Bridgetown, Honourable Member, I have seen them in St. Michael West. A house goes up in flames and the fellows on the block that we write off as lost respond spontaneously without training and without a thought sometimes to their own well-being and they go into burning flames to rescue an old lady who is fairly immobile or an old gentleman who cannot see or it may be that those who occupy this dwelling are fit as fiddles but they need help in this moment of threat and fellows 'on the block', these guys, respond and they are not recognise necessarily when it happens. As a matter of course the newspaper might take a picture, the newspaper that is, if they so desire or if they are on the spot but these guys do that without prompting and with no thought of that and there are people who serve in State institutions, people as I said who serve in the political arena and they are not looking for recognition, not looking for material advancement, they are in the non-governmental organisations of this country and in charitable organisations of this country and the churches of this country. Not everybody who serves in the church especially at the leadership level of the church is in it for the money. There are people who represent what it is in my view to be truly Barbadian who serve irrespective of what and I think that the gesture here is well-intended if it is intended to recognise that type of effort. Of course, there are those who serve in a context where there is an obvious lack of appreciation. Not only do you not seek for recognition, not only do you not seek for material advancement but sometimes when you do, there is an obvious evident lack of appreciation and yet people press on and do what they have to do because it is in their DNA, it is part of what makes them Barbadian and they are happy to serve without pause for thought, that here I am doing my best and they do not even hear... Politicians know about that, hey you all can say otherwise but we all have constituents who demonstrate that type of attitude. You do their best for them, Mr. Speaker, you know that well and I know that well, we are political neighbours, and you help 99 times but when they come the 100th time and you failed and you are not in a position to help you are the worse person in the world but you do it nevertheless and they berate you in front of your face, behind your back, some of them not all of them thankfully, a minority group and you know they are doing that and they come back for help and you give them the help because that is what you are there to do, you are seeking to serve even in the face of an evident lack of appreciation for what you are trying to do. Sometimes the resources are not even at hand to do the job that is needed in the area of service that you seek to provide for your country and I am sure that there were limitations on resources and equipment for those who are in the

frontline of the struggle. Thankfully, the country found itself in a place where in several instances we are able to find the resources to help to get the job done but in spite of that there are many instances still to be reported that the resources were not there, the equipment was not there but yet people did what they could to get the job done. Some serve, Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the fact that they make great sacrifices with respect to their family and family life. It cannot be easy for anybody who is devoted to family and who feels like family is devoted to him or to her to have to make the sacrifices in terms of time sometimes, in terms of finances, you are putting yourself at the disposal of others at the expense of family members but this is to me what it is to be truly Barbadian. I speak from a perspective of Christian relationship with my Lord but I think that it even goes beyond that and even outside of being a Christian and coming from a Christian experience, a Christian perspective, there are those who serve with a sense of humanity such that they are willing to put others before themselves and before yourself sometimes mean before your family. You can identify with that I am sure, Mr. Speaker, and politicians should be able to identify with that. I think that these things are very much in keeping with the true Barbadian spirit and if this legislation is intended to address that then it is a good thing which I would fully support. These values really constitute what it is to be a true Barbadian and I am sure they are embodied in the persons who are on the frontline as exemplifies in the way they went about serving their country in this moment of crisis and this moment of need.

Mr. Speaker, now you can say what is positive, what is good but you always have to give the balanced perspective as you see it, and from where I stand or sit there are a couple of questions that I would have to raise or a couple of comments that I feel it necessary to make. In this Bill, a Humanitarian Service Award Bill, at Section 4 subsection 2 it seems to suggest to me that the identification or the identifying of persons to be awarded is solely at the discretion of the Prime Minister of the day and if that is so I do not know that I support that. I think that if these are truly national awards for service rendered in the national interest those who are identified as deserving of these awards should not be restricted to those who catch the attention of the Prime Minister or who are so awarded based on the recommendation of the Prime Minister only. I do not make that as a political comment or attack on the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, that is a general thing. If we are going to be awarding people on a national level for a national duty, national service, especially in moments of crisis and serious challenge then those who are so awarded should be identified outside and beyond the scope of the discretion of a singular person or a singular person in the office in this case of the Prime Minister.

I noticed as well that if you look at the two Bills together as the opposing voice on this side that I think I have to say that we got to be careful in Barbados that we do not devalue the worth of honours conferred upon people especially at this level by embroiling the award in the mire of politics, if I might put it like that. We need to avoid politicising the process. I do not think that this is the first place in the world that a point like this has been raised. If you do some research you would find abroad, near and far, there are those who raised this issue with respect to the conferring of national awards. Often it can get embroiled in the political machinations of the day and it can become very subject to the political cultural practices that obtained and I would not want to see us dilute an award at this level and of this nature by making it easily subject to politicisation, and that is the point I want to make.

I remember when we introduced it, I do not recall the specific title, but a number of people that we are supposed to honour every year from abroad and at home and I was concerned about the numbers then and I said it then because I still am of the view that the numbers indicated in that Schedule, in that legislation suggested that we would be given a whole set of (I cannot remember) 40 awards per year to persons? I felt that that was too many, that it would dilute its value. It is not and I was not saying then, as I was thought to have been saying, that we cannot find that number of people, I was simply saying that with that number of people, with that degree of frequency, could have the negative effect of diluting the value of the award in the minds of those who receive those awards and so we should not subject or make it easy the recognition of people who do honorable service to this country, especially in a crisis situation such as we are intending. We should not dilute that by making it easily subject to political influence.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I noticed also with respect to the Gold Award of Achievement that the intention is to move the number from one to whatever. I do not like the idea, I could live with moving it beyond one, and it would be good to know what would have informed the thinking around the number of one person for that Gold Award annually. I can understand what informs the thinking that we need to do more than one, but I do not know, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that to leave it as an open-ended situation such as the legislation purports to do.

I also noticed that with respect to that Gold Award, it was linked to National Heroes Day. I believe that that would have been an attempt to underscore the importance of those qualities embodied in our National Heroes and seem to be critical and desirable in nation-building. I would have thought, therefore, it was an attempt to instruct citizenry as to the values that we uphold and hold high and treasure such as embodied in our National Heroes, which might be replicated right across our citizenry. Hence to delink it from National Heroes Day, I do not know

necessarily that that is the best thing to do. It is not the thing that would tell me I should vote against it, but I just put that out there. I think we want to teach especially our young and up-and-coming citizens what we see as the real Barbadian spirit, what we see as the true value of citizenship, how citizens behave, what are qualities that we want to see inculcated in our young adult people as they come along from our school systems and from our home and family units and come up the line. I think if we delink it, National Heroes Day and just leave it to the discretion of Cabinet of Barbados as to when these awards should be made, I do not know that that is the best thing; nation-building is much more than having to do with proper management of the economy or the healthy building or the healthy building of healthy institutions, it is also about teaching good values, good quality of citizenry and patriotism and one of the ways we do that is by example, by models, by the embodiment of such and I think persons so recognised become the models that you want to encourage other people to emulate.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I [would] want to support my comrade, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West. We are colleagues in arms. We are on the political frontline. We may fight in different spheres, but I think we are pursuing a common cause, that is the good of Barbados. I want to support the Honourable Member for St. Philip West. Mr. Speaker, Sir, one last thing before I sit is simply this, (and I heard the Honourable Member recently suggesting) that we need as a nation to learn how to better treat persons who have served at the highest levels in this country, especially in the political arena and in the politics and Government of Barbados. I have said this before, nobody listened, nobody probably listened to him or to me until it is themselves to be honored. I said it long ago and it first dawned on me, Mr. Speaker, Sir, when having served as Prime Minister of this country, and especially in difficult times, and having taken a principled position with respect to economic policy and suffering for it, I saw Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford, after he had ceased being Prime Minister, struggling to find a car parking space while attending an event around Parliament or Heroes Square. That hurt me to see that. It hit me then and I said it then. In fact, we do not treat ourselves properly because it is not the political thing to say that politicians are not well rewarded/awarded and remunerated in Barbados. And I got shot because I am speaking as the voice of Opposition and I am not pushing my own cause but we in this public space over long year do not properly represent our own cause and politicians are not managed and handled properly and they are not properly remunerated. I do not make apologies for saying that, and they are not properly rewarded for the service which they give. Now, I can say that. Some of you fellows who just start to not go there, but that is a fact. If you compare what happens in Barbados, even with some of our neighbours who are not as well-off economically as we are, and if you do the comparisons in real terms politicians

in Barbados are not treated properly, notwithstanding what the public is made to believe, notwithstanding what the media helps to propagate out there, they are not treated properly, they are not provided properly for with respect to when they have health challenges. I thank God I have come this far without any health challenges while I have been in here but I know of a couple who have been, and I do not know all of the details and I cannot speak to recent times because you have thrust me out of your bosom and I am now over here, but I was aware then when I sat with others, I was quite aware of some of the challenges that they had.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I remember one particular fellow saying that he went away on Government Business and found himself immediately faced with a serious, serious health challenge which would require a financial response and was not in a position to do so because there were no provisions for anything like that, the country sends you out there to do its business, but they do not care if you survive out there or if you get back or what state of health that you are in when you do return. I really did not need to go into all of this, I really want to support the Honourable Member for St. Philip West in his call to treat politicians properly. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the truth of the matter is that they are not treated properly, they do not speak up for themselves because we are afraid that people would think that we are self-serving, and I am guilty of that. Mr. Speaker, Sir, there are lots of things I should be saying about the Office of the Leader of the Opposition and when I am not longer there I will say those things, but I do not want to appear to be self-serving. As I said, I am at the other end from you guys and these things have to be addressed, and I think seriously so. Thus that when fellows have served here honourably when they have served at the highest levels, you have Prime Ministers out there who are “ran about”, “beaten about”, and no sort of dignity or courtesies extended to them, that is bad, that is bad.

There is a lot about the United States of America that we do not like but there are some things about the United States of America and their system that we must applaud. There are lots of things about other places that we do not want to emulate but there are some things that we really should very seriously copy and that is one of them. Therefore, how do we treat people? That when a former Honourable Prime Minister comes into my church, if he is coming to a service to attend a wedding or funeral, should I not give him the proper courtesies and addressed him properly? I should. Those things should be mandated, and we need to put in place a framework that treats to these things.

Now, I want to stop. I have spoken longer than I had intended. I said some things earlier which I hope will not be missed, but I know the public space out there, those who will pick up on the last couple of things that I have said and

I hope that they do but I hope that they would remember some of the other things I have said as well.

I support the Bills in this regard, Mr. Speaker. I call for a close examination of what is happening to our children. I call for caution as we set up a system of awards beyond those which we now have, so that we do not subject it easily to political influence. I call for a better deal for politicians in Barbados, current and former. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Asides.

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

Hon. Miss M.K-A. CADDLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sir, I rise to say a few words in support of both the Humanitarian Service Award Bill and the Gold Award of Achievement (Amendment) Bill. There is a young woman, a frontline worker, who is very close to me. Her daughter is also very close to me, and some time ago her daughter sent her a photo which she had taken, and it was an image of the sunset. She said, "Mummy never gets to see the sunset because she is working against COVID." She is six years old and that is what she said. She said: "She is working against COVID and she loves the sunset so I took this picture so she can see it." That, for me, embodies the people of Barbados, the frontline workers, the people who support the frontline workers, because not all of us are on the frontline but it takes a whole supporting structure, a whole community, to be able to respond in the way that this country has been able to respond to this pandemic.

Sir, I start there in making that point because that particular young lady works in such a supporting role. She is one of the many people who is not a doctor or a nurse or works in a lab, and they have done tremendously work, but she is one of those people who had to do some of the work of changing the structure of healthcare administration and making sure that apart from the increased number of beds and apart from all of the equipment and the other things that had to be put in place, we also had the people and the institutional arrangements to be able to make all of this happen. She is one of the people who got up on mornings early and went to work without knowing what would be, if any, the change in remuneration or what would be the arrangements, but really just understanding that this was not business as usual, that this was an emergency situation and that this was being done not for the Government, Mr. Speaker, but for the people of Barbados.

I think that Barbadians came together in this crisis out of an understanding that it was their work that would mean that their neighbours and their families would have been able to survive and live to tell the story. As we went forward under the leadership of the Honourable Member

for St. Michael North East, the Honourable Prime Minister, and the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown and the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East and the team, I do believe that the people of Barbados and those workers were buoyed by the fact that Barbados was starting to distinguish itself as an example of how to handle this crisis. As I listened to people who worked at the lab or people who worked at the University of the West Indies, and as people came together to talk about how we would manage this, people were motivated not just because they needed to and wanted to take care of their fellow Barbadians and those who live here, but because there is something about Barbadians. I heard the Honourable Prime Minister say this in this Chamber a little while ago: It is not just that we feel we are, it is that we know we are. We are often in the position of being turned to for regional and global leadership. The people of Barbados knew that this would be such a time; not just leadership in the international arena but even leadership in communities to be able to wear your mask, to be able to observe the protocols and to be an example in the communities in which they live.

Sir, this is one of the reasons why this Humanitarian Service Award Bill and this Gold Award of Achievement (Amendment) Bill and us being able to confer it on more than one person, and not just at a particular time, is so important. I mentioned in particular the University of the West Indies, and the Honourable Prime Minister in leading off and the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, the Minister of Health and Wellness, went through all of the different categories. One of the risks that you run when you start to name categories is that you forget somebody and you live in perpetual fear of doing that, so I am not even going to try and do that, but I do have to acknowledge not just the healthcare administration but I will come to other roles which the Ministry of Health and Wellness played in other parts that people may not have expected. I have to acknowledge the University of the West Indies and those who immediately came out and said, "There are things that we need to know which we do not yet know. Research is what we do. Modelling is what we do. Forecasting is what we do. Let us help."

Sir, I remember having a conversation with the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown. There are roles which we all have to play. We are not all the Minister of Health, thank goodness, but there are roles which we all have to play. I remember having that conversation with him and asking, "Do we know what our numbers going to look like? Do we know the things that we will be called on to do as the numbers change? Who is dealing with this forecasting business? Who is looking at this modelling?" That is the conversation that led to the further involvement of the University of the West Indies, and they came with all of their thinking and with all of their explanations; not only being willing to teach but willing to learn and being able to

share in this collaborative space. I really have to acknowledge the team that has been doing the research there and has also given some leadership to the global community in terms of how we address this issue of modelling and forecasting.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M.K-A. CADDLE: Their work, together with the work of the Ministry of Health and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH), also allowed us -- in particular the Chairman of the QEH, the Permanent Secretary and team in the Ministry of Health and the Deputy Chairman of the QEH Board and the team at the QEH -- to very quickly put together that operation for the European Investment Bank financing for COVID-related healthcare expenditure. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East made the announcement this morning hot off the Press that we had received word that the operation had been approved for up to 50 million Euros in COVID-related health expenditure. The reason why we were able to very quickly put that information together -- and we certainly know that the European Investment Bank and the European Union tend to require perhaps a lot more detailed information than many of our other partners -- was because of the tremendous planning in terms of procurement and in terms of knowing exactly what things cost and what you would need. It was because the Ministry of Health and Wellness and the QEH had done that planning quickly but had done it and had the capacity to be able to keep abreast of that information, that we were able to put together all of those numbers and we were able to go back to the European Investment Bank and get these concessional terms for this refinancing.

Sir, the colleagues from the bank even said to us, "This is perhaps the best example of how we have received information and how well thought-out and planned and specific it has been in the countries that we have worked within this operation."

However, I want to say something very quickly about why this kind of financing is important. In 2019, the Ministry of Health and Wellness went through an estimates process just like every other Ministry, where they came to us in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs and Investment with a program, with some ideas for the expenditure and for the revenue to say this is what we expect to earn and spend. I once heard somebody say that COVID is like looking both ways before crossing the street and then getting hit by a plane. That is really what happened to that Ministry and it happened to all of us. However, when they came to estimates and they put forward what they put forward, never in a million years would they have believed that they would have to by January, February, March of the following year, then have to start to really think about well how we finance a

response to a pandemic. There is something that people do not often think about in the last nine months as we have been dealing with this and it is the fact that this pandemic did not put on pause any other health related issues. People still got ill from other kinds of things, people still into accidents, regrettably, people still had fractures and all kinds of other health issues that the health sector in this country had to address. Hence, what happened, not just in the health care sector but in many other sectors, is that the pandemic sucked all of the air out of the atmosphere, because when you had planned your resources for certain things at certain times, here comes a pandemic, a one in a hundred- year event and tells you, you thought you were going so well come so. What this operation, what this financing, with the help from the European Investment bank allows the sector to do, is to then reorient resources to the areas that may have had to wait because we were trying to keep people alive in the context of a pandemic.

Sir, it is very important that we understand that the health sector is one where there are many things to respond to all at once, there are many balls in the air and I have to give the utmost credit and respect to the Minister of Health and Wellness and the team who continued to do an accident and emergency expansion, continued to address the issues related to vector borne diseases, dengue and all of these things. Continued to engage by increasing the nursing capacity with the nurses from Cuba and Ghana. Continued to roll out the community health workers and all of these other efforts alongside everything that was going on, has now brought a national cancer plan for the country and is really able to walk, chew gum and skin coffins and as we would say because that is what has been necessary, while other countries are barely even able to keep abreast of what is happening with the pandemic, the Ministry of Health and Wellness in Barbados is able to not just deal with a pandemic but also to continue to address all of the other health care issues that we have to address on a daily basis.

The fact that we had to deal with COVID has called for all kinds of restructuring and it is not just in the health care sector, but it is all certain changes in the structure of the economy and that nature of commerce. Hence, I say these things because I want us to have the full picture of how so many people in so many sector and places had to shift, adjust and come with new ideas. COVID created a new economy in Barbados. We talk about the legislation that addresses a national payment system, when we talk about modernisation, it is because everything had to be shifted quickly. We had to start delivering pharmaceuticals, people drugs to them. We had operators, people who worked in the delivery economy that very quickly rushed in and filled that gap. They are people who called us up and said listen, has it ever occurred to you that you might be able to use delivery services in this way or that way, has it ever occurred to you that we might be able to assist. They did not ask how much they were getting paid or asked

anything about any arrangements, they came in and they understood that we had to restructure the economy, make way for a digital economy, delivery economy, and a gig economy, where the nature of work and the way that we do things was changing. All of those people who came with their ideas and new business models we have to acknowledge, and we have to mention them when we talk about how Barbadians have stepped up to the task.

On the issue of how we had to deal with financing for COVID, it is not just this recent operation that allows us to adjust the financing issue. A short while ago, I was able to lay a loan contract that sees the Government of Barbados again accessing concessional resources, and I have to say concessional resources because I always have to repeat two points that all countries borrow, but the second point is that the mere fact of borrowing does not mean that there is something wrong with what a country is doing. We came out of a decade where even if Barbados wanted to borrow from somebody nobody would allow them. When you go into a certain shop and you see the signs that tells you no credit here, that was the position in which Barbados found itself. The fact that based on our advocacy and fiscal rectitude, we are now in a position of accessing concessional, as in low interest resources over a longer term repayment period makes our economy more sustainable. Hence, that loan contract that was laid earlier is for the amount of US \$120 million that we now have access to as a policy based loan to be able to address the falloff in revenue that was caused by COVID.

Shortly, we will also lay another loan contract that sees us being able to receive US\$100 million from the Latin American Development Bank to be able to address the falloff in revenue and we are discussing with the World Bank for the first time in decades being able to access exceptional borrowing, because these are exceptional times. Excluding the World Bank resources that is Barbados \$440 million, about the same amount we estimate of the falloff in revenue for this fiscal year that was caused by COVID.

I wanted to say something very clearly before I advance from this point. It is that there are countries in the world that are trying to get access to borrowing to be able to fill their financing gap and cannot for various reasons. This period and the reason that have been making the case for the ring fencing of COVID related debt, is that globally if we are not careful about how handle global debt in this environment, we are headed for an international debt crisis, if we do not carefully plan at an international level.

