
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2018 – 2