This is not about Barbados now because ironically Barbados least needs the help, in terms of how we treat debt in this pandemic and post pandemic world. However, we are doing the advocacy on behalf of our neighbours in this Caribbean region, small island developing states and

Least Developed Countries (LDCs) because if together we do not chart a sustainable debt path for the entire world, then the world will be in a debt crisis. Having come through the last 30 months that Barbados came through where we were able to get our debt on a sustainable path, it is the country that least needs to make this case. However, we make the case because no man is an island and no island is an island in this context.

Whatever happens to the rest of the region and world will affect us. I say all of that to say that I want through you, Sir, to disabuse us of the notion that because we borrow it means that we are not managing the economy well. It is not debt in itself that is problematic, it is making sure that it can be serviced. Under the BERT plan, we have made sure that the path we are taking is one that is sustainable and one we will be able to service. The last point I want to make, Sir, is one that relates to a point that was made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael West in his intervention. It is not often that I find myself in the position of agreeing with the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, but it is the season for all kinds of miracles.

I want to pick up on this question of mental health and resolving conflict. It is a bit unfortunate that the Honourable Member chose in making the point about how we need to make sure we continue to invest in young people's resolution of conflict and conflict skills, ironically happened to actually glorify some physical violence that was perpetrated on him when he was a student. Therefore, it is a little bit of an uncomfortable illustration that was made because I do believe that if we want to address some of the mental health and socialisation issues that seem to be affecting us more in this pandemic reality that we have to reject physical violence.

Apart from the story of being beaten that he used to illustrate the point, the underlying point is one that is sound. Mr. Speaker, December 10 ended 16 days of activism to end gender-based violence. This year we saw by not any means an isolated case but is perhaps the most recent case that comes to mind, the murder of a young woman by an intimate partner. It seems to me that apart from the sense of loss and grief, and the senselessness of the act we were not outraged enough. We heard colleagues from United Nations (UN) Women, the National Organization of Women (NOW) and other institutions tell us how in the context of this pandemic that gender-based violence has increased.

I have not seen specific numbers. Again, I do not think we collect enough data about it. We need to collect more information but I do not think we can have a conversation about how to help people cope and address people's mental health without having a broader national conversation about this other epidemic; this other national health crisis that is taking the lives of Barbadian women.

We were too silent, Sir, during these 16 days of activism to end gender-based violence because this is not an effort that can be driven from a department in a Ministry. Yes, they need the resources in order to be able to do it, but it calls for action by each Barbadian.

It calls for every man to call out and reject the kind of behavior in his friends and colleagues that suggests that intimate partner violence or gender-based violence or violence against women is okay. It calls for the rejection of that. It calls for all of us to say, "Listen, it is not okay to speak to her like that. It is not okay to touch her like that." It calls for us in the context of the schools and community-based groups to not just think we are teaching Math, English and coding, but to understand that we are teaching young people how to relate to each other.

It is never too early to say to a young boy that is six or eleven years old as I do in the communities of St. Michael South Central whenever I see it, "No, that is a young lady and you must not touch her in that way." It is not too early to say to young girls, "It is not alright for you to put hands on somebody in an aggressive way." As I have said to my colleagues in this honourable place before, we are not going to achieve true gender equality unless we address this atmosphere that allows gender-based violence to persist. This is one of the issues when it comes to resolving conflict that we have to speak about, and I do not say it because I am a woman.

I do not step away from it because I am a woman. I think that we all have to be mindful of the fact that men and women bring all kinds of perspectives based on our life experiences and not to step back from it. What I would say in closing on this debate is that the work which has been done in response to this pandemic has been nothing short of human or "hu-woman." It has been nothing short of tremendous and it is fitting that we acknowledge it not just with this symbol of appreciation, but as the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East; the Honourable Prime Minister, said earlier that we acknowledge it in a tangible financial way to honour the men, women, young adults and children who have made their contributions.

I do want to remind us that the work of addressing this pandemic and transformation of making sure that we continue to live in a harmonious society must continue. The effort that we have seen has to be applied to other things that ail us. The work that we have seen has to be applied in other places where people are losing their lives because we have not done enough.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I commend these two Bills. I am obliged to you.

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

Ms. T. N. S-A. MOORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am sure that many of us in this Honourable Chamber can well recall about a year ago when we were making plans for "We Gatherin' 2020" there was a lot of anticipation that we would be reconnecting with our culture, we would be recalling the sense of community within our various parishes, we would be linking up with a number of people, relatives and friends who would be coming in from overseas to attend the many festivities, the many functions that would be planned all around "We Gatherin' 2020." All like now, last year that is where we were with much anticipation, but then something else visited, Covid-19. Covid-19 happened and it knocked all of those plans, "We Gatherin' 2020" changed to "we inside", "we masking up", "we on lockdown" and so on and we have heard the many different iterations of it that were being put out on social media and anticipation and excitement turned to fear and anxiety among many within our communities. I contexted it there, Mr. Speaker because the two Bills before us are Bills that emerged really out of a reflection of what took us from the level of anxiety that was being experienced when Covid-19 visited to where we are now, Mr. Speaker, on the 15th December. I am sure that when Covid-19 came upon us that there were many who are listening to this debate today that could not consider that Barbados could be in the position that it is now. Of course, we have had seven deaths and we regret that we have had those deaths but that we are here and we can look around and still see many of our families and friends who have not lost their lives to Covid-19 and especially when we look at other countries where the situation is not as positive or has not been as successful as it has been for us here in Barbados. I am sure that context is what makes us all as Barbadians really proud of what we have achieved and the fact that we can stand here to debate a Bill that contemplates an award that will be conferred on eligible persons who rendered outstanding service to Barbados, yes, but as we have been made aware previously and again here in this Honourable Chamber that it will be delivered to many Barbadians who help us through the Covid-19 crisis and that they will be honoured.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill contemplates giving recognition to what the trade union movement worldwide recognises as a hidden army of workers and while we regard it as a hidden army of workers is because in many respects the workers that have been on the frontline of Covid-19 have not been workers that were regarded by and large by many people as being significant. Permit me not to mention the doctors or the social care workers who, of course, performed outstandingly, permit me not to focus on the politicians who led extremely well in their various portfolios to bring us through what has been a very challenging year as we have been battling Covid-19, permit me not to focus on those in the essential areas, the generally classified, essential areas like policing and so on, who we would expect in times of crisis to step up to the plate but permit me to focus, Mr. Speaker, on those in the

gas stations, in the bakeries, in supermarkets, delivery workers, transport workers, those who kept our water and sewerage intact, those in our Ports who, notwithstanding their anxieties, who notwithstanding their fears, generally presented by operating within the unknown because Covid-19 was new to everybody. After all, it was scary because it was killing people all over the world. Permit me to focus on these people who were called upon to deliver us through the crisis and who stepped up to the plate selflessly in response to a pandemic. I wonder if many of us or enough of us have taken the time to consider what it would have been like if the gas station attendants decided that they were not going to work. I wonder if we have taken the time, to consider what it would have been like if the workers in the bakery determined that they were too scared to go to work. I wonder if we truly consider what the outcome would have been if the Port workers, those who were the dockers, the operators if they decided that they were too scared to mingle among their peers to deliver the goods that many of us needed, that our hospitals needed in terms of supplies and many of us need for food during the period, especially the period of lockdown. Mr. Speaker, of course, they did not contemplate as they made the very conscious decision notwithstanding their fears, notwithstanding their anxieties to go to work and deliver us through that period, they did not contemplate an award, but yet, here we are, recognising that although they did it out of a sense of selflessness, that they deserved to be honoured for what they have done and what they have brought to this country. I am happy, Sir, that we can be saluting them.

The pandemic has taught us a lot of things. It provided an opportunity for many of us to reconnect with our families. As I said, it provided an opportunity for us to recognise something very fundamental, that workers matter and that every job matters because sadly, we have had to lament too often that within our society there seems to be a feeling that there are only those jobs that are considered academic that are the big up jobs or the jobs worthy of mention and, Mr. Speaker, it reminds me of the story in the Bible of the widow's mite. Not the big, extravagant things, not those things that would be valued by the average person as being great but being able to give of yourself and give sacrificially at a time when people need it most. That is what these frontline workers, many of them, were able to offer us, yet Covid-19 has also shown up some very ugly truths about systemic inequalities within our society, within our economic system that is failing the very people who in times of crisis and I refer not only to Covid-19 but who will be called upon when we have a natural disaster, a hurricane, for instance, these are the people most at risk. Workers who when stay at home orders are in effect become the lifelines of the rest of us and these very workers are the ones who are living pay cheque to pay cheque. I mean it can be argued that all of us are living pay cheque to pay cheque but that happens if we decide that we are not always going to stay in our lane and stay within our

means but these are the people who do not have those options, those are the people that I am speaking about who are forced to, and they were forced to in the COVID-19 environment, to choose between minimising risk to their health or negotiating risk to their health and making enough money to see their families through.

Mr. Speaker, the trade union movement regards these workers as the hidden army of workers because as I said many of them were never valued before but now we had to recognise them and today we are recognising them as mattering more than anything else, but one of the things that I observed during the COVID-19 period particularly during the period of lockdown, I do recall we designated Wednesday evenings as the time that we would stand outside our houses - time to get out of the house at least for fresh air, that you feel safe nobody is going to come and snatch you up because you are outside the house - and that we would be able to applaud these frontline workers for their efforts and I do remember seeing clips of people not only applauding, not only developing jingles and so on 'bigging up' these workers but people coming out with their pots and pans and everything and we were dancing and celebrating these workers that are now the subject or very much at the centre of this humanitarian award, and I want to commend the Government of Barbados for recognising the effort and the contribution too. It is important that I say that, Mr. Speaker, before the next thing that I am about to say because as we applauded these workers, do you know or are we aware that some of the very people that were supporting and promoting the applause were the very people who were constructing and devising that as soon as the country opens back up many of those workers would have found themselves on the breadline because it happened. It happened to supermarket workers, it happened to workers in retail and workers in delivery who were on the frontline and who we now hail and who this award would now recognise as humanitarian.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that this award is a good thing. I believe that it is a right thing but now having experienced the value of these workers and having had cause today to reflect on the value that they brought to our lives during this period 2020, I am heartened that this Government also recognises and is caused to recognise in any event that we cannot cut corners in attempting to do the right thing, so we cannot stop at a humanitarian award of service, we cannot stop at a pin or whatever designation whatever form it takes because many of these very workers, key workers, essential workers, frontline workers, important workers, face stark inequalities relating to their pay that have to be addressed, to their job security that have to be addressed and to the hazards that they face in their workplace. Again, I go to the gas station attendants as a good example because many of us when we go to fuel up cannot wait to get out of the gas station because of the fumes, the scent, and we could feel it at the back of our

throats or we feel it in our heads if we have to be there for any length of time, but these workers are the same workers working at wage levels below what the average person should be expected to live off of working without conditions, working without health insurance and working without basic personal protective equipment (PPE).

Asides.

Ms. T. N. S-A. MOORE: Yes, some of them would be pregnant too compounding a bad situation so the question is not if we are doing a right thing but how do we move beyond that to do the right thing for these workers. What is the right thing for workers who had to physically show up for their jobs during the pandemic and who would be called upon to show up during any other emergency? Increased wages yes, improved conditions, improved healthcare, improved healthcare monitoring, health insurance PPE and the like.

The right thing, Mr. Speaker, must be done in spite of a very vocal minority of people who would even attempt to rubbish the strides that we have made recently in this country regarding our approach to a minimum wage, a minimum wage that would recognise and that would uplift many of these workers to whom we would affix or attribute a pin. Many of these very workers are the workers that would get a pay rise on account of a minimum wage that is being discussed in this country during the next three months. All Honourable Members in this Chamber must exercise their influence in encouraging other people to see the importance of what is being done, to support what is being done and to work tirelessly to ensure that come the 31st of March 2021 that we would be able to demonstrate that beyond the award that these workers would achieve in January 2021 that they have a lot more to look forward to in terms of the upliftment that a Government committed to enfranchising its people is committed to doing and will do.

I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, that we have not had the worse of experiences on account of COVID-19 but certainly when we look at what has happened in other countries, when we see the challenges that are being experienced in other countries and when we recognise the tremendous loss not only to jobs but to lives in other countries, I am sure that we pat ourselves on the back and we say to ourselves that we have done well but beyond this we recognise that if we are really well-intending and if we are really committing to doing well for our people then the very tangible award that we will place on thousands of workers during January 2021 and going the step beyond to uplifting the floor of the wage levels that many of them can be anticipating in another three months are very important first steps towards delivering everything that we came to Government intending to commit to.

Mr. Speaker, we recognise that Rome was not built in a day and while we recognise that everything cannot be done at once, we recognise and see what is being done here, what is being contemplated here as a signal that it is never too late to do the right thing but [that] it is important not only to trim and to attack it in little bits and pieces but to express a firm commitment to doing the right thing. It is a good first step therefore and I am very happy and pleased to be able to support it, but I signal us that the journey is far from over. Mr. Speaker, Sir, 2020, has definitely shown all of us the need for substantial improvements in worker conditions and worker protection. I am encouraged that the Government is on a good track and I know that with strong leadership and firm commitment and with the insistence of the many of us who would ensure that we follow through on our commitments, that we will get there.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I just want to take this opportunity before I sit to encourage all of us to continue to work steadfastly to ensure that Barbados remains a country that recognises workers as people first; that understands that every job counts; and that our people must not only be observed as vehicles to [be] exploited and to gain profits when convenient but that our people must truly be recognised as being a symbol of who we are, and in recognising that, we pay tribute to them in ways such as the award and going further, to ensure that we uplift them and truly enfranchise them.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I support the Bill, not only for all those workers who deserve our thanks, but I support it for all those workers who deserve our respect, and more importantly our support. Mr. Speaker, Sir, with those few words, I am obliged to you.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Philip North, you have the Floor.

Dr. Miss S. E. BROWNE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, thank you for the opportunity to add my voice to the current debate. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I can only but agree with all the sentiments of Honourable Members today with respect to the Bills. I too agree and support the initiatives being presented. First of all, I want to offer my congratulations to the Minister of Health and Wellness who I think did a fantastic job with respect to COVID-19 pandemic and also to all the ministries that contributed.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown is one person whom I can honestly say (although I was not personally involved with any of the COVID-19 planning committees) was always willing to listen. I will call him in the middle of the night. Whether or not the Honourable Member took my advice, I am not sure, but the Honourable Member was always willing to listen. Therefore, I would want to salute the Honourable Member on a job well done, and [is] still being done.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I agree that the frontline workers need to be recognised but I also ask myself (although I agree with Honourable Members about who the frontline workers are, and the Honourable Member for St. George North is on the same wavelength as I am) who are really the frontline workers. Everybody knows about the doctors at the hospital, at the Accident and Emergency Department, the doctors and nurses at Paragon and at Harrison Point, but there are those of us (and I am giving myself and my other colleagues a pat on the back) who despite not working directly with COVID-19 pandemic we stepped up and recognised that life still went on. We still had to see children with asthma, we still had to see the hypertensives, the diabetics and whatever colds were left (because there were not that many colds left after COVID-19 pandemic came in) but we had to step up. Some of us did not have ready access to the personal protective equipment. I had a doctor working with me, the minute I said I did not have any personal protective equipment she backed off, as she had 'other comorbidities', which the Honourable Prime Minister said is a new word. Mr. Speaker, Sir, that word has been around for so long but I am glad it has reached the general public so that we can understand the implications of it but there are those of us who had to step up. There was no hiding from the COVID-19 pandemic, we had to turn up at our offices every day, sometimes five or seven days a week and risk our lives and that of our families to step up and I do want to recognise my colleagues in assisting with that.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish somehow that I could break these medals into a lot of pieces because there are so many people to whom I would love to be able to hand medals. I would list some of them now. Yes, there are the healthcare workers. I want to recognise now, especially it is clear and ever-present in my head, the members of Environmental Protection Department of the polyclinics and the COVID-19 pandemic liaisons which I am also grateful to you, through Mr. Speaker, Sir, to the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown who gave these people jobs and opportunities to work with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic response teams. I want to applaud them, especially the St. Philip Polyclinic where they have environmental issues, the roof fell in at one point in time, but these persons worked. I had an event lately and I was a little annoyed because one of the health inspectors kept me back, but for good reason, he made sure that everything was "on point" with respect to the spread of COVID-19 pandemic, he made sure the books were at the door. It was a fantastic effort. I want to recognise them.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, people would not remember but when COVID-19 pandemic hit there was no end to the masks that we saw on every corner of the street, people stepped up and made masks. Yes, they made a dollar for themselves, but everybody was in it together. These people made masks, some sold masks, who did not give away

somehow got, the Government supplied some of them too and so I am extremely proud of these people; all of them want a piece of this medal. I want also to recognise the teachers also. Mr. Speaker, Sir, this room makes it feel that the pandemic is coming to an end, but it is alive and well in many parts of the country and there are frontline workers like teachers, nursery assistants and children monitors who look after our children five days a week for the whole term that has now ended. I want to applaud them. They did not have to but they made sure that our children were safe, that they wore their masks, that what little the play times they were well supervised, the people in the schools who had to clean every day maybe two or three times a day wiping off the desks to make sure that the students and teaching staff were safe.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I cannot sit unless I recognise the Sandy Lane Trust and now the Tanglewood Charities, they are as much frontline workers as any doctor in this country because without them I am not sure what would have happened. These people stepped up and provided funding for many of our constituents and without them I know a lot of them would have been worse off. It gave me a lot of work, but it was good work and it is still going on. I really want to recognise them.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am the Chairman of the National Assistance Board. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit some of our members had to be quarantined,, for obvious reasons, some contracted the disease but even in quarantined, they worked. The home-helpers got a lot of "stick" for coming into people's houses. Yes, some people backed out of the programme, but they don their personal protective equipment and were in people's houses helping. They never forgot the old people out there who had no one else to look after them, they stepped up in the middle of COVID-19 pandemic and went to work. I want to thank them and to congratulate them and to offer them a piece of this medal. Mr. Speaker, Sir, those are the people of whom I am so proud.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, that being said, we have to look at and anticipate the fallout from this pandemic. We have to anticipate the fallout and to put measures in place to tackle the fall-out. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition alluded to it. The children are probably my biggest worry. Their schooling -- and it was necessary -- have been cut down, some were going to school two and three days per week and it worried me as a parent. My daughter was happy, she does well, but she hates school. So she was on top of the world but I was worried, along with other parents. They were worried too. The fall-out is real. Children learn through interaction and play. Every animal, at least mammals, learn by play. If you watch a goat outside with the mother, they play. That is how they learn, and school has been affected so much. We are seeing children putting on weight because they cannot run around

outside as they usually do. Some of them, if they are an “only child” and do not have an active neighbourhood, cannot run around. Even with the pandemic, all of them were close to each other. The chances of them contracting would have been small because they were like families, but there are some children who did not have a playmate, and I worry for the psychological effects of what COVID would be doing to them as well as some of the teachers. Some of them were terrified. I know people who sent in sick-leave certificates for purely psychological reasons. They just could not handle it. The fear was real out there.

Sir, there is also the risk of boredom. Although every child is affected, that does not mean a child cannot drop back from current educational standards. There are real worries about this. There are people who worry about losing their athletic scholarships, because basically the year was put back and a year in an athlete’s life is like 20 years. There are things we have to deal with, the fallout. We need to put psychologists and psychiatrists and counsellors and therapists in the schools. I mean all schools. I do not mean a select few. They need to be available more than they are now in the schools to deal with some of these issues. We have to deal with the job loss, and that affects children too. The job loss is real. We all know it. These are issues that psychologically affect people, so when mummy and daddy have to basically divide a potato among five -- this is happening -- they settle for a piece of potato and a bit of gravy. That affects families to the highest degree, and these are things which the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central would have brought up, domestic issues and domestic violence. It is not easy when nobody in the house is working. Tempers flare.

I have met some who were victims of domestic violence, and that goes both ways. People see it as women being abused but men are being abused too in these circumstances, even if it is only verbally. That is a real issue in this COVID pandemic. The crime situation, as everybody sees -- it is no secret -- seems to be almost spiraling out of hand, and I know a lot of it can be attributed to COVID. These are things we need to look at because they will come back to bite us in the next two, three, five or ten years. It is a real worry for me and other members of the population. Speaking of domestic issues, there are currently mothers -- I spoke to a nurse recently with the deepest of worry -- giving birth in the hospital and having nowhere to go when they come out. In my time, which sounds like years ago but it was years ago, we made sure there was a questionnaire -- I do not know if they still exist -- on the forms which asked whether you had running water and electricity in the house so that you knew where the new mother and child were going.

There have been instances recently where a mother and a baby had to be rescued from a drug hole. There was nowhere else to go. Luckily, she is undergoing

rehabilitation now. We have issues like those which we need to address and get at. I am aware of instances, but I cannot locate the people in cases, where mothers sell out their daughters. Some are mentally subnormal including one in my constituency, but I cannot find her because she moved out of the constituency, but I am working on that. These are things about which the Child Care Board has to be much more vigilant if it is not already. As it stands, the Government Industrial School is almost a bane to my existence. I do not believe in it, I do not believe in how it is structured now, and I do not think it is the answer to rehabilitation of children who are 11, 12 and 13 years old. These are things that need to be looked at in this environment, because children will give trouble. If you cannot socialise and socialise correctly and get the proper learning, children will give trouble, and the only answer or one of the answers cannot be the Government Industrial School. We read in the newspapers lately about a young lady who was basically imprisoned. A 14-year-old child? If it were up to me, I would squash that whole institution and start from scratch. These are the realities which we have to face. We really have to face them and bear that in mind.

One of the things I want to speak about is the vaccine. The truth is, I only know what I have read, and it is okay to tell the Barbadian public to take the vaccine, do not mind the rumours and it is for your own good, but we have to spend a lot of time on education. It cannot be only governmental policy. We have to coordinate well with the players and the medical professionals so that we have an educational system in place before we bring the information to the public. There are people who have real fears of vaccinations; real fears basically because they do not understand it and we need to address that. I have had big men crawl under my office table to avoid an injection. Big men fainted away in my chair to avoid an injection, so it is not as simple as saying the vaccine will be here soon. These were men as big as the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown is.

It is not as simple as saying the vaccine will be here and you have to take it and make it mandatory. I have seen things on Facebook saying make it mandatory. It is a lot more than that. Even the simple vaccines that we have been dealing with for years, up to now it is not as bad as it was about ten years ago. Up to now it is a challenge, and a parent cannot tell you why they do not other than the obvious allergies, which are not common. They cannot tell you why they do not want the vaccine. Some reasons are religious, but you are usually able to turn them over, so let us take that vaccination a little more seriously than just saying it is coming and you have to take it. The public and Barbadians are smart. We did not educate them for no good reason. They are smart and they just need the information, and I believe most people will be on board.

Sir, I was one who was skeptical when SARS and H1N1 came out. To be honest, I have not gone for it up to this day but this is one that I would honestly support because this is really and truly a life-or-death situation. I want to encourage research in the Caribbean and in Barbados, with the attendant funding, with respect to COVID because it is obvious to many of us that although a few members of the public did contract COVID, most of them were asymptomatic. I would love to see what the research is on that. Why is it that our population is doing so well? Yes, all kudos to the powers that be which made sure our borders were secure and are still making sure that is happening, but we have to be ever vigilant on it because the pandemic is not over.

I am getting information from people at work. Please correct me if I am wrong but I got a report this week that people are being quarantined and not being tested, so you are quarantined for two weeks. Things like that we cannot afford. I walked into the polyclinics recently not for medical reasons but to go to another department, and I was able to take my temperature and walk right through. If I came in with COVID, there is no way they can find me. We have to not slacken up on what we are doing. It is important. It is really important. The pandemic is not over. I keep saying this. Although we are doing well, it gives the public a sense of security. I will take a little slack for this later, but I would like it to start in this room. I came in here this morning and very few Members had masks on. I took mine off. It has to become a habit. I am so used to wearing it that I was downstairs eating my lunch and had my meat cut but realised my mask was still on. It has to become that kind of a habit that we do not even think about it. It has to start with us, though. It is all right to preach and say put on your mask, make sure you distance yourself six feet without the mask or three feet with the mask, but we have to set the example and I try my best to do it everywhere I go. We have to set the example.

I want to also comment -- this may be my final, I will see -- on what the Honourable Leader of the Opposition said in congratulating the Honourable Member for St. Philip West on the notion that we do not treat past Prime Ministers and Members of Parliament as we should in the United States a President is always a President, they are not former Presidents, they are Presidents. It hurts me a little bit when I pass the Erskine Sandiford Centre. The first thing I see is Ross University. The biggest and brightest sign is Ross University, and the smallest sign is Erskine Sandiford Centre. Although it seems trivial, it is important, he is still a Prime Minister in my eyes and should still be a Prime Minister for the Members of the public. I think that needs to be rectified. He is an essence a hero to us, not a national hero to be put up, but he is one of the founding Members, one of the Prime Ministers that got Barbados to where it was, and to come and the first thing I could see lighted up pretty at nights is Ross University. That is a slap

in the face of a Former Prime Minister or should I say a Prime Minister, Erskine Sandiford. Things like that needs to be addressed, we cannot treat our own like that.

When I was working in the polyclinic, even now, if a nurse or health care worker comes into my clinic I see them first. We have to respect our own and give them the due respect that they deserve. That is one that I wanted to speak on. It is not so much related to the debate, but I wanted to touch on that.

The last thing I want to say is nothing new, but let us keep up the effort, do what we know that we should do. It is in our children now with wearing their mask. We have done so well. It is not only that we were lucky, but we were smart. I myself had doubt with the ports of entry. I was nervous. The words I want to use I cannot use in here, but I was never so nervous when it felt like it was taking too long to close the borders, but I am glad as the Members say, I stayed the course, because it proved useful.

Of course, we are trying to our best to get people back out to work. Every day you get a WhatsApp saying a job might be available. Getting people back to work is important, but let us look after our country and our children. Please, put the children first. They are the ones that will lead the country in another few years, so let us look out for them, get the counsellors on board and do what we are doing. Thank you so much for the break, I appreciate the efforts and thanks for your time Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of Government Business.

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me first of all thank all Honourable Members who had the opportunity this morning and this afternoon to speak on both of these Bills, the Humanitarian Service Award Bill as well as the Gold Award of Achievement (Amendment) Bill.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister in her opening remarks, commented on the fact that this COVID-19 pandemic has perhaps united our entire nation. I want to echo those sentiments because I believe that even on the basis of what we heard here throughout the course of this debate, it is clear that all hands have been on deck in relation to this pandemic, whether you are on the backbench, in the opposition, part of the trade union movement, or part of the private sector. It is clear that even in this room, there was consensus for the most part about the fact that as Barbadians we had to rise to the occasion in order to fight what many of us described as the enemy, because we recognised that if we were not to do so, our very survival and the survival of future generations would end up in jeopardy.

Sir, I start there because I had the opportunity to be away from this country for a short period after coming to office in 2018. I had the opportunity to do a lot of reflection and to observe not only the leadership, but to certainly to observe from afar other colleagues who are Ministers in Governments, being able to respond to what I believe to have been one of the most difficult periods in our history. A period where we came to office having to put back together a country because of the economic downturn with the number of downgrades that we have seen over the course of the previous decade. While I was away, at the time I believe that this was perhaps one of the most major crises that we could possibly face as an Administration. I believe that from afar I was watching all of my colleagues burning the midnight oil trying to put together as many different policies and as many different things as they possibly could in order to be able to take Barbadians through this difficult time, and to make some very tough decisions as it related to our economic survival and how we would certainly be able to sustain the social fabric of this country.

Sir, I then had the opportunity to watch the response of not only the Cabinet but wider extended Government and certainly the Prime Minister of Barbados respond to a COVID-19 pandemic. It is not a case of blow your own horn, but I honestly believe that leadership matters, and this pandemic demonstrated along with the steps that we have taken in relation to the economic recovery plan for this country, that when you have strong leadership, when you have someone with a vision, steering the ship and making sure that all hands are on deck that there is almost a certain guarantee in terms of the survival of an entire nation.

Sir, many of us ask the question, whether we could have survived this period if there was somebody else at the helm, and I honestly believe that we could probably not have. They were many who were critical in the early stages when we heard about the outbreaks taking place in China and then later the various decisions that were taken by this Administration. They will always be critics because when you are not in the driver's seat it is always easier to try to navigate from the passenger seat to tell people where they must go. However, the one thing that I recognise over the course of the past few month, is that being at the helm is certainly not an easy task and certainly not an easy road. It means that sometimes you have to make some very difficult decisions if it is that you are going to not only plan for today but to certainly plan for the future as well. Sir, over the course of the past few months, I watched this entire team in this Administration and across Barbados pulled together to be able to do what I consider to be just an amazing feat to try to pull this society together in these very difficult times. Again I want to reinforce that leadership does in fact matter. Whether it is the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, who as others have said has perhaps aged during this period, not any fault of

his own but because he understood his commitment to the people of this country and he understands his commitment to the portfolio with which he holds.

However, I watched a gentleman who served with me from Opposition pretty much aged before my eyes and make certain sacrifices even as it relates to his constituents, because I know that he could not always be there on the frontline with his constituents as many of us sometimes cannot be because of the demands of the job in these particular times. The reality is I have watched the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown continue in the face of all the challenges to continue to not only hold up himself but also his Ministry and his staff and all of those who have to work every single day to ensure that Barbadians are safe.

I want personally and publicly to thank him as other have done because on every opportunity that I think we are given to be able to say thank you to the Honourable Minister, the Member for the City of Bridgetown. I think we have to do so because I think we have to remind Barbadians of the work that he has done, but also the work that he and his entire staff have continued to do in giving service to this country. He has presided over all of the staff whether they worked in the laboratories, persons who visited the various organisations on many occasions to explain to people what the COVID-19 virus was, what was to be expected, how they were to protect themselves and we had the opportunity to go not only to the various ports of entry, but certainly to speak to people even in relation to education about exactly what to expect and how to prepare themselves.

Again, I think that spoke volumes because these individuals were willing to not only educate in these times but certainly to put themselves at risk at a period of time when a lot about this virus was practically unknown. We are here this afternoon, Sir, to not only recognise those persons who form part of a very wide list of individuals who we consider to be the frontline workers but we also recognise by our extended comments all Barbadians who whether in small or big ways, stepped up to the plate during this period in order to do something which really required them to go beyond the call of duty.

We are extremely grateful. As a Government recognise that it is not enough just to simply say "thank you" alone. I believe that by this small feat which is by passing legislation that would allow us to now recognise those persons at the appropriate time and in the appropriate way, it is again a further symbol of the sincerity with which this Administration and certainly many people of this country want to treat to the persons who kept food on our tables and the toilet paper that the Honourable Member for St. Peter spoke about. I know the Honourable Attorney General and I had to make decisions as to who was able

receive passes. We did so based on what we considered to be emergency situations.

Sir, let me just tell you that there were many people who requested all kinds of things because for the most part during that period everyone had to make some form of adjustment to their lifestyle. Even you, Sir, I am sure like many of my colleagues believed that they should have received emergency passes during that early stage of the lockdown. Wisdom prevailed because we also had to make a decision that we too as persons who would interface with constituents, all of us could not expose ourselves to everyone because we really did not know how this particular pandemic would unfold. In fairness, there were some who were comfortable with the restrictions that were placed on them.

Many people wanted to still be on the ground and, eventually, with greater wisdom coming from the health professionals we were able to make certain relaxation to the rules to allow greater movement. Those requests came from all parts of Barbados and from all organisations, not only those who were feeding people across this country. I want to really say, “thank you” to all of the organisations such as the Homeless and Vagrant Society and the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) which on a regular basis were stepping up to the plate to fill the breach, and in many cases putting themselves and certainly the lives of the persons who volunteer regularly at risk to make sure that we cater to that portion of the population that are often forgotten.

Sir, I want to really say that even in that time what struck me was that there were many other large countries that were not looking after their homeless population. There were many countries who could not get it right in terms of how to deal with the people who were most vulnerable. However, this Government was able along with the Ministry of Health and its officials and the social care ministries to work with the entities in Barbados that help us to fill that breach in our society. I think we owe them certainly a debt of gratitude for stepping up to the plate and making sure that they complied with all of the things that needed to be put in place to make their facility and volunteers safe, and to make sure that we were not to see a major fallout from that particular segment of the population.

During that period, I think it also opened my eyes in relation to our relationship with the Social Partnership as well. Barbados has always boasted of a strong relationship and ties with the Social Partnership, but that period also gave me an opportunity as I chaired a number of the meetings with the colleagues on the sub-committee, the opportunity to engage with the Honourable Member for St. George North, the head of the private sector organisations; Mrs. Tannis, Mr. Clarke and others, and a wide cross-

section of people in the private sector who shared their views in relation to how we would resume work but also how we would deal with the issues of lockdown.

It was an interesting period, Sir, because the Honourable Member for St. George North’s voice was very boisterous in many of our meetings being the voice of labour. She is not the lone voice but certainly a very loud voice in reminding us at every occasion the importance of labour in the equation and the fact that, as she said early, even the small people matter. We started to realise that during this period that it was not just the people who had the academic qualifications and technical skills, but it was also the very people who were the cashiers, gas attendants and the people supplying bread and pastries.

Those were the people who rose to the occasion and perhaps armed with very little knowledge about how they would contract the virus and whether they were safe, they still were prepared to be out there with the restrictions that we had put in place to service the entire population. Also, there were the people who worked in the ports of entry. They in particular again rose to the occasion in a way, Sir, that I think we may not even truly appreciate as a population all that was done. I know that we recognise a number of persons who assisted with the cruise ship and taking people who were on board, in particular the crew, to safety and transporting people from the ports of entry to ensure that they could get to their final destinations.

Many of us, again, could never imagine what that period was like and I can certainly say there may be some things that many of us who were on the sub-committee will never be able to say, but the fact is that it was not easy during that period managing all of the different interests and trying to not only keep our citizens safe, but certainly to be able to plan for a Barbados after COVID-19. This fundamentally was what was at the forefront of our mind no matter what we were doing. How do we keep “Bajans” safe now but at the same time there must be life after COVID-19. Whether it was the private sector echoing that sentiment, labour or the Government, it was clear that no matter what we did that we had to make sure we preserved a Barbados that we could all still live in, work in and feel safe in when the COVID-19 pandemic was over; whenever that would take place.

Therefore, the criticisms came about the shutdown or the lockdown. At a point in time, I sat and laughed when I saw the memes about shutting down the country and taking away “Bajans’” rum because it was as though we had taken away a prized possession from the people of this country. Again, we understood as a Cabinet and sub-committee that there were certain restrictions that we had to put in place in order to make sure that Barbadians also did not disobey the protocols that we were putting in place for them to be safe. I can certainly stand here now and smile about it, but

believe me that during that period many of us were not laughing because we knew that we had to make some very serious decisions in order to keep our citizens safe.

Certainly, we had to make sure that we made decisions that kept our frontline workers safe as well, whether it was the same doctors, port workers and the persons traversing from the airport to take out the cruise ship passengers and employees. Those were things that we had front of mind in whatever we did, so while it may have seemed as though it was taking away in a sense the lifeline for many Barbadians who were not able to frequent places as they would like. The one thing I heard my colleague, the Honourable Member for St. Peter, speak to earlier, is that the one thing we did throughout the entire period and we continue to do, is to listen to the people. When it was that people were complaining about the times and about the restrictions, we tried it for a few days, a few weeks and then we made the changes once we had listened to all of the various individuals who weighed in. We never said, as an administration that we had all the answers because certainly when we looked across the seas, it was clear that nobody had all the answers and we, even in relation to education we took a decision early on, and I would never forget this because it really demonstrated how quickly things can change and things change overnight.

One day we were having a consultation with our teachers online, we were talking about how safe schools were, we were talking about keeping children in school, we were talking about the fact that the science was telling us that the children were not the target in terms of this virus and I walked in the afternoon and heard that a 12-year-old in New York City had been the first child that had contracted this virus. Shortly after that, Sir, we then had our first two cases in Barbados, not children, but our first two cases in mid-March and we took a decision then that in the interests of all Barbadians and certainly with the uncertainty that would have presented to us that we had to take a decision at that point and time to not just keep the persons with comorbidities safe, but we wanted to make sure that we protected our children because they would be the future generation of this country as well. We had to take some hard decisions and yes I have heard the comments of other colleagues in relation to education and the concerns that they have, as I do, in relation to what this period has done to education of our young people, in particular. The fact of the matter is, Sir, that all of the learning speaks to the fact that this lost time, this lockdown, this shutdown, this restriction of ours, all the wearing of masks, the physical distancing, the time away from school, is likely to do a lot of damage to a number of students and particularly, many of us know all those students who even, in normal times, fall below the line, they fall through the cracks, they are in that at risk category, they are the ones who have a lot of social and behavioural issues that they are dealing with, whether in

the home or in the communities and we know that they, more than any other set of students are the ones that must be on our radar, particularly as we try to bounce back as a nation. We have started consultations with our students and I started last week because I felt that the students needed the opportunity to be able to speak about their experiences. Just as we said when we started the last term that we wanted our students to be able to spend time, not talking about mathematics, English and hard core subjects, but we wanted them to be in a position to speak about their experiences during the lockdown because we understood that there were lots of mental health issues that we were dealing with, with children having to be back home for long periods, with parents being laid off, with them being exposed to all kinds of things that normally the school environment serves to protect them from. We understood that we had to talk to them and we started the conversation with them and I want to, again, commend and applaud the young people who attended the session because they spoke openly and candidly about wanting to get back to school. As I think, the sentiments were expressed just yesterday when I met with teachers as well in a consultation at both the primary and the secondary level where people would like to see a face-to-face engagement again because despite all that we have tried to do in terms of devices and accessibility and connectivity, there was a very real concern, not matter how anxious and how apprehensive you may be about the Covid-19 pandemic and all of its impact, there is a very real concern about the lost time that students are experiencing as a result of not being about to engage in a face-to-face environment. It therefore means that we have started our conversation with the Honourable Member for The City of Bridgetown and I know he is in discussions with his team to look at what the science is saying, to look at what it is we need to do, as a country, as a Ministry of Education, following all of the specific protocols that we can possibly follow to make sure that we address the issues that have been raised by our students and our teachers, Sir, because the truth is that we have, to a large extent, contained our local transmission of the cases and community spread and we therefore have to ask ourselves some questions during this period, as to where do we go as far as face-to-face education is concerned over the course of the next couple months. These are real issues that are engaging the attention of the Cabinet of Barbados, they have been engaging the attention of the Ministry of Health and certainly the Minister of Health as well because we recognise that it cannot be business as usual. We are going to have to play serious catch up to make sure that students do not continue to lose valuable time away from school during this particular period and so those discussions are ongoing and hopefully we would be in a position to speak to the country as it relates that but we have heard the sentiments expressed. We will meet with our principals shortly, I believe tomorrow and we also meet with the unions as well to discuss the way forward as it relates to students who are doing, whether it is the Eleven Plus

Examinations, whether it is Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (C.S.E.C.), Caribbean Examination Council (C.X.C.), but we also recognise that this is not a conversation simply about students who are preparing for an exam because it is also a conversation about every single student who has been impacted, from the child at the nursery level who is not able because of the masks in many cases covering the face to be able to understand exactly what the teacher is saying because the lips are covered. It is a conversation about the children who are hearing and visually impaired and how they have been able to adjust in this situation as well. It is about what is also in the best interest of our teachers and our students and trying to find the appropriate balance to be able to make sure that we can return people into a safe environment in the best possible way. Those concerns expressed by the Leader of the Opposition and certainly by other colleagues as well, we are more than mindful that they are real issues that are confronting us right now but they are also confronting every other territory in the world. I have told every meeting that I have addressed that the reality is that Barbados is extremely fortunate even though we have challenges in the Ministry of Education because our children are still going to school even if it is for a limited time even if it is half of a day, two days a week or three days a week. We have tried with the help of our teachers and our principals to find a way to accommodate children but we know that we need to do more if we are to certainly make sure that face-to-face element is certainly contained. We recognise, Sir, that even as we talk about these individuals who have given humanitarian service to Barbados during this period that even in the Ministry of Education as well we have had a number of donors who have given selflessly to make sure that children had the device to go to school and I also again want to reiterate that we could not have been able to get through this period without the help of private individuals, private sector organisations, people who believe and love Barbados and will do anything for Barbados that stepped up to the plate and basically said we want to help. What is it that you need in terms of technology, what is it that you need in terms of devices because we recognise that there is a need? You also had the teachers who even though we were in so-called lockdown, tried to find a way too to still engage with students to hold their hands to talk them through the process and so while we may not in this situation today identify every single category of person that is classified as frontline, the reality is that we can all find examples of people who rose to the occasion during the Covid-19 pandemic to be able to assist in some particular way.

For me, the question was asked by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West whether the award in some way was being devalued by increasing the number of persons who are entitled. I think he, perhaps, better than any of the rest of us, having served in this particular Administration previously is well aware, because I

certainly am, because I have been a member of this Party for as long as I have known myself -- is well aware that when this Administration is in power the one thing that this Party has been known for is highlighting the achievements of its people, not selecting and handpicking some people but making sure that all loyal sons and daughters of this soil are recognised for the contribution that they make to Barbados whether here or outside of Barbados.

I do not believe, Sir, as we move to discussions on moving Barbados to a Republic that we are at the point anymore where we must follow what the colonial masters did and only have a few honours being trickled out to the privileged few from time to time every year. I believe that as educated Barbadians, people who have a common history of people oppressing us, that we have a responsibility to also set examples for our young people to look up to and if that means allowing and empowering ordinary Barbadians to be able to share in the space that we say these are the persons who have stood out because of their humanitarian contribution, these are the persons who have stood out because of their service to country, these are the persons who have stood out in their respective disciplines, then I believe that in a modern-day Barbados we have a responsibility to widen the number of opportunities for Barbadians to be recognised and certainly to be able to have a space within the acknowledgement from us as a nation.

The Pride of Barbados Award, Sir, again is another example of us as a Government being able to recognise not only people within communities, ordinary Barbadians who have given of service, but certainly being able to recognise people who live outside of Barbados because the one thing that in the last decade many people seemed to have forgotten is that common phrase by Kofi Annan that Barbadians punch above their weight and this Administration, whether it has been the National Heroes, whether it has been making sure that we highlight the contributions of our artistes, our writers, our poets, whoever, has been known and has spearheaded the charge for making sure that people who have contributed in any particular sphere in this country have been afforded their correct due and, therefore, Sir, I want to assure the Honourable Member, who I know sometimes is a little mischievous and wants to be a little controversial but I know deep down in his bosom that he understands that the Barbados Labour Party did not thrust him out of their bosom, he actually left the bosom of the Barbados Labour Party but he left behind a Party that recognises its people and that will continue to acknowledge the contribution of people of all walks of life...

When we sat the other day watching the persons being honoured for Independence, the stories of the fish vendor and the person who worked hard in Barbados to be able to achieve significant milestones in this country, as the

Honourable Prime Minister would say, that is who we are. We recognise people for their significant achievements overseas but we also recognise the ordinary Barbadian, the hawker, the fisherman, the person who has been on the cultural landscape of this country, we recognise everybody, because we understand that the wheels of this Government and this country do not turn without all of the pieces in the wheel working together, that is this Administration, and so the Honourable Member must be assured that this is not about watering down anything because I assure you that any other opportunities that we are given to highlight the achievements of our people we will continue to do so. What however have to do, and all of us have to collectively commit to it, is to making sure that we do not just simply pin an award but that we educate people about the persons who we have been awarding and why, so it is no longer enough simply to unveil a plaque of an artist impression but not to mention what the artist's visual interpretation of the actual mural was supposed to be because all it is then is an inscription on a wall of who opened the plaque which nobody pays attention to but instead we have to get to the things now that really matter, the things that would inspire another generation and so it is not enough any longer to simply have just the insignia but we have to start to teach about these people within our schools and we have to encourage our creators to do videos on persons who have given of outstanding service. I hope that during this period and certainly over the next couple of months even through the Ministry of Culture that we can see videos emerging on the COVID-19 pandemic and Barbados' response and documentaries about Harrison's Point and the things that Barbados did in the early stages to create safety and a platform for if we found ourselves in a situation where we needed to cater to our people. We have to understand that these are stories that must be told and while at the same time all of us have been affected by this pandemic, it is not like Hurricane Janet or Tropical Storm Tomas where only a few people experienced it, this is something which has impacted everyone and we have to find way through culture and through the visual arts to be able to capture and to document this period.

The Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown should be being interviewed and in another or 20 or 30 years another generation should be hearing his experiences. The Honourable Prime Minister should be able to speak to some of the experiences of managing a country in a crisis and being a leader to the region in a period when there was not much leadership globally as well. Those are the things that we need to talk about and we need to be proud about because you know sometimes we forget that we have a lot to be proud about. We want to complain about things that are happening or not happening but we forget how much we have to be proud and we have to be thankful for in this little rock. To have people wanting to come to Barbados and stay for an entire year to work remotely is again tremendous by our leadership of this country to craft

something which allows people, who I understand are even now volunteering in different ways in this country while they are here working to come. It was not enough simply to just know that we have a beautiful island and clean beaches perhaps even more clean than they would have been because they do not have all of the pollution in them over the last couple months, we understood that we had to do something else because it was not enough to sell sea and sand because you could get on a plane and get that somewhere else, we understood we had to do something different.

Mr. Speaker, the one thing that Bajans must take away from this period is the fact that this Administration has tried to keep them safe. We may not have always made decisions that met their satisfaction or that they always understood all of the fine details but the one thing I want to assure the country is that we have always done what we had to do and made decisions in the best interest of the people of this country first and foremost, Sir.

Sir, I always just want to end by saying that I always talk about the COVID positives. I have friends who during the lockdown became bakers. They picked back up professions that they had longed put aside. The people dusted off tools that they had not used for a long time. I am sure, Sir, that even you yourself did some painting around the house or something that the wife was probably surprised that you even had the ability to do. The fact of the matter is that this period highlighted for us not just the people who were on frontline but it highlighted a lot of cracks in the system, it highlighted even for us a lot of the things that we needed to focus on whether it is in terms of labour and how we treat to labour, it also focussed on infrastructure, it focused on the things that are in a lot of legislative regimes in terms of how we treat to the workplace, how we treat to safety. All now all we are talking about is washing up sinks and sanitising stations, things that perhaps should have been on the agenda and high on the agenda before and now more front of mind for Barbadians because of what has happened during this pandemic. Sir, I am glad that we can reflect on this period now, we can acknowledge the people who have contributed to getting us to this point, but at the same time we have to take from the negatives during this period the positive things that COVID-19 has left us with and continue to leave us with. We cannot retreat, we cannot surrender, as the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown continues to repeat, we are not yet out of the woods, but the one thing I believe Barbadians must be assured of is that we are an amazing set of people who are committed to a common cause, that is, to keeping Barbadians as safe as they possibly can be. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I believe we have taken all steps that we can. We have introduced our School Monitors. We had all of the COVID-19 pandemic relief in terms of making sure that we have been able to get people back to work. Some of those same workers who were on

the frontline, we tried to take care of as many people in our population as possible, and the commitment is there that we will continue to ensure that our people remain safe.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I just again to thank all Honourable Members, including the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, for their support because I do believe that we are united when it comes to these types of legislation. In terms of the focus of this Administration I know that we will certainly, once funds are available, ensure that those persons who have contributed but are identified as persons on the frontline, that at the appropriate time the necessary contribution and certainly compensation will certainly be put in place to recognise their contribution. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that the Bill be read a second time.

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

The question was put to the Honourable House and agreed to in the affirmative without division.

On the motion of Hon. S. J. O. BRADSHAW, seconded by Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS, the House resolved itself into Committee on the Bill. Dr. S. E. BROWNE, Chairman of Committees, in the Chair.

Madam CHAIRMAN: This Honourable House is now in Committee.

COMMITTEE

Clauses 1 -- 8, inclusive, were called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. S. J. O. BRADSHAW, seconded by Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS, Madam Chair reported to His Honour the SPEAKER the passing of one Bill in Committee and His Honour the SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the motion of Hon. S. J. O. BRADSHAW, seconded by Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Barbados Humanitarian Service Award Act, 2020.

ORDER NO. 4 – GOLD AWARD OF ACHIEVEMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2020.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Leader of Government Business, you have the Floor.

Hon. S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

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

The question was put to the Honourable House and agreed to in the affirmative without division.

On the motion of Hon. S. J. O. BRADSHAW, seconded by Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS, the House resolved itself into Committee on the Bill. Dr. S. E. BROWNE, Chairman of Committees, in the Chair.

Madam CHAIR: This Honourable House is now in Committee.

COMMITTEE

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

On the motion of Hon. S. J. O. BRADSHAW, seconded by Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS, Madam Chair reported to His Honour the SPEAKER the passing of one Bill in Committee and His Honour the SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the motion of Hon. S. J. O. BRADSHAW, seconded by Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Gold Award of Achievement Act, Cap. 401.

ORDER NO. 5 – COMPANIES (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2020.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael North, you have the Floor.

Hon. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is a relatively short and simple amendment and I intend to make a very short and simple presentation. Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is all part of Barbados' compliance with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Exchange on information or request standard, which has as one of its core items the whole issue the availability of beneficial ownership information, or to be more specific, accurate and up-to-date beneficial ownership of companies and legal entities and arrangements.

Mr. Speaker, here is a brief background: You would recall that Barbados was assessed ultimately fairly recently in relation to its compliance with this standard. In fact, the assessment was completed in April of this year and Barbados was found, in relation to the period that spanned July 2015 to June 2018, which predates this Administration, to be only partially compliant with that standard, Mr. Speaker. Therefore, that was not good. As you know, it also triggered an automatic blacklisting by the European Union. Mr. Speaker, more recently Barbados applied for a supplementary review of the same Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) and was granted that review, which

will take place at a date and time to be announced by the OECD.

Mr. Speaker, what we are doing here today really is strengthening our hand in relation to when that actual supplementary review takes place. As it stands now in Barbados, there are a number of regulators for companies. You have the International Business Unit regulating corporate and trust service providers, the Central Bank regulating financial institutions, Financial Services Commission regulating insurance companies, et cetera. All of them are empowered to regulate and monitor the entities under their purview but there are also a large number of companies that fall to be regulated by the Corporate Affairs and Intellectual Property Office, otherwise simply referred to as CAIPO; in particular, Mr. Speaker, these companies which actually earn less than \$1 million annually in gross revenue. Those companies are all regulated by CAIPO.

Sir, a critical component of monitoring or regulating by any entity so empowered is the authority to be able to access the required information, and today this is what this Amendment is really about in relation to CAIPO. In particular, when you look at the annual return which is required to be obviously filed annually in relation to companies at CAIPO, you see one notable statement in it. It says this at Clause 13:

“I certify that the company has maintained at its registered office the records pertaining to the company, including the records pertaining to beneficial ownership in accordance with Sections 170 to 172 of the Companies Act.”

That is really at the core of what we are looking at today, because while a lot of work has been done in relation to the regulation of companies falling under the International Business Unit and the other regulators -- and the work has been done extremely well -- we also have to recognise that the entities that fall under the purview of CAIPO similarly have to be regulated as well. CAIPO has to be fully empowered to be able to regulate, therefore, and in this context that means to be able to access information and verify the declaration in the annual return and that there is to be found at the registered office of the company information pertaining to the beneficial ownership. This has to be verified as a correct statement. They have to verify that the information is actually there and also that it is accurate and up-to-date. Hence, the Amendment today, Mr. Speaker.

Sir, you would see in the current Section 175 of the Companies Act, which we are amending by addition, that it is headed “Access To Records.” Subsection 1 empowers directors and shareholders to be able to examine the records of a company and take extracts free of charge. Subsection 2 empowers shareholders of a company, upon

request, to take a copy of the articles and so on of the company. Subsection 3 empowers creditors and their agents to be able to access information, and Subsection 4 says that “any person may during the usual business hours of the company and upon payment of a reasonable fee, examine the records of the company and make copies of those records or take extracts therefrom.” The phrase “any person” would obviously include CAIPO as well, but it is a very weak Section. It firstly speaks about having to do this during the usual business hours of the day upon payment of a reasonable fee. The “usual hours” of business of a company may vary from company to company, and then you must pay a reasonable fee. Who is to determine what a reasonable fee is? So it is very nebulous. More importantly, Sir, the regulator -- in this case, CAIPO -- does not really have the right to insist that you produce records and that you allow me to examine your books, which is absolutely necessary if we are to say that we are meeting that standard.

Therefore, Sir, you will see that the Amendment that is before the Chamber today does just that: It empowers the Registrar to be able to require a company to produce any of its books, records or documents that are required to be kept by the company under the provisions of the Companies Act. More importantly, Mr. Speaker, it also empowers the Registrar to appoint a person in writing to examine the books, records and other documents required to be kept by the company. That will be the mechanism that will actually be used. Really and truly, Mr. Speaker, I hold the view that the Corporate Affairs and Intellectual Property Office really ought not even to be a regulator. It really is a registry, and it really should continue in its role as a registry but because of so many entities that are not covered by other regulators and a more recent Amendment that we made, CAIPO is now actually no longer just a registry. It is a regulator as well. The fact of the matter, Mr. Speaker, is that what will happen is that pursuant to the power contained in the legislation, it will in fact designate the Compliance Unit in the International Business Unit to be the entity or the agency responsible for regulating the entities that fall under CAIPO.

Mr. Speaker, if I may say it: Currently, the entities that earn less than \$1 million gross in revenue are actually over 30 000. That has to be cleaned up because a lot of those are entities that no longer operate, so what is now a work in progress is that you are going through to see how many of the companies on the books in the Registry really are totally non-functional, and therefore would be struck off from the Registry’s records. That would lighten things up a lot and make things a lot easier, even in the eyes of the international regulator because the more companies that you are seen to have to regulate, the greater the burden you are placed under and the more you are scrutinised to see how many of them you are actually doing. CAIPO is going to use, in any event -- as I said -- the International Business

Unit, which already has a Compliance Unit. It has already -- if I may sing its praises -- completed, I believe, all of the onsite inspections of all of the corporate and trust service providers, of which there are 305. If not all, it has done certainly in the 90s in terms of percentages. They are well seized as to how you go from the process of debt stop inspections through to onsite inspections through to meetings and final reports to sanctions. They already know all that, so CAIPO will be relying on them to carry that forward. Hence, we would be able to see that all of the entities in Barbados would be properly regulated and would be able to report significant progress in my view, certainly as I said strengthening our hand for when we have to have the actual supplemental review conducted.

Mr. Speaker, what is being looked at here by the international regulators is the whole issue of tax evasion or tax avoidance by citizens in those countries. Individuals are known to use very elaborate corporate structures so as to hide their identities and hide profits from earnings. Hence, you can have company X incorporated in Barbados who or which has owned by company Y registered in the Bahamas, which is owned company Z that is registered in Israel and then go all the way down. You must always have the ability. You might ultimately have a company registered in Barbados, you must always have at the registered office of that company in Barbados who the true and ultimate beneficial owners are of the company. It may be a Canadian citizen that the Canadian authorities are inquiring about to see if he in fact is declaring and paying his fair share of taxes in Canada. There has to be that ability to trace and always determine who the ultimate beneficial owner of the company is. Or, it may be that people are using these elaborate structures not only to hide their tax liability but also to launder money. The Attorney General will speak on that aspect of it while my focus is on the tax bit of it.

However, I know that they were those who were looking at the penalties in the legislation and these amendments in this legislation are really not importing additional sanctions on businesses. This legislation is really looking to enforce existing commitments and obligations that entities are required to comply with. As I said notably in my case in terms of the tax point I am making here, the fact that you must have beneficial ownership information at the registered office of the company at all times and available upon inspection by the regulator.

Now, that is not an unreasonable request. If people are asked to file an annual return every year, it really and truly is a relatively simple document and there really is not much excuse for companies no matter how big or how small filing this annual return. Then, some do not file their annual returns, and when they get hit with a \$10 penalty, they cry out, but really and truly in my view, it is not unreasonable to asked them to file the return and we do not

like to impose penalties. However, if you do not do what you are supposed to do then there is a penalty. Under this amendment, there are also penalties. The first one is if you do not comply with an obligation, you see it is stated that there is a penalty of \$5 000. It is only if you do not pay that penalty that they then go onto higher penalty which it is up to \$500 every day during which the default continues not exceeding \$15 000, and if you still do not do it after the \$15 000 maximum is reached, then you can acquire a higher penalty or even a term of imprisonment if you do not. Let me just add one thing, because they are those who will quickly look at the impact on the small business operator. The truth is that there is nowhere in the world does it happen that all of the entities that fall to be regulated, meaning monitored, inspected or whatever are in fact monitored and inspected. Nowhere in the world does it happen. They use a risk rating tool to see which entities fall into low risk, medium risk or high risk, and you usually do that by virtue of an initial questionnaire sent out to companies, which they can easily respond to and have a risk rating. When companies are rated as low risk enterprises or entities, they would hardly, any more than one million, would they even be inspected far less be called upon to do anything at all under the legislation. Nobody has to jump up to say you are putting \$500 on a man.

First of all, the issue of a penalty only arises if you default. That is the first thing you have to understand. If you do what you are supposed to do, the issue of a penalty will never arise. The funny thing is that I cannot say that it can never happen, but you know you can have a very large entity that falls short of all of the requirements you should put in place to guard against money laundering and what not. You can have a small company that is also high risk. There are also some small companies that operates in such a way as fronts for big enterprises, so that a big enterprise might appear to be totally compliant with all of it manuals in relation to International Monetary Fund stuff and all of that, and while operating through a little front man that selling on the face of it only 20 pairs of shoes a month. That can be happening, while they are sitting back and making a ton of dirty money. In the ordinary course of things, a small operator, a real small man, once you did the risk analysis, which is the starting point in all of this, you are going to find that that operator is such a negligible risk that he will perhaps be rated as low risk because he has to be given a rating.

I want those to understand that there is no need to fear the legislation, there is no need the teeth aspect of the legislation, because as I said penalties are only really triggered when there is a breach.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know that there is anything else that I can really say further at this point. If necessary I would have to rejoin the debate later, but I know my learned friend the Attorney General is going to speak on his

bit as well. Mr. Speaker, with those few words I commend the amendments to the Chamber and as I said there are things that would strengthen our hand. Thus far the news is good in terms of what we got two weeks or so ago, and I do not want to really leave any stone at all untorn hence the decision to bring this legislation to make a good situation so far even better. Thank you Mr. Speaker. I beg to move that the Bill be read a second time.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Bishop J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. Just a few words in contribution to the matter brought before us by my Honourable friend out of the north region of St. Michael. Understandably, he is one to do that which he must and frequently so in the past year or so to bring matters before us will seek to put us more fully in compliance with our obligations vis-à-vis some of the international institutions around international business, trade and so forth.

My concern and briefly to address the matter is more so revolving around issues coming out of our corporate culture that impact Barbadians more immediately and impact Barbadian negatively. If his past performance is anything to be judged by, I am sure the Honourable Minister would spend much time in giving his energy and effort to addressing the deficiencies in our corporate culture here at home that are a cause for concern to Barbadians.

He spoke with reference briefly to the matter of beneficial ownership and the issues around it. I suppose, in recent times which may have caused us to be found wanting at the bar of international institutional opinion on these matters. While that is important, I think it is of some importance in weight too that we understand the regulatory obligation which we must meet to give exposure to ownership issues or claims must also take into consideration the need for privacy. Often, we perhaps come down in an imbalanced fashion on the need for privacy being afforded to individuals who are privileged to exercise ownership or directorship in our corporate world, while not at the same time giving a sufficient attention to the fact that “Bajans” have an interest in knowing and an interest at stake in what obtains in that corporate world.

I am saying simply, therefore, that while we deal with the matter of beneficial ownership, how that makes us look and places us with reference to the international context, and where we have to pay due attention to the issue of the obligation vis-à-vis privacy and the extent to which that exists, we have also got to bear in mind always that Barbadians have a right to know because many of them are investors in some of these corporate entities. Recent experiences have taught us bitterly that if we do not know and are not privy to important information that we wake up

one day to find that our investment has been jeopardized or perhaps totally lost.

Therefore, if I may be clear I am saying whereas there must be due regard to privacy to the extent that that matters, there is the other side of the issue and that is, the need to know and the right to know because you have invested in that corporate entity. It is not only a matter of satisfying the institutional global entities to which we are obligated in one way or another but it is also a matter of a Government seeking to create a climate in which Barbadian interests at home is safeguarded because of what we put in place to constitute the regulatory framework around these matters.

I hope I am clear, in that I went all around the world and I hope I got home. Whereas we want to eliminate or reduce significantly those issues and dynamics which caused us to be blacklisted or labelled as only partially compliant, and that the Minister therefore must do the job he is now seeking to do, again not for the first time in the interest of the country we have also got to bear in mind that if we do not get it right with respect to corporate culture practices in Barbados, the interests of Barbadians at home will be jeopardized and therefore it is a matter to which we must pay attention and balance privacy issues as against investment interests and investor rights.

We have had a problem in Barbados for a long time as well around the issue of interlocking directorships or directorates. There was a big furor years ago which was championed by people like Elombe Mottley and now Sir Hilary Beckles, one remembers the challenge on the entire Mutual structure. I am old enough to be aware of these things. Mr. Speaker, the whole business of interlocking directorships, I do not know has sufficiently engaged the attention of those who have had responsibility for these matters over the years and across Administrations. However, I raise it again because I believe perhaps it is my duty so to do. One can easily find a compromise of the fiduciary responsibilities I think if you bear reference to the (CLICO) situation which is not far behind us.

I think one of the findings coming out of that was due to persons occupying multiple spaces as directors across that corporate structure in some of the entities, persons paid greater attention or for one reason or another would have been motivated to give due regard to what is happening in this or that particular company. Therefore, rather than a duty of care to a specific entity within the total structure, you had the expression of multiple interests across various units in that corporate entity resulting in problems.

Beyond that of course is a matter of conflict of interest. It is always a bother in any sphere of activity when conflict of interest is a dynamic which attains a place of

prominence in the way people behave. Insider information or cross-company trading information, especially if companies are in competition with each other is a bother. These are some of the things thrown up out of that kind of a situation. Perhaps, the most sinister is the whole business of sectoral consolidation. It is a big issue in Barbados that across quite a few sectors, the consolidation that is taking place within those sectors and somehow for Barbados to free itself from these corporate entanglements must address the issue in my view, Mr. Speaker, of these interlocking directorships.

You are a person who lives in the world of law and I am sure you are very familiar though your practice predominantly I think is criminal law and not corporate law, and I certain your colleagues in this House who are closer to the scene of corporate law who know what obtains in that culture and this whole business of interlocking directorship because a person is another's friend or that person attended the same school as another person. Is the school motto, "up and on", Sir? It may be that this person wears the same school tie or school skirt as the other person. It could be that they are from the same church too or the same masonic lodge. It works too.

In fact, more prominently so. Oh my goodness, please do not take me down that road. In Barbados, we know that is a problem. My goodness, I did not want to go down there. At the highest level in Barbados' corporate world and the average poor "Bajan" uninformed as to these things, Mr. Speaker, is investing his or her hard earned money not knowing who sits at the controls and who is beholdng to who, who is a friend to who, who is related to who, who wears the same tie, who belongs to the same church, is a part of the same masonic lodge or a member of the same party.

These things obtain and that is the world in which we live and these are issues which we have to address, Mr. Speaker. The size of companies, Colonial Life Insurance Company (CLICO), if we understand the nature of the beast is not to be simply seen in terms of its Barbados institutional persona, eight, nine, 10 or 12 companies or whatever obtained here under that banner but you know of its regional character, you know of its international character as well. It is a massive company. I believe the question is very pertinent as to whether or not the regulatory framework which administrations here in Barbados are able to put in place, these frameworks are sufficient to the cause of regulating these massive companies. It is not only C.L.I.C.O., that is one that has failed and flounder but there are others which are still viable and thriving and you have -- I am not going to call any person's name because you are not, in my view, committing any breach serious enough for me to bring attention to you and your size, but there are other companies known to you, Mr. Speaker, that are massive

and growing and they grow up in Barbados and they have now spread across the region and internationally as well. The question is: to the extent that it is necessary to have a regulatory framework in place in Barbados, do we have the State capacity to regulate these companies? We talk about companies which are too big to fail, that is a reality. There are also companies which are too big to regulate when you consider the means and the capacity which are available to us here in Barbados. The other thing is, Mr. Speaker, this, what I call duality that exists in the corporate world and I see that it is gaining currency even in the Government where you have a Chairman and a Chief Executive Officer (C.E.O.) embodied in the same person. I do not know if that is healthy and this Administration has embarked upon doing that. I think we did it at the with the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (Q.E.H.) Board a State-related entity, but it also obtains, I think, at the Central Bank of Barbados and it obtains elsewhere in critical institutions in Barbados. I do not know that is healthy that you have the Chairman of a Board which is responsible on behalf of ownership for the oversight of the operations of a company and the oversight of the Chief Executive Officer (C.E.O.) and you have the two positions embodied in the same person. There can be arguments made for that, I imagine, but to me the arguments that fall against that way more heavily with me and in terms of my favour. I say that is one of the things that needs to be examine before we go too far down that road where we have the duality of the Chairman and the C.E.O. of important, critical nature companies embodied in the same person even if some of these companies are not only private sector, but may be State-related in terms of their ownership and their operation.

Perhaps the last thing I would mention is in the corporate culture with which we are familiar, connectivity, I suppose, matters and it is not far in our recess memory that we would find reference to sinister on-goings with reference to the matter of connectivity where political influence, political connection, plays a role in what goes down in financial institutions in Barbados. There is a matter, I think, is still before the Court, therefore, I will not speak to that but that is fresh in our memories. We do not have to go too far to recall that, but it is a clear example of the fact that the politics of the day and political personalities of the day and the political influence that obtains can be such that it crosses these boundaries, gets into the corporate world and it becomes a mix that is detrimental to the interest of Barbados. I do not want to dwell too much on that but political influence, political connectivity may, in fact, result in companies being victimised and pressured, political positions -- you can snicker if you want, but if the politics is not right, if the politics is anyway corrupt, you can see the ugly spectre of victimisation against some companies rearing its head.

The other side of the coin is, it may not be a question of the hand of politics interfering and bringing pressure to

bear on companies, but it may be that the eye of politics looks a little bit too gently and the goings-on in certain companies. In other words, political directorate, the regulator, may be aware, but a political eye may not want to look with great scrutiny on what has happening there or to wink its eye as to what is happening in this company, therefore, the regulators hands are tied. Do you catch my drift? Do you understand where I am going with that? I apologise, Mr. Speaker. Hence you have a political directorate, if it is minding so to do and it is a brand of corruption, you have held or tied the hands of the regulator so that he or she or it cannot go after company A or B and there is some view, which has some measure of currency. That is what happened with respect to C.L.I.C.O. as well, or it may be that the hand of the political directorate comes down heavily through the regulator on some company for some reason that serves political ends. I say that for the consideration of my friend, the Honourable Member on the Other Side.

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

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have agreed to share this particular platform with the Honourable Member for St. Michael North. I supposed, to use the cricketing term, he is the opening batsman. I guess this would make me the wicket keeper, but today is not about scoring runs, Sir. It is really about helping to address the serious challenges that Barbados has to face. I do not propose to labour too long but I think it would be remiss of me if I did not bring this discussion into context and I apologise for repeating it now almost to the point of ad nauseam, but I think it bears repeating that all Barbadians recognise what is at stake.

Mr. Speaker, our functioning effectively within the arena of international trade in the sense of our ability to buy and sell across international borders depends on something called correspondent banking and I guess we could call this money laundering 101 but it is important. Correspondent banking is jeopardised when the correspondent bank, that is to say the bank in the overseas jurisdiction that our local bank will send money to. Let me rewind a little bit, Sir. If a person wants to do a transaction, let us say in England, or even Jamaica, in order for that money to move from Barbados whether it is CIBC First Caribbean International Bank, or the Bank of Nova Scotia, or Republic Bank (Barbados), or First Citizens Bank (Barbados) Limited bank account, it has to move in US dollars but it moves into a bank in the receiving jurisdiction. That bank that handles the transfer of the money is called a correspondent bank and the relationship is called correspondent banking. Think of correspondence, something that moves from one person to another.

Not long ago, Mr. Speaker, the Caribbean region had as many as 160 correspondent banking relationships so any time a Barbadian wanted to move money from Barbados for a transaction to pay school fees, maybe to buy books, whatever it was, a merchant might want to buy shoes, whatever that transaction was, you had a whole set of banks overseas that were willing to move our transactional finances for us but that has now dwindled significantly. In the face of money laundering, Mr. Speaker, correspondent banking is jeopardised when the correspondent bank is not able to satisfy itself that arrangements to monitor and suppress money laundering in Barbados are being carried out with sufficient rigour that he does not have to worry about it, so in other words, Barbados has an anti-money laundering regime, it has to meet certain minimum standards that are established by the Financial Action Task Force, that is the international regulatory body to deal with money laundering, that sets the benchmarks that we have to meet and there are many, and Barbados has done very well in the last two-and-a-half years moving from near the bottom of the pack covering off a lot of areas and achieving a fair amount of success and we could be proud of the work we have done so far but the fact is that the Financial Action Task Force has said that we have not got where we need to be yet and we can spend another whole debate talking about that. I have often referred to the Greek myth of Sisyphus the ancient king who was required to roll a huge boulder up a hill and he would get to the top of the hill at the end of the day but then the rock would roll right back down again and the next morning Sisyphus got to start the exercise all over, and it is akin to what has happened to us, Mr. Speaker. We have been working that boulder up the hill and when we think we get there for some reason or another the rules changed something happens, the something is twisted and turned, and we have to respond so the boulders go back down the hill and we start all over again.

Mr. Speaker, let me hurry up. When correspondent banking is put at risk, it challenges and could sometimes even prevent us from doing things that are required of us as a Government. Now, I do not want to send off any panic buttons but just imagine, Mr. Speaker, a situation where the Barbados Government needs to buy COVID vaccines and has to send money abroad for the purpose of the purchasing of those vaccines or the purchasing of the syringes or the purchasing of the freezers or the fridges whatever it is that the vaccines may have to be kept in but the correspondent bank that we would seek to use in wherever we are going, England or the United States of America or wherever it is, says they are not satisfied that Barbados is applying sufficient rigour to suppress money laundering and therefore we are touching your money and all of sudden we cannot pay of the vaccines that we need, so let us bring that home to why we are here today.

One of the areas in which we are regarded as not having met the required standard has to do with the question of beneficial ownership. Now, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition ranged far and wide. He talked about interlocking directorships and this and the next and the third thing, and on an ordinary day I will be happy to engage him on those subjects, but beneficial ownership is very different to the management of the company. The directors manage the company. Practically everybody in here has been a director of a company at one point in time or another and I am sure that we probably did not own a single share in it especially the lawyers and so on. You can be directors of all kinds of companies but you do not have a single financial stake in it. Beneficial ownership has to do with who owns the company, the owner the company, who the shareholders are.

Now, historically our corporate regime has been predicated on the sacredness of the information to do with who owns the company. Barbadians have always been very private people and many of the people who have done business in Barbados have also been very private people. Our culture really has been one where I own shares or you own shares in a company, that is nobody business, what you want to know for, and our Companies Act was designed in that way so much so that only in the case of fraud can you do something called piercing the corporate veil. The corporate veil is that artificial construct which says you can see the company but the people who own the company are behind the veil so you cannot see them. That is how our company law has been based, has been structured and has been administered and successfully so but enter tax issues, enter also money laundering, and the international community has reached the point where they say look in order for us to be able to properly assess the tax structures that you are using, in order for us to determine who is really getting the benefit of the money, in order for us to determine who owns the company that may or may not be engaged in money laundering you got to move that veil, pull back the curtain, we need to be able to see who owns the company. That has been the tightrope that we have been trying to walk because in some instances countries have said to us or groups of countries have said to us we want to be able to get who owns your companies on demand, in fact, we want access to all of your corporate records to know who owns a company in Barbados and we fought that. Mr. Speaker, that is not how we do business. We certainly cannot ask the same of you but you have to strike a balance. The balance that we have sought to strike is building on what we have had all these years, so let me refer you quickly to the Companies Act at Section 170. The Companies Act at Section 170 talks about the records that a company shall keep at its registered office, and one of those things is that a company shall, this is at Section 170 subsection (2), maintain a register of shareholders showing the name and the latest known address of each person who is a shareholder and a statement of the shares held by the

shareholder and the date on which each persons was entered on the register as a shareholder, so a company is who keeps that. The company at its registered office will have therefore information on who owns the shares but that is all the law says. We have an arrangement where the Registrar, this is now found at Section 175, or a member of the public can seek to inspect that information but even that was considered not to be satisfactory. At Section 175 (4), it says:

“Any person may during the usual business hours of the company upon payment of a reasonable fee, examine the records of the company referred to in paragraph (c) of subsection (1) of section 170 and in subsections (2), (3), and (4) of that section and make copies of those records and take extract from therefrom.”

Mr. Speaker, Sir, section 170 (2) is about shareholders, but that, Mr. Speaker, Sir, does not, and understandably so, satisfy the requirement. Can you imagine that the Commissioner of Police investigating a money laundering case (there is a company involved) and the Commissioner of Police has to send along a constable and try to access these records? They could run rings around that person - (we [are] having a Board meeting this week to determine what the reasonable fee will be, so when we have decided we will let you know, then you can come and pay it - sic!). Mr. Speaker, Sir, details of shareholders are not kept at the Companies Registry, unlike information on directors, so that directors' information is at the Companies Registry, you go up there, you pay the \$40 or \$50 and you do a search and you will see that Dale Marshall, Santia Bradshaw, Joseph Atherley, Sam Couch and the Duppy, Cynthia Forde, are directors of a company, but nothing about the shareholders.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the bottom line is that we have had to make amendments to our law bearing in mind at all times the importance of having some kind of corporate veil to ensure privacy -- not anonymity -- privacy, but also to put a regime in place where the authorities are able, for the purposes of tax information, for the purposes of investigating and punishing money laundering, they are able, with some significant ease -- if you could put it that way -- to access the information.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, one of the amendments being made to the Act has to do with guidelines and beneficial ownership and this is the one that is more targeted to the suppression of money laundering. Now, you have a corporate veil (I mentioned that earlier) but shares can be sold. Shares can move. Now, the Financial Services Commission has a provision in their legislation which says that any time you want to part with more than 10 per cent of the shares of one of the company that that entity regulates, that you need to submit that information to the Financial Services Commission and they have the right

either to approve or refuse to approve that transaction. That allows them to know who the movers and shakers behind our insurance companies and other regulated bodies are, but in relation to private companies, the vast (vast) majority of whom are mom and pop -- often they are just pop or mom -- people who incorporate companies to do modest things, but we still have to have an ability to track movement of shares and who controls the company. Mr. Speaker, Sir, what we have proposed, based on a Committee made up of our local regulators, we have determined that it is better to provide that we will structure that through guidelines, rather than to stipulate a threshold in the law. The problem with the threshold in the law is that if you want to increase or decrease a threshold you have to come back to Parliament to do so and that involves another set of convoluted processes. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the guidelines which conventional wisdom says have the force of law, those guidelines will be issued by the Registrar and will determine the threshold amount.

Now, Sir, there is a view that the threshold for the reporting of change of ownership of shares should be 20 per cent, so that if 20 per cent of the shares are being sold in any company, then you should report that. However there is no internationally agreed upon threshold, the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force has said they do not think that 20 per cent is the figure. It is difficult to say what the figure is, because that will depend on the company. A small hired car company that has two cars would have clearly a different requirement to a company that owns three hotels and a fleet of Mercedes Benzes, and that will have a different set of arrangements to a construction company working all across the Caribbean -- there are different strokes for different folks, so rather than try to fix a clear figure, we propose to do it by issuing guidelines and those guidelines will be able to deal with the peculiarities of the situation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is one step moving us closer to addressing our Caribbean Financial Action Task Force and European Union issues. Time does not allow us to go into a huge debate on the specifics of the money laundering regime, on the challenges that we are facing, on the requirements of the European Union and where we stand on their blacklist, suffice it to say that we are working assiduously, we have established a special committee made up of all the regulators and representatives from all the agencies and we meet every single week, and have been meeting for every single week, for months now, dealing on a week-by-week basis with issues and progress to be made. We have the benefit of consultants from Canada who have been working in this area for many years, having worked with the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force, but also working for significant countries across the globe advising them on their anti-money laundering issues and counter-terrorism financing. We have had the benefit of those

consultants who have been laboring with us and doing tremendous work.

We have, leading our team, an excellent public servant who has again just been seconded from the Central Bank of Barbados, that is going to yield significant fruit, so we continue to work assiduously to get Barbados out of the enhanced monitoring of the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force, and as quickly as possible off the European Union blacklist. There have been some challenges in terms of how we got there, but I do not think this is the occasion but suffice it to say that this is one of the legislative requirements that we have to meet and we are ticking those off one by one, by one. We have covered off the vast majority of those, this is one of the few that still needs to be done.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, before I sit, just to show you how the gold post changes: The whole issue of digital currency has now burst on the seam. There is no clear regulatory framework. In fact, in Barbados in 2018 we tried to set up "regulatory sandbox" -- and the thing about a sandbox is that it is exactly that. You know, you do not want children to nasty up the house so you put them in a sandbox so that they play and make all the mess in there. Hence a "regulatory sandbox" was established in Barbados so as to allow the establishment and the growth of digital currencies, without threatening the traditional banking sector and the traditional money markets. Thus they would have operated within the confines of that sandbox and so the rest of our financial systems would not be at risk.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is a new achievement, this is a new development, Sir, but already the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force has said to us they need to know how we will have regulated digital currency, at a time, Sir, (at a time) when hardly any countries in the world have even determined how digital currency should be regulated. However they have said to us that we need to tell them how we are going to regulate it, yet they cannot even tell us how they are regulating theirs. Hence the gold post changes, it is regrettable, sometimes we wish we could be impolite in the diplomatic context but we cannot.

Nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is another step that we are taking and I am pleased to be able to invite this Honourable Chamber to support this measure and to join us in that direction, [while being] mindful, Sir, that we are still not removing the corporate veil, we are still ensuring privacy, so any of you investors out there do not worry that somebody can go to the Registry and say: "I want to see who owns John Brown Limited." That is not what we are doing. This allows our regulators to have access to the information, so your corporate information will, other than what is already at the Registry, remain private. It will remain private; that is an important guarantee for business people. Barring the need to secure your privacy, the

regulators will have a strong and vibrant mechanism to be able to see who the puppet masters are -- if that is a good term -- behind the puppets; who are the persons making the ultimate decisions, who are the beneficial owners, who are those shareholders, who have a vested interest in how the company functions and runs.

Sir, with those few words I hope I have been able to explain a few things to this Chamber and to our wider audience, and I am grateful for the continued support in the area of suppressing and hopefully eliminating completely the element of money laundering from our vision. However, I have to say, definitely in closing, that we are in a sense being punished because we are not a place where a lot of money laundering happens. Barbados' money supply, I think, is at about US\$5 billion. I think that is the kind of figure. That figure is smaller than many multinational corporations. In order for us to harmfully impact the European Union's (EU) financial markets, every single penny that is available in Barbados -- the four cents in my bag, the five cents in yours, every penny that is in our economy -- would have to be funneled towards money laundering in order to be even able to impact EU financial markets. That is it. We could not buy nothing, we could not do anything else, we could not even turn on lights. Every penny in Barbados! Sir, it would be like taking a bottle full of air and vacuuming out all of it. That is what it would mean, and it would not even create a blip in that arena, Sir, but that is a fight for another day. I am obliged to you.

Asides.

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

Asides.

Hon. R.St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Bill be read a second time.

Hon. Miss M.K-A. CADDLE: I beg to second that.

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

On the motion of Hon. R.St.C. TOPPIN, seconded by Hon. R.R. STRAUGHN, the House resolved itself into Committee. Dr. S.E. BROWNE in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

MADAM CHAIRMAN: This House is in Committee.

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

On the motion of Hon. R.St.C. TOPPIN, seconded by Hon. R.R. STRAUGHN, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour the SPEAKER the passing of one Bill in Committee, and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motion of Hon. R.St.C. TOPPIN, seconded by Hon. R.R. STRAUGHN, the Bill was read a third time, passed and cited as the Companies (Amendment) Act, 2020.

SUSPENSION

Hon. Miss S.J.O. BRADSHAW: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 6.30 p.m.

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

The question that the Sitting do now suspend until 6.30 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and MR. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

RESUMPTION

RECOMMITAL OF PAPERS

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

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the Valued Tax Refund, the Maria Holder Memorial Trust Order, 2020.

REVERT TO GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 8

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.

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

STANDING FINANCE COMMITTEE

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

Mr. CLERK: In the name of the honourable minister of economic affairs and investment to move the passing of a resolution to grant the sum of \$32,753,850 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. 8 2020-2021 which form the schedule to the resolution.

Mr. CLERK: Madam Chairan, I should let the House know that this is an adjusted figure that supplementary has been circulated to all Members.

HEAD 13

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

IN THE AMOUNT OF \$819 354

Madam CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central.

Hon. Miss. M. K. A. CADDLE: Thank you Madam Chairman. The amount indicated in these supplementary provisions for Head 13, the Prime Minister's Office relates to Kensington Oval Management Inc. Now, KOMI as we call it is one of those entities that has been like many tourism-related or visitor-related and entertainment-related venues been impacted by this COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to us having been thrust into this position of having to respond to and recover from the pandemic, Kensington Oval Management Inc. had been developing a new strategy, new revenue streams, new ways to penetrate the regional and international cricket and sporting entertainment market. Those plans are still on track. Even though KOMI has been very hard hit by the pandemic and direct inflows from cricket and from other sports and entertainment, events have been virtually eliminated, there are still plans for add on services for tour revenue and so on.

Now, Madam Chairman, I do not intend to spend too much on this Head except to say that we have just recently had the erection of a statue to pay tribute to Sir Wes Hall, one of this country's region and world outstanding cricketing legends. For many people, for those of us who love cricket all over the world, Kensington Oval is still considered the mecca in this part of the world of cricket.

From the perspective of tourism investment and the promotion of the visitor economy, we have to be able to leverage KOMI's location as being a part of the urban but also the coastal entertainment corridor to be able to build

out and build on what it currently does. Kensington Oval is about cricket but it is not just about cricket and the cricket entertainment product in Barbados is not just about Kensington Oval. We have talked about really leveraging the cricket legends of Barbados and of the region. We have talked about the site where Central Purchasing is currently, being converted into a hotel, another venue that is branded as the cricket legends of Barbados or even the cricket legends of the region and having others in other locations.

Hence, there is a lot that we need to build on and that we will build on when it comes to how we position Kensington Oval. KOMI has been enjoying I would say some very strategic management and thinking. As I mentioned, the plan is to develop more resilient revenue streams. The plan is to be able to as we have started doing and we did this with the unveiling of the Wes Hall statue, is to be able to use the social media platforms in the region, similarly to how cricket West Indies and others have done to be able to attract interest and to be able to create a platform for online merchandising of Kensington Oval, West Indies cricket, regional cricket and other types of gear and memorabilia. Improving and relaunching our daily tours. Reducing the cost structure of KOMI by incorporating renewable energy. We have start discussions with Barbados National Oil Company Limited as well as the IDB to evaluate how we can make sure that KMOI can reduce its energy related cost by at least 20 per cent over the next five years while the oval is able to pay off for this system.

Madam Chair, however, while we are developing these things, it still requires the Oval to remain open and functioning. The people of Barbados would have seen that we have still made several attempts to host certain entertainment events to make sure that there is a cash flow, but regrettably that has not been sufficient in the context of this pandemic to be able to meet all the needs. Hence, KOMI has been very severely impacted by the minimal inflows as a result of the pandemic. We anticipate that it needs a minimum subvention of about \$187 583.33 a month to cover basic expenses. It means that over the period in question, it is \$819 354 that are required.

Madam Chairman, we consider this an investment in making sure that Kensington Oval remains open and relevant. It is put in the position to be able to develop those new revenue streams and to develop the cricket related tourism and entertainment product, which we think Barbados is the best place in the region to be able to offer to the rest of world. right now, we have this brilliant young man, Captain Tom, I believe he is called. He is a British national who was able to raise I believe about £33 million for the National Health Services (NHS) in the United Kingdom (UK). One of his dreams was to come to Barbados and visit Kensington Oval which I believe he will do on Thursday. People all over the world see Kensington

Oval, the Cricket Legends of Barbados and the region as a part of a dream to be realised. We believe that these resources are an investment in the future of Kensington Oval and it is for that reason we are requesting these sums. Madam Chairman, I beg to move that Head 13 stand part.

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

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

HEAD 15

CABINET OFFICE-\$1 711 723

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Earlier today we debated the Bills associated with the Humanitarian Service Award, as well as the Gold Medal Award for Barbados. Part of the sums associated with this supplementary for the Cabinet Office under Sub-Programme 7020 is to facilitate the acquisition of the medals to facilitate the award specifically as it relates to the Humanitarian Service Award in January. In the supplementary you will see that \$395 895 will be required in order to have those awards specially minted, if that is the correct language, to give to those persons who have given human service to Barbados this year and allow them a special award which will be designated under the COVID-19 award.

Obviously as we indicated, going forward we anticipate that there may very well be other areas with respect to the Humanitarian Service Award and, therefore, those monies will be able to procure those awards. We have also set aside, Madam Chairman, \$1 million in this supplementary under contingency. Madam Chairman, as you are aware, this year was perhaps one of the most active hurricane seasons even though Barbados did not necessarily receive or experience other than the rain systems that threatened us from a hurricane perspective. Hurricane Eta, you would recall Madam Chairman, which for the first time in a long time we actually got into the Greek Alphabet with respect to the named storms in a season caused significant damage across Central America.

Specifically, four countries that we are pledging these relief funds for include Panama, Belize, Honduras and Nicaragua where some 2.5 million persons approximately were impacted by Hurricane Eta. You may recall that there were videos of persons marooned all across Honduras and Central America as Hurricane Eta passed. Barbados being a part of the global community, notwithstanding our current fight against COVID-19 as well as our issues in terms of dealing with the economy, Belize being a part of CARICOM but equally as we partner across Latin America because as you recall we opened a mission in Panama in order to strengthen our linkages with

those Barbadians who migrated to Panama over 100 years ago to construct the canal.

As we broaden our relationships across the hemisphere, we feel that even at this time we can give whatever little we can to bring some relief to those persons who were significantly impacted by the passing of Hurricane Eta. This \$1 million under Cabinet Office is to bring some relief, however small, to those persons who were impacted by Hurricane Eta. The last sum of monies here gives me great joy. The \$315 828, I know the Honourable Member sitting to my right will not relish it but the Member for St. George North was duly elected a few weeks ago, and these monies are to cover the costs associated with the administration of that by-election in St. George.

I know that the Honourable Member, even though he was very forthright in his congratulations to the Honourable Member, obviously this is a constitutional responsibility and therefore these are the costs associated for the Electoral and Boundaries Commission (EBC) in order to ensure that those who worked specially on election day and all of the administration associated with the registering of electors, and all that goes into the hosting of a by-election, that these costs are covered with respect to this supplementary request. Madam Chairman, I beg to move that Head 15 stand part.

Bishop J. J. S. ATHERLEY: I intimidated earlier that very early in my formative years, I learned how to deal with conflict. The Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central has obviously come looking for a fight. He has come to sit quite close to me and then, he would not end his submission without making reference to the experience of the St. George North by-election in which PDP gained in its vote and the BLP lost.

Asides.

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: In the spirit of giving, Madam Chairman, I beg to move that Head 15 stand part.

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

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

HEAD 27

MINISTRY OF TOURISM

AND INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT- \$886 515

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Yes, Madam Chairman. As you would recall, even though we are in the midst of a pandemic the Ministry is still executing under the National

Tourism Programme a project which is funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) with respect to the execution of that programme and, therefore, the monies associated with this supplementary is to in part, support the financing and the cost associated with those persons under the project unit and similarly under the air transport infrastructure.

These are additional monies to support obviously the operations in terms of the personnel with respect to agencies.

Madam Chairman, I beg to move that Head 27 stand part.

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

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

HEAD 30- SUPPLEMENTARY FOR THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL:

\$5 362 193

Madam CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Joseph.

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL: Madam Chairman, I am pleased to ask this Honourable Chamber to acquiescence in providing the Supplementary for the Office of the Attorney General in the amount of \$5 362 193. This covers, essentially, four Heads and among the items that are included here, Madam Chairman, would be professional services that have been engaged by the Office of the Attorney General. This total amount is the figure of \$1 040 950. Madam Chairman, this amount is reflected because of several factors. One of them is the fact that the Government of Barbados has engaged a United Kingdom (U.K.) firm -- I have disclosed this to the Honourable Chamber before -- to do work for us in the area of investigating potential incidents of corruption and an amount in the sum of £150 000 is due to that entity. There are other expenses, there are still some legal fees that are owed to the attorneys as legal costs who worked have costs in the election cases of 2½ years ago. There is one instance where, for some inexplicable reason those costs have not yet been settled and that is also included. In addition to that, you see that there is provision for the amount of \$400 000 under the Office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel. Madam Chairman, I do not think it is a secret that the area of legal drafting is a very complex area and there is a global shortage of legal draughtsmen and it is no secret that we have had a fairly blistering schedule in terms of legislation coming to Parliament. It is little known though that a lot of day-to-day drafting is done by Chambers. All of the Orders that are made, for example, under the Duties, Taxes and

Other Payments. I think one was laid before this Honourable Chamber a few minute ago. All of those things have to be expertly drafted by the staff of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel.

In addition to that, we have had to bring forward a number of pieces of legislations to Parliament in short order. This has required us to engage additional drafting services from outside of Chambers. We are very fortunate to have, still available to us, a number of draughtsmen who have retired. We have been using Justice Sherman Moore, who used to be the Chief Parliamentary Counsel before he elevated to the Bench and he has been doing a tremendous amount of work. This amount is not for him but we anticipate that other invoices will come in as he finishes off other pieces of legislation. We are very fortunate and we now have a newly retired Chief Parliamentary Counsel and I hope that she would be able to assist us in that regard as well. The forensic services relate, Madam Chairman, to getting the Forensic Services Laboratory in Culloden Road up to speed. That Laboratory was allowed to fall into a state of - I do not want to be so extreme as to say decay in recent times. We have spent a significant amount of money to try to get the building back into shape because a lot of the issues have been environmental. This amount covers annual expenses including things like insurance servicing equipment and so on, in order to be able to make sure that all of the additional things are sorted and in a position to be reactivated when we hopefully will get into the Laboratory later in the financial year.

Police services takes up the vast majority of the money that we are seeking. By convention, Madam Chairman, we do not go into the specifics of the procurement matters but suffice it to say that some of the provision that is made here relates to day-to-day maintenance of our stations and things of that sort. I think a lot of people do not recognise the challenges that the police officers of Barbados have to operate under. I frequently get calls and text messages anonymously complaining that air conditioning units are not working, generators are not working, a whole set of things. Madam Chairman, you may say they are small things, but a police station is not like this building. We came into this Honourable Chamber at 10.00 a.m. every Tuesday, the staff will come every day, but they may come at 8.00 a.m. or 10.00 a.m. I think the staff here comes at 10.00 a.m. and they leave at 5.00 p.m. A police station is opened 24 hours seven days a week and there are three shifts in the course of everyday so people are constantly rotating into a space that for the last eight hours had been occupied by someone else and then at the end of that person's shift, another individual rotates into that space so the use, the intensity of the use of a police station is in many respects, unlike most things in Government. Obviously, hospitals and the ambulance services will have that too, but I think that would allow people to understand what we are dealing with. What may be seen as a

maintenance issue that can be put off until tomorrow cannot be put off until tomorrow because there is another shift coming for whom these maintenance issues continue to be a problem, therefore, we are budgeting a significant amount of this money to be able to bring a lot of relief to officers who are working in stations. Solar heaters, air conditioning, maintenance of bathrooms, things of that sort, but in addition to that there are some legacy things. There are generators, all of our stations have generating capacity, I believe, certainly the new ones and the major ones and we have to be prepared in case there is a power outage. The station has to work. You cannot call a station, I am sure, and take any delight in hearing that we do not have any electricity, therefore, this is not working or that is not working. There are things of that sort that are being addressed.

Madam Chairman, it is a figure that I can assure the Honourable Chamber is much needed. It does not represent in any way, any falling down in relation to our budgeting. A lot of issues come up during the course of the year, but I am pleased to be able to say that this money is going to be well used and specifically targeted to ensure that among other things the members of the Royal Barbados Police Force would be able to function in some more comfort that they are currently functioning in and that we would be able to continue to deliver the services to the country in terms of drafting and other professional services.

Madam Chairman, I am therefore asking the Honourable Chamber to approve the Supplementary in the amount of \$5 362 193 and beg that Head 30 stand part.

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAM: I beg to second that, Madam Chairman.

Madam CHAIRMAN: The question that Head 30 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

HEAD 31 -- SUPPLEMENTARY FOR THE MINISTRY OF INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND SMART TECHNOLOGY \$3 737 291

Madam CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central.

Hon. Miss M. K. CADDLE: Thank you, Madam Chairman. As we are all aware, the Ministry of Innovation, Science and Smart Technology has had to hit the ground running when it was first established and has had to increase the pace of the sprint in the context of the COVID pandemic. These supplementary moneys being requested cover three broad areas of work that are very crucial at this time. MIST, as we call the Ministry, is responsible for the rollout of a transformational programme, the National Digital Identification System. This is something that would

allow each Barbadian to be reregistered but it would also allow for a number of digital services and a digital personality and interaction not just with the Government of Barbados and with Government services but with a range of other services including payments being able to be done in a digital way and so on. It is very important that we are able to accelerate the pace of the roll out of that project and some of the resources here cover the Ministry of Innovation, Science and Smart Technology being able to do that.

This National ID System is a part of a broader modernisation thrust. One of the first actions of this Administration when we came to service two-and-a-half years ago was to start the work of modernisation, digitisation and digitalisation. What that means is that we are migrating more and more services online. We all saw this with the Police Certificate of Character. We have modernised the way in which passports and driver's licences are renewed. There is a range of services that would allow Barbadians to save time and in so doing to become more productive and to be able to dedicate time to the things that they value most.

Part of the process of the digitisation - and digitisation let me say is the word we use when we are talking about making information digital, but digitalisation, an extra syllable, is the word we use when we are talking about allowing people to carry out business in an online environment so they are two separate processes. What these resources will allow us to do is to re-engage some of those people who would have been separated from both public and private sector work both prior to the pandemic and as a result of the pandemic. We are very aware that there is a need for people not just to be able to receive support and transfers in the way we have been doing it but to be able to work again, to be able to get up every day, as we say colloquially, bathe and powder and go to a job and feel like they are and be a part of economic activity and life in the country again and so these resources will allow us to engage people to be able to first clean records and to be able to digitise them. I know, Madam Chairman, that you as a champion of healthy buildings and healthy environments would be happy to hear that we are getting rid of all of this paper that dust clings to and that we will be able to digitise to clean the records to store them securely and to be able to digitise them.

The final area of work and final activity that these resources would allow us to accelerate relate to smart cities and being able to fulfil the Manifesto pledge that was made as it relates to Smart Bridgetown and the availability of free Wi-Fi in the Bridgetown area. The Smart Bridgetown Project contemplates the free Wi-Fi as the first phase, it also contemplates a parking App, Application, that would allow people, once we have established stronger and more complete and parking ride systems, to be able to identify

where parking is available and therefore not lose time by driving around and around in circles or parking illegally and therefore lose money. It would also allow for visitors to be able to see certain attractions as a later phase, a Phase 3, so that there are aware of where they can go and what times and get the most of their experience in Barbados.

These sums of money, Madam Chairman, would allow the Ministry of Innovation, Science and Smart Technology to rapidly implement these activities, so with that I beg to move that Head 31 stand part.

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

The question that Head 31 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

HEAD 33

MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS, INFORMATION AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

\$1 275 995

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Christ Church East.

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS: Madam Chairman, the bulk of the sum sought is to assist us with the debts of CBC, the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation. As you would know, Madam Chairman, the Government sought to take the statutory corporation off the books of central Government to allow them to stand on their own two feet. The Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation main revenue comes from advertising and from income generated from MultiChoice, MC TV.

Madam Chairman, anybody who is in business would know now that the bad word in Barbados, actually internationally, is advertising. Advertising and sponsorship are now two bad words. The advertising revenue for the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation has dropped off significantly over the COVID period with business trying to hold on to their cash and not investing it in advertising. There have been almost no new subscriptions to MultiChoice and we have run into some difficulties with increasing debts to the suppliers, things like the networks that the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation is allowed to pay for licences to use their feeds. We have a backup with those and we are trying to renegotiate or come to some allowance with respect to being able to service those debts but as it stands now the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation needs to take care of some immediate things.

In addition, Madam Chairman, we have a situation at Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation where the building through years of neglect has reached a point where

immediate work is required in certain areas. A lot of the ACs, air-conditioners, are not functioning, certain sections of the building had to be shut off because of mould and the whole sick building thing again is in need of an industrial clean so the sum sought for the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation in particular was the sum of \$913 195 and that is basically to take us through to the end of this financial year to put us in the position where the staff can actually work to get some basic equipment because a lot of the equipment is out of date as well. The format that the equipment records in is not the current format. We need high definition things, things that would be able to speak to each other so this is just to patch the hole until the end of the financial year when the realistic estimate as to what is necessary to take the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation forward would have to come into play, so that is the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation aspect.

The balance of the funds, Madam Chairman, is in relation to the new Public Affairs Department. As you know there is a Director of Public Affairs currently but that is a one-person shop. What COVID has taught us is that the Government needs to change the way that it disseminates information so when people think of Government information they actually think of the Government Information Service, GIS, but the GIS is an agency that is pretty much set up to do reporting on behalf of the Government. They would do one-off things. They would report an opening of something and they would report things for the Metrological Office. One off reports are what GIS really does. What we need now is an avenue for the Government to get the message across as to where we are going as a country and what is necessary to educate our people and to get some behavioural change. We have issues with crime in Barbados, Madam Chairman, and it is not going to go away by itself. The Police can do what they do but still positive messaging have to be out there on a constant basis from the Government.

With respect to NCDs, non-communicable diseases, and the Ministry of Health and Wellness, the Minister can say all he wants and GIS will report it once but to get the message out there across as to the changes that Barbadians need to make in order to secure their lifestyle and a better way of health, we need a format and a platform to do that and this does that. Madam Chairman, if I use one good example it is "No Sugar November" That was a recent challenge that was up in November where you are pushing to not use sugar and it got a lot of buy-in because it was repeatedly out there in social media and a number of people obtained some good reports out of it. I want to toot my own horn but having put myself out there, somebody who was going for the gold and not realising how many people saw it, but I was ashamed to have fallen short. Hence anytime I was tempted I just sucked it up and just left out the sugar.

Asides.

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS: Madam Chairman, obviously the Honourable Member for St. Thomas needs to change her spectacles because being right across from her the Honourable Member fails to see that I am now ten pounds lighter than I was at the beginning. Madam Chairman, the point is...

Asides.

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS: Madam Chairman, we do not hear Asides, especially cruel Asides, but the point is that something as simple as that, by the repeated messaging and changing the way how we put it out, it got a lot of people to buy into it. We have spoken to the Ministry of Health and Wellness, we have spoken to National Cultural Foundation, it is going to be a department that, (a), can stand on its own, or (b), can work in collaboration with other ministries and other departments to push their agendas and help them to be able to meet their targets. When we get to the point when the COVID-19 vaccine comes into Barbados there is going to be a need to be a sustained public education push to be able to answer the question, to be nimble enough to answer questions in real time and to get the messaging out there. This is the department that will do that. We do not intend to overpopulate it with staff, rather, it needs to have a way to contract for the services it will require. We are going to be requiring specialists in audio visual presentations, editing, messaging, behavioural change specialists. It is going to be that department that is going to be used to educate and transform the way of thinking of Barbadians to help make us to be the best that we can be.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the other initiative that I want to point at, and the Leader of Government Business had mentioned in one of her earlier addresses, but we need to capture is what is Barbadian? We have a lot of prominent Barbadians whom we have not captured what their life stories are. Thus for the Sir Wes Halls, the Sir Garrys, the prominent people, all whom have gotten the highest awards, we need to capture what their stories are so that Barbadians down the line can understand that these are the persons whom we look up to, this is where they came from, this is what they have achieved, and this is why we need to emulate them. Madam Chairman, this is that department that is going to do all of that.

Madam Chairman, we have a problem that came forward very recently. I do not want to pin-point it specifically but you know what I am talking about, where we should not be scrambling for footage or to be able to tell the story of prominent Barbadians when they have passed. That should already be done, catalogued, added to their accomplishments and we should be able to represent them properly and honour them properly at the drop of a dime. Madam Chairman, we need to hear the story of Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford. We need to hear the story of Sir David

Simmons. Madam Chairman, we need to hear the story of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition -- what were his experiences, what were his thoughts, what drives him, what motivates him. We need to capture the story of the longest-serving female Parliamentarian.

Asides.

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS: Madam Chairman, I think I have made the point. The bottom line is that it is not a lot that we are asking for at this instance. We want to start now and we have to get this department properly functioning and running, especially to start the public education and the public dissemination of information with respect to the Covid vaccine because we need to hit the ground running for that one in particular, as soon as it is available.

We need to talk about what it means to be a Republic and to be able to answer questions and put the information out there. Madam Chairman, the amount for this particular section is simply to take us to the end of the financial year, then the proper accounting for this section is going to appear in the Estimates for 2021-2022. Madam Chairman, with those few words and that explanation, I beg to move that Head 33, in the amount of \$1 275 995 stand part.

Hon. D. G. SUTHERLAND: Madam Chairman, I beg to second that.

The question was put to the Honourable House and agreed to in the affirmative without division.

HEAD 34

MINISTRY OF FINANCE, ECONOMIC AFFAIRS AND INVESTMENT

\$2 214 444

Madam CHAIR: The Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central, you have the Floor.

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Madam Chairman, the sums under this specific Head for the Barbados Revenue Authority in the amount of \$2 152 444 in part is to do two things: Madam Chairman, having starting this implementation with respect to TAMIS which has been ongoing now for the better part of four years, the Government of Barbados has now taken responsibility over from the consultants with respect to the administration of TAMIS but some \$13 575 is our counterpart funds in relation to execution of that specific project which the Barbados Revenue Authority will now apply with respect to the expenditure associated with that particular software programme. Madam Chairman, I can say to the public of

Barbados that we have been working obviously to ensure that the smooth transition with respect to the processing of refunds... We have not yet gotten to the stage where everything will run as smoothly as we would like, given a number of factors that have impacted that but the reality is that we believe we are at a stage now where with the Government having the full production capacity with respect to TAMIS, given that it has been built to specification and has been delivered but going forward we will be able to make changes and the appropriate adjustments as it relates to policy in a much more timely manner than we have been experiencing over the past two and one half years with respect to this. Equally, a number of persons have already received their 2019 tax refunds and equally reversed tax credit for 2018 and therefore as the Barbados Revenue Authority continues to manage that process to ensure that while it is important for us to respond to people in a timely manner, the clearing of the backlog with respect to refunds continues while we manage to stay current with respect to the refunds that are available. Madam Chairman, I urge certainly the faith of the public with respect to that because we are making strides with respect to the improvement of the public finances as it relates to the administration of revenue.

Madam Chairman, the remaining sums, \$1.5 million, relates to the payment of pensions benefits with respect to retired employees of the Barbados Revenue Authority, as well as those employees who are anticipated to be retiring during the course of this financial year. Ma'am, as you know the Barbados Revenue Authority took five departments in and therefore as persons were in the service for a number of years we are seeing over the course of the last few years that persons are retiring, so that these sums are to facilitate those retiring benefits.

Madam Chairman, the last amount is to provide \$62 000 to repair the roof of Central Purchasing, as Barbadians know it. The officers there, certainly throughout this period, have continued to serve the Government departments, as well as the expanded procurement mechanism that we asked of them to ensure that we have critical items in this COVID-19 pandemic environment. We want to ensure that the roof of the warehouse which obviously stores some of these critical items, that we have those repairs completed in the shortest possible time and therefore this \$62 000 is to conduct those repairs to the roof of warehouse at Central Purchasing Department. Madam Chairman, I now beg to move that Head 34 stand part.

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

The question was put to the Honourable House and agreed to in the affirmative without division.

HEAD 35

MINISTRY OF PEOPLE EMPOWERMENT AND ELDER AFFAIRS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$75 000.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member for St. Thomas.

Hon. Miss C.Y. FORDE: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I wish to indicate the release of funds to the tune of \$75 000 to go towards the Alliance to End Homelessness. Over the past few years, that institution has been serving the public of Barbados, particularly emphasising persons who are homeless, and over the years it has done a very good job in helping to ensure that homeless people are taken off the streets, but more particularly at this time of COVID when no vagrant, as far as I am aware, was seen knocking around Bridgetown during that period, especially during those months of the lockdown. They were all housed at the institution. I want to commend the organisation because of the assistance that has been offered. Government does not have enough facilities to cater to those who are extremely impoverished and find themselves homeless for whatever reason. Some of them are mentally ill and others have been turned away from their various homes or have lost them due to debt; therefore the properties would have gone since they could not pay mortgages and so on.

Madam Chairman, these funds are going to help shore up the services that the organisation has been offering. The organisation has been providing meals, clothing, counselling and medical assistance, and it has been following the protocols. Luckily, we do not know of anyone who would have been a part of that institution coming down with the disease. Our homes -- those that are under the Department of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs -- including Lancaster House, the Clyde Gollop Centre and the Vauxhall Home were all filled to capacity. Therefore, the Alliance for Homelessness was able to take in those individuals who found themselves on the other end of it. Governments over the years have been extending that helping hand to organisations and other entities which help to ensure that people reach a level where they can be housed, fed and provided with funds to help lift them up out of the poverty cycle. There are also other institutions which have been benefiting as well over the years and continue to do so, including the Salvation Army which has for many generations been offering extensive support and assistance to the public of Barbados. Yes, the Salvation Army goes out and sources money through the kettle project and other aspects of collections.

Ma'am, we have recently included the Prison Fellowship that has been doing excellent work to be able to work with those families, in particular, whose parents or children have been imprisoned. Therefore, when a father goes to prison, then there is little money or maintenance

coming into families; similarly if it is a female. The Prison Fellowship is under our umbrella. The Business and Professional Women's Club has for many years been managing the battered women centres, and they too are entitled to the subvention. There is the Council for the Disabled and other community-based organisations that bring to the fore what their plans and visions are for the institutions as well as the accountability that we require. We have been following it very carefully to make sure the elements of accountability are there, where the expenditure is included in the organisations' annual reports so that we know how the finances are being managed.

Ma'am, I therefore wish to thank that institution and all others for the excellent work they have been doing, and I would wish for this Honourable Chamber to take note of the expenditure. We have been told and we will continue to look out for the information to come in from that institution about the sanitising, the following of protocols, the wearing of the masks and all the other things they would have been expected to do. Luckily, none of our homeless people, as far as we are aware, has been identified. I ask for this Head 35 to the tune of \$75 000 to stand part in relation to the exercise that we are undertaking.

Hon. K.D.M. HUMPHREY: I beg to second that, Ma'am.

The question that Head 35 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

HEAD 46

MINISTRY OF MARITIME AFFAIRS AND THE BLUE ECONOMY IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1.25 MILLION.

Madam CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member for St. Michael South.

Hon. K.D.M. HUMPHREY: Thank you, Madam Chairman. You would recall that during COVID the one thing that we learnt was that Barbados needs to be food-secure and that we must put ourselves in a position to be able to make sure that, in the event of any unlikely or untoward tragedy, we would be able to feed ourselves. Madam Chairman, you would also be aware that the fisherfolk played a vital role in maintaining our food security during that period. Today we are here requesting \$1.25 million to be able to take care of, in a way, those who took care of us during COVID. Madam Chairman, we believe that we will require what are called FADs (fish aggregating devices) and install these FADs across Barbados, strategically placed in our waters. These FADs serve to attract fish. FADs, for generations, have been naturally occurring in the system. They can be logs, dead whales or just floating devices which small fish are drawn

to, and then the larger fish are drawn to the small fish. FADs have been used across the world to attract fish and increase the catch for fisherfolk. We are hoping to be able to put the fisherfolk in Barbados in a position where they too will be able to catch more fish over time.

Madam Chairman, we determined that it was important that we pilot this project for a year, so we are hoping to source a few FADs which we will place strategically. Over time, if they perform effectively we will be able to monitor the ecological and eco-system consequences of the FADs to the extent that we would be able to determine whether the FADs will benefit in terms of the amount of the fish we catch, any reduction in the diesel which the fisherfolk must use to find fish if they do not have to go looking for the fish, and the use of smaller vessels since we might not have to go out as far as before. These FADs can be of tremendous benefit to the fisherfolk. To that extent, we are seeking to source these FADs.

Madam Chairman, I must also say that we are not just stopping there, however. The Government, as you are aware, is committed to digitising most of its processes and we believe that we need to have technology on these FADs that would enable us to monitor the fish stock as well. It is a system whereby we will also be able to monitor who is accessing the fish. This is technology that is out there and is being used across the world, but which Barbados is not using. We are really modernising the fishing industry and bringing Barbados into the 21st Century, so we are seeking to have on the FADs remote electronic monitoring systems which will help us greatly. Right now we have a dearth of data as it relates to the fish stock, what is being caught and so on; so that also will address that problem and would help us generate secure, confidential and reliable information about fisheries and fishing in Barbados.

The other small part of this fund is to source a fishing vessel. Madam Chairman, you would recall that one of the promises we made as a Government was that we would source fishing vessels and start a lease-to-own arrangement with the fisherfolk. We are using this first vessel as a kind of pilot also, but we want to equip this vessel with renewable technology. We have a 2030 commitment that Barbados must be fossil fuel-free or at least carbon-neutral, so the new technology in the fishing industry would allow us to do that. We are going to be working with local builders of the vessels to ensure that we do that, as well as local innovators to work on the solar panels and so on to make sure that we design a vessel that is fit-for-purpose in this century as well as fit-for-purpose in relation to the direction in which the Government wishes to take fisheries and fishing.

Madam Chairman, in a sense that is where we are. That is why we are seeking to source these funds. I will close very quickly by just saying that today's newspaper

suggests that there is a breakdown in the market of the ice machine, but I just wish to say that there is no breakdown but the ice machine was taken down for repair. When we took down the ice machine, almost all of the component parts in there were broken, and because they were broken we had to source these parts from overseas and import them. We expect that machine to be up and running by Friday; this Friday. Our commitment to the fishing industry is thorough, Madam Chairman, as were the repairs which we did to the ice machine. With those remarks, Madam Chairman, I wish to move that Head 46 stand part to the tune of \$1.25 million.

Hon. J. A. KING: I beg to second that.

The question that Head 46 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

HEAD 81

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT, WORKS AND WATER RESOURCES IN THE AMOUNT OF \$3 254 951

Madam CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central.

Hon. G. P. I. GOODING-EDGHILL: Thank you Madam Chairman. The request before the Honourable Chamber is in respect to works needed to be executed within the Scotland District as part of the Scotland District special works program. The sum being sought is in reference to the continuing of the gabions to be placed at Fruitful Hill, St. Joseph where roadworks was commenced this year. There is also provision as part of the request for supplementary funding to build additional gabions to be placed at Lower Parks, St. Joseph.

Madam Chairman, you will be aware that St. Joseph is located within the Scotland District and this is an area that is prone to slippage and we are seeking to reinforce the area with the construction of gabions and you know gabions are cages which are engineered from the double twisted hexagon, woven galvanise steel filled with mesh and rocks to help preserve erosion due to waves, currents or other ground water flows. That is essentially what we are setting out to do.

Madam Chairman, you would appreciate that to construct gabions is very labour intensive. You have to employ workers to compact stones within the cage and then to ensure you position it in such a way to avoid slippage within the area. It is also used to reinforce roadworks and to ensure or to at least avoid significant slippage when we are constructing roads within an area. Like I said we are doing one such road at Fruitful Hill and then at Lower Parks.

The Ministry has commenced the road rehabilitation project within the Scotland District. The sum requested will go a long way in reinforcing the infrastructure specifically within the area of St. Joseph, but also to ensure that we have to stabilise slippage that we continue to experience within that area.

Madam Chairman, Parliament is invited to approve this request for supplementary funding and I therefore beg that Head 81 stand part.

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

The question that Head 81 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

HEAD 82

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATIONAL BEAUTIFICATION IN THE AMOUNT \$3 965 930

Madam CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central.

Hon. A. R. FORDE: Thank you Madam Chairman. It is really the month of giving and if I was to ask for a gift this Christmas I would ask to have the vocal ability of an icon who printed the song Beautiful Barbados, none other than Emile Straker himself and to tell the entire Barbados, if I could have sing that song as half as good as him I would feel good, because Barbados must not only be beautiful in song but it must be beautiful as the new pardon and a new way of life. We cannot have an iconic that represents Barbados all across the world and Barbados remains a dirty unkept place.

To this end, I wish to ask that this Chamber commit to the spending of these funds to assist with our national clean and green program. Obviously, we know the importance of keeping our environment clean, not only from a health perspective, but we understand the issues as it relates to mosquito borne illnesses and other vector borne illnesses that we are faced with as a nation and the cost associated with that. However, certainly as much as my good friend, the member of Parliament for the City of Bridgetown trying his hand at using the fumigants to eradicate the mosquitoes. The reality is that the eggs remains on the leaves of these plants and these shrubberies for a long period of time, up to 10 years if science provides accurate information. Sometimes the only way to get rid of these other than using our biodiversity is to rid ourselves of a lot of these disused lands and put them into proper usages.

The fact remains that in Barbados when I hear people talk about idle lands, Madam Chairman that is idle

talk. There is no land in Barbados that is idle. The reality is that every single green space must be considered a space with benefits, whether it is the plants being used for carbon sequestration, food security, recreational spaces, but most importantly or biodiversity which I have spoken of on many occasions, and importantly this is one area that a lot of persons tend to forget and that is for its psychological benefits. The psychological benefits of having an area that you can balance your human rights is invaluable. When we are faced with the most damming pandemic, to have these clean clear green spaces where persons can be provided with their natural recreational habitat is something that we all wish that could happen across the length and breadth of Barbados.

Hence, this money of course is to go to this national clean-up exercise. Along with that the other funds that we are asking for is to help with our natural Botanical Garden, which is a natural oasis. We are planning to build out obviously because science must inform what we do in terms of our planting of trees, we do not do it in a whimsical way. There is a serious science associated with it with reference to the type of trees we use. Their natural flora, our biodiversity, the ecosystems management, so of course we need herbarium structures, build out our germplasm and our taxonomy. That is the only way we are going to make sense as it relates to building out our Botanical Garden. To the east of the Botanical Garden, as you see in the Waterford base, we are going to have the international garden being built out.

Basically, those funds are supposed to ensure that Barbados not only remains clean, but there is a green association to it because we cannot be telling the rest of the world UNFCCC in terms of our commitments to maintaining our Paris Agreements and ensuring that our temperatures in Barbados remain less than 1.5 degrees Celsius. We cannot be telling the international community that we have a green economic recovery. We cannot be speaking to Latin America and the Caribbean and saying that this is the way how we are going post COVID if we do not do things on the ground to ensure that this happen.

Madam Chairman, there are a lot of benefits associated with it and I want to say that these funds will be well spent as we seek to build out a clean and green Barbados. I want to take the opportunity to thank the Sanitation Service Authority and their workers who are also part of not only the cleaning of Barbados but an essential part of the frontline workers when we talk about the whole COVID response as it relates to keeping our environment clean when faced with a pandemic, the most existential threat since our prior, global warming as we know it.

Madam Chairman, I want to thank them from the bottom of my heart. I want to pay homage to all of the

workers at National Conservation Commission and Sanitation Service Authority for staying the course with the words of the Colonel himself, the Member of Parliament for the City of Bridgetown, no retreat no surrender. I want to commit to you the sum of \$3 965 930 and wish today that it stand part.

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

The question that Head 82 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

HEAD 83

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY IN THE AMOUNT OF \$ 7 185 892

Hon. I. A. WEIR: Thank you, Madam Chairman. The sum of \$7 185 892 is being sought to continue the tremendous amount of work that we set about to do in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. Madam Chairman, I feel the responsibility first and foremost to acknowledge all of those who participated in the sector during the shutdown period of COVID-19. It cannot be underscored enough the importance of the sector to Barbados' food security and, indeed, when we look at how all around us ports were being shut down one after the other, it was important that we maintained a level of food production in this country that gave us surety and safety that we were able to feed ourselves during that period.

Madam Chairman, I am happy to report that while we projected that we were going to cultivate an additional 680 acres of land in Barbados, we actually surpassed that projection by another 75 acres. Therefore, Barbados was able to see growth in the sector by as high as 16 per cent over a period when all other sectors were in decline. I take this time to thank all those workers who were involved in the sector, particularly those who were working in the sugar harvest as well. Portvale factory remained open 24 hours seven days a week during that period. All of those workers who went out, many of whom would have received tickets for being on the road because of various situations and police seeing them on the road at the time when the curfew was on, I do hope Madam Chairman that they do not have to pay a penalty but at the same time need to recognise that they made the sacrifice to come out at a time when most people remained at home.

I consider them also to be part of the national effort to make sure that Barbados is Secure while we went through that period. In order for us to continue what we are doing in agriculture, we have to build a very solid foundation. In so doing, we have to get access to what is needed to buildout agriculture. There is indeed a dearth of equipment across the sector and we are seeking to make

sure we address this by providing the equipment that is needed, so that we could continue the work.

I do believe that if we had the equipment at the time when we cultivated in excess 680 acres, we could have done more. Right across Barbados, the one thing that everybody was saying throughout the COVID-19 period is that you can see clearly agriculture was growing and there was more cultivation than they have ever seen in the history of Barbados or for a very long time as it relates to non-sugar agriculture. Therefore, in order for us to continue this work we are seeking to provide equipment under Programme 160 Subprogramme 163 to continue our research in development in order for us to increase crop production and this goes towards machinery for \$945 000 at the Ministry.

Madam Chairman, we are also going to provide additional equipment under Subprogramme 637 to the Barbados Agriculture Marketing Corporation (BAMC), so that it can continue its cultivation work and make sure it can increase sugar, cotton and non-sugar production as well. The sum of \$3 468 492 is going towards that cause. Of course, we have completed the sugar harvest and the farmers for a very long time are getting their payments on time and it is significant that we note prior 2018, there have been many challenges with farmers receiving payments. Certainly, many of the people who work on farms had to go on the farms without bathroom facilities.

Many of them had to go to work in some of the conditions where when nature called they could not respond immediately unless they could find a place on the same field. These things we have brought closure to and have now provided toilets on farms across Barbados and are now moving to a system where we are going to have mobile toilets like the ones carried on aircrafts, so that people can use these toilets. It is not water borne but similar to what we have on the aircraft. We will receive the first set of those toilets in January and then, we will continue to ramp up.

The work at the BAMC will continue but the payment of \$2 645 400 goes to the farmers for the climate mitigation subsidy that was introduced so that they could maintain increased production but at the same time practice good husbandry. Of course, Madam Chairman, in the Scotland District the Soil Conservation Unit continue to do their work over there. A lot of requests are being made now for them to carry out excavation work and provide services across Barbados clearing bush, over grown lots, et cetera and indeed bring back a lot of land into production.

In order to support the work they are doing, the sum of \$127 000 is going towards equipment to help them to continue their work. Therefore, Madam Chairman, a total sum \$4 540 492 will be going towards the procurement of

equipment for the Ministry and across the State Owned Enterprise (SOE). \$2 645 400 is in support for the farmers in the form of the climate mitigation subsidy. Madam Chairman, I do seek the House's approval for the sum of \$7 185 892. I beg to move that Head 83 stand part.

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

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

HEAD 86

MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS \$739 562

Lt. Col. the Hon. J. D. BOSTIC: Thank you, Madam Chairman. The funds being sought in this supplementary under Head 86 are really intended to enhance the Environmental Health Services Programme of the Ministry with particular emphasis on the Vector Control Unit. In the Ministry of Health and Wellness, we are not only fighting the protracted against Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), the current battle against COVID-19 but we are also launching an attack on dengue and its outbreak in this country.

This is very important for the Ministry and the country as a whole because we cannot have a situation where dengue patients and COVID-19 are competing, for example, for the same hospital beds and things of that nature. To be honest with you, from the time we started to track this on the advice of the WHO, PAHO and Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), we recognised early that it was very possible for dengue to have a more significant impact on our population in Barbados than COVID 19. Hence, we embarked on a programme to try to mitigate the spread of dengue in the country. The funds that we are seeking here are really intended to enhance that programme. The majority of the funds are required for professional services and I will explain those, machinery and equipment, supplies and materials including chemicals.

What we are trying to do in the Ministry with the Vector Control Unit is to give it some additional human resources to do a few things. One thing is that we have trained about 30 persons so far to participate in the Fogging Programme; an enhanced Fogging Programme but they have not yet been able to do that because we are awaiting some equipment to come into the island. We plan to purchase about 40 handheld foggers as well as some additional vehicle mounted fogging machines to be able to allow us to have five dedicated teams for fogging, two to operate in the northern half of the island, two to operate in the southern half of the island and with a special team that would response to specific requests by the Environmental Health Officers. The intent then is to free up the

Environmental Health Officers and assistants to be able to go into the communities to try to locate and identify mosquito breeding sites, to neutralise those sites and for us then to be able, with the foggers, to control any outbreak. At the moment, the 30 persons who we have taken on board and have been trained are actually out in the field identifying sites at this time and the information is being fed back to the Environmental Health Department so that they can start a coordinated and targeted programme so that we can bring this thing under control. We are going as far with this as we possibly can to be able also to utilise technology to assist with those persons who go out and identify sites so that when they log in the information it goes back to base and then the policy, the plan, the execution part of it can be put together in a short period of time as is possible so that we can continue to respond. I know this is going to bring a lot of relief to Barbadians because I have been getting a lot of calls from my colleagues, Honourable Members in this Honourable Chamber from constituents across the country and we are trying desperately to be able to respond to those calls.

Remember that fogging is important but fogging is only a temporary measure because the main effort has to be dedicated towards locating, isolating and neutralising the mosquito breeding sites and this is where we now call on all Barbadians to come on board. This has to be all of the country and all of the society approach to this in the same way that we are fighting Covid-19. We want people to be able to call in. We want people to be able to identify, we want people to be able to take measures to reduce the number of mosquito breeding sites so that people take responsibility for their homes, for the areas around them, for their communities and even corporate Barbados must play a part in this as well by doing the same thing for the areas where their businesses are located. I will speak more to this as times goes by, but I just wanted to indicate and I thank the Ministry of Finance for making these funds available even though we have been having funds also to fight Covid-19 but this is really as a result of the level of care and concern that this Government has for the health, safety and well-being of its citizens and I think that is a most commendable effort.

Without any further ado, I invite this Honourable Chamber to support this Supplementary and I beg to move that Head 86 in the tune of \$739 562 stand part.

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAM: I beg to second that, Madam Chairman.

The question that Head 86 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

HEAD 91

MINISTRY OF YOUTH, SPORTS AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$75 000.

Madam CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. George South.

Hon. D. G. SUTHERLAND: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I rise to seek the indulgence of the Lower Chamber for the approval under Head 91, under the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Community Empowerment for a grant for the Nature Fun Ranch for their work with at risk youth. Madam Chairman, the Nature Fun Ranch has been in the vanguard of providing lifelong skills for at risk youth in this country and I want, at the outset, to congratulate the management and the person, without calling the name, who manages that institution in the north of this island because very often we realise that young men and women who leave school without academic qualifications in some, what I call lifelong skills, in the past these young men and women had no second chance but what this programme has done is to create the opportunity for these young men and women to learn lifelong skills and to allow them to become global citizens and also build out our mandate of making Barbados the best place to live, work, raise a family and to do business. In that regard, skills such as entrepreneurial skills, farming, discipline, civic education, these are some of the range of skills that are taught at the Nature Fun Ranch and annually the Nature Fun Ranch produces some 450 to 500 at risk youth with these skills and what we call giving them a second chance and bringing them back into mainstream Barbados whereby people do not see them as problem children or youth. I often use the phrase, Madam Chairman, is that youth development is national development and national development is youth development. If we are supposed to prepare this country for 50 years down the road and if we are seeking to address deviant behaviour among our young people, I am on that part because most of the crime being committed today are being committed by young people and we cannot turn a blind eye to that and we have a duty to our youth people, the at risk youth, to give them the necessary skills and to help them navigate whatever challenges they face, whether within the home environment, within the working environment and we welcome programme such as the Nature Fun Ranch and the Barbados Youth Advance Core. The Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central who started that programme, I want to congratulate him because annually we roll out 900 young men and women at the Barbados Youth Advance Core in addition to the Nature Fun Ranch of 450 young men and women. If you add that, annually we are looking at saving the lives and creating job opportunities and skill sets for some 1 300 or 1 400 young Barbadians.

Madam Chairman, I also want to congratulate the Government, the Prime Minister, who saw it fit to create a programme such as the Barbados Youth Advance Core whereby we can teach young men discipline, civic education and indeed self-esteem building and a range of other personal development courses as well as getting them job placements and mentorship. I stand here, Madam Chairman, to support this Resolution to propose it to the Lower Chamber and it is my expectation and our expectation, as a Government, while this \$75 000 takes us to the end of the financial year, we are hoping that we can provide more funding as we go through our Estimates to build out this programme further and to create what we call skill whereby we have more at-risk youth being part of this programme. With those few words, Madam Chairman, I beg to move that Head 91 stand part.

Hon. J. A. KING: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that Head 91 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

HEAD 92

MINISTRY OF ENERGY, SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

\$200 000

Madam CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. George South.

Hon. D. G. SUTHERLAND: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I have been given the duty in this Lower Chamber again to speak on behalf of the Minister of Energy, Small Business and Entrepreneurship to seek your approval under Head 92, the Ministry of Energy, Small Business and Entrepreneurship for the sum of \$200 000 required to finance the initial operations of the Financial Literacy Bureau. Madam Chairman, as we seek to build out business in this country we recognise that small-businesses, medium-sized businesses and also micro-businesses lack what we call basic financial management training and financial literacy training.

This Financial Literacy Bureau was conceptualised over a year ago and indeed when we came to office the Prime Minister, when we wrote our Manifesto, recognised that in an effort to really build out small business in this country we have to focus on financial literacy. Madam Chairman, when we speak about financial literacy we are not speaking about just accounting but a range of disciplines that would allow small businesses to function effectively and efficiently in an effort to take these businesses from the informal sector to the formal sector and we came up with this programme as a Government to indeed inculcate and give the necessary skills to our people

not just in the businesses but in our schools and in our homes because we have to create that entrepreneurial ethos and that entrepreneurial culture that is nationally pervasive and driven by international foresight, and this is a key tenet of creating that entrepreneurial ethos, so with those words, Madam Chairman, I would want to support this Resolution on behalf of the good fellow, the Minister of Energy, Small Business and Entrepreneurship and to say to the people of this country that financial literacy would give us the way to build out the small businesses and to ensure that the small business sector the micro, small and medium enterprise sector, contributes to GDP as is in other countries like Jamaica, the United States of America and India whereby the micro, small and medium enterprise sector contributes to over 50 per cent of GDP, Gross Domestic Product, so with those few words, Madam Chairman, I beg to move that Head 92 stand part.

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

The question that Head 92 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

On the motion of Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN, seconded by... MADAM CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour the SPEAKER the passing of one Money Resolution in Standing Finance Committee and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motion of Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN, seconded by Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS, the Money Resolution was read a first and second time and passed.

PAPERS (RECOMMITTED)

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

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the following:

1. Customs List of Prohibited and Restricted Imports and Exports (Amendment) Order, 2020;
2. Duties, Taxes, and Other Payments (Exemption) (China National Complete Plant Import and Export Corporation Barbados Limited) Order, 2020;
3. Value Added Tax Refund (Abu Dubai Future Energy Company, PJSC, (Masdar) Order, 2020.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS (REVERTED)

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Leader of Government Business.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With that we have come to the end of today's Sitting and we have also come to the end of the Sitting for this entire year and in speaking on the adjournment because I know that there are many Honourable Members who are anxious to not only see the end of this Sitting but certainly to start preparations for the Christmas activities. I know many of you would want to mingle with constituents, obviously safely and with the physical distancing protocols in place, of course, but I do feel that given the opportunity that we have over the course of the next couple weeks it would certainly allow Honourable Members who have worked tirelessly over the last few months trying to keep Barbadians safe to be able to spend some much needed time, I believe, with family and certainly with friends and to reconnect as best as they can.

I know that as we come to the end of this period I know that we are all looking forward to certainly next year having the opportunity to get back into the Parliament in town because while we have enjoyed the time here we are mindful that the renovations that were necessary to deal with the environmental issues at the Other Place have also been pressing and we have been trying to push ahead to make sure that we can get back into that facility, so I would want to first of all thank the management here and the staff that have worked with us at this particular location to be able to accommodate us during this very difficult period. We never expected that we would have to relocate in the way that we did but they have made the accommodation here as best as it could be given the circumstances and I know that we are very grateful to them for so doing but we do look forward to being able to get back into the original House of Parliament.

I also want to thank the Clerks and the extended staff of Parliament, the catering staff, the security, the servers, all of the persons who make our time here comfortable and productive, as well as obviously the Royal Barbados Police Force who watch over us and make sure that we are safe while we are here. I want to also thank the technical staff who we do not see normally but I know that they work tirelessly behind the scenes to make sure that everything we do here is properly captured and certainly allowing other persons across the world and certainly in Barbados to be able to view what we are doing.

I want to thank and certainly to wish a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all my Parliamentary colleagues, including Honourable Leader of the Opposition, who, though we do not agree on everything, we continue to be respectful of each other, and when he does agree with us we are more than elated because we know that he has come back to his philosophical mores. I hope that 2021 is less stressful for everyone than 2020 has been. I mean, when I think of where we started, we started

all pumped up for "We Gatherin". Then it was a case of physical distancing. We are sanitising and of course we are wearing masks as well. Mr. Speaker, Sir, everything seemed to have changed over the last couple of months, because we started to turn the corner, then it was almost as though we were basically starting from the start line all over again. All of us have worked hard in our respective ministries to do what the Honourable Prime Minister always says, which is, to deconstruct and reconstruct our ministries, to deconstruct and reconstruct our thinking because that is the only way that we are going to be able to take Barbados out of this very difficult period.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, like most others, I am still watching Covid cases but I am also very confident in the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown and his entire team. I have been confident in them even as it relates to our children in school. They worked with us tirelessly when we had the incident at one of our secondary schools. I continue to be totally satisfied that we are in good hands as a country because of the level of expertise that we have within the healthcare system, and long shall that be.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this year will be remembered as a year of buzz words like "protocols", "lockdown", "curfew". I do not think most of us would have expected that we would have been speaking of "lockdown" and "curfew" certainly in our lifetime and certainly not in relation to our own ability to move around this country, but it has also been a year, despite all of the downs, there have also been a lot of ups. Again, I take away from this period and I invite others to do the same, as we reflect upon people whom we have lost in the last year, both Barbadians and visitors alike and persons across the world, that we are still here and we are still fortunate to be here. Barbados has fought a good fight and continues to fight a good fight and therefore there is a lot that we have to be proud of and a lot to look forward to in 2021.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, on my own behalf, on the behalf of the residents/constituents of St. Michael-East, on the behalf of all of my colleagues I want to wish all of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy, Happy 2021. We look forward to joining with all of you, including you Mr. Speaker, Sir, as well, back in these Honourable Chambers but also being mindful always that we have yet again prepared in the event that we have to go virtual at any point in time because this is an Administration that prepares. Just as we prepared for Harrison Point, just as we have prepared we have finances for vaccines, we have also prepared in the event that we have to move in the direction of a virtual Parliament as well. Therefore, in that vein, I am obliged to you.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Leader of the Opposition, you have the Floor.

Bishop J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, just to join with the Leader of Government Business in recognising the invaluable contribution of those who have served us, those involved in security, the technical people, hospitality staff, ancillary staff of Parliament, to you yourself for the way you preside over matters in this Honourable House and of course Chairman of Committee and to the Clerks at the table in helping us to have reached this point. It has been a challenging year but it has been a blessed year.

I want to thank the Leader of Government Business as well for the courtesies that the Honourable Member has extended me and I would like to wish all in these Honourable Chambers, Members and otherwise, blessings of a Christmas and a blessed New Year.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I now wish to take this opportunity to wish all Honourable Members in this Honourable Chamber a most prosperous, peaceful and blessed 2020 Yuletide Season, hoping that you return in 2021 energised and ready to do the people's work once more for 2021. I hope that prosperity (and bountiful prosperity) will fall upon you in 2021. Those who were pauperised I hope that you would become rich, both monetarily, psychologically, and spiritually and that the Honourable Chamber will continue to show civility even when there is contention.

On the behalf of the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk, the Marshals, and all ancillary staff I want to extend greetings again on their behalf. I hope that we shall come back and that we shall so survive COVID-19 pandemic and that by 2021 a degree of normality would start to return to Barbados. I do believe that with God's blessings we shall succeed and overcome.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Leader of Government Business, you have the Floor.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, Sir, with those few words, I think it is a perfect time to adjourn the House until January 12, 2021, at 10.00 a.m.

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

The question that the Sitting do now adjourn until Tuesday, January 12, 2021, at 10.00 a.m. was put to the Honourable House and was resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the Sitting accordingly.

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

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

EDITORIAL QUERIES

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

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

Q2. Government Notices; Order No. 8. The sum of the Supplementary Estimates No. 8 Resolution is given three ways: '\$31 212 530' in the morning notice, '\$32 754 030' in the recommitted notice and '\$32,753,850' when the Clerk reads the Resolution in Standing Finance Committee (described as 'an adjusted figure'). Printed as in the source.

Q3. Order No. 8, Head 34. The Head is headed '\$2 214 444', but the Minister speaks of 'the Barbados Revenue Authority in the amount of \$2 152 444'. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Recommittal of Papers; Papers (recommitted). The paper laid after the 6.30 p.m. resumption is titled 'the Valued Tax Refund, the Maria Holder Memorial Trust Order, 2020', and item 3 of the later Papers, 'Value Added Tax Refund (Abu Dubai Future Energy Company, PJSC, (Masdar) Order, 2020', has unbalanced brackets. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Order No. 4; Order No. 5, report from Committee. The Gold Award of Achievement (Amendment) Bill, 2020 is cited at third reading as 'the Gold Award of Achievement Act, Cap. 401'. On the Companies (Amendment) Bill the report is made by 'Mr. CHAIRMAN' although Dr. S. E. Browne (Madam Chairman) was in the Chair. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Order No. 8, Heads 30, 31, 33 and 92. The sentence 'The question that Head 30 stand part was put...' is labelled as spoken by 'Madam CHAIRMAN'; Head 31 has its title as an ordinary paragraph; the Chair is labelled 'Mr. CHAIRMAN' on Head 33; and the seconder on Head 92 is 'Hon. K.A. HUMPHREY'. Printed as in the source.

Q7. Order No. 8, report of the Resolution. The seconder is left incomplete in the source: 'On the motion of Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN, seconded by... MADAM CHAIRMAN reported'. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, 15th December, 2020 at the Worthing Corporate Centre, Christ Church, with Mr. Speaker presiding; prayers were taken by Rev. Father Mark Harewood. The Leader of Government Business, Hon. Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw, laid the Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemption) (Innotech Services Limited) Order, 2020 and gave notice of a Resolution under Supplementary Estimates No. 8, 2020-2021. In a Ministerial Statement, the Minister of Housing, Lands and Maintenance, Dr. the Hon. W. F. Duguid, announced that the Government would return just over \$5.6 million to nearly 600 existing and former National Housing Corporation tenants who had paid towards their units under the 2003 Sale of Terrace Units Programme while almost 2 500 neighbours received theirs free.

Standing Orders were suspended and the Barbados Humanitarian Service Award Bill, 2020 and the Gold Award of Achievement (Amendment) Bill, 2020 were taken as a cognate debate on the application of the Prime Minister, Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley. She described the national response to COVID-19 since the start of the year, praised frontline workers and the Cuban brigade of nurses, and said the Government hoped to add an affordable 'ex gratia' payment to the medals. Lt. Col. the Hon. J. D. Bostic, Hon. C. E. Jordan and Hon. Ms. C. S. V. Husbands spoke before the luncheon suspension.

After the resumption Hon. M. K.-A. Caddle laid an Inter-American Development Bank loan contract on strengthening public policy and fiscal management in response to COVID-19. The Leader of the Opposition, Bishop J. J. S. Atherley, supported both Bills, applauding the Minister of Health and Wellness, but questioned the change in the Gold Award from one recipient a year and its link to National Heroes Day. Miss Caddle, Ms. T. N. S-A. Moore and Dr. Miss S. E. Browne also spoke, and Miss Bradshaw replied. Both Bills passed through Committee, Dr. Browne in the Chair, and were read a third time.

Hon. R. St. C. Toppin moved the second reading of the Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2020, part of Barbados' compliance with the OECD standard on exchange of information following the assessment completed in April. Bishop Atherley spoke and the Attorney General, Hon. D. D. Marshall, spoke on suppressing money laundering. The Bill passed all stages, and the Sitting was suspended until 6.30 p.m.

In Standing Finance Committee on the Resolution, Ministers explained the Heads: Miss Caddle on Head 13, Prime Minister's Office (\$819 354), for Kensington Oval Management Inc.; Hon. R. R. Straughn on the Cabinet Office (\$1 711 723), Tourism (\$886 515) and Finance; Mr.

Marshall on the Office of the Attorney General (\$5 362 193); Miss Caddle on Innovation, Science and Smart Technology (\$3 737 291); Hon. W. A. Abrahams on Home Affairs, mainly the debts of the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation; Hon. Miss C. Y. Forde on \$75 000 for the Alliance to End Homelessness; Hon. K. D. M. Humphrey on food security (\$1.25 million); and other Ministers on

their Heads. Every Head stood part and the Resolution was read a first and second time and passed.

On the adjournment, the last of the year, Miss Bradshaw and Bishop Atherley thanked all who had served, and the Speaker wished Members a peaceful Yuletide. The House was adjourned until Tuesday, January 12, 2021, at 10.00 a.m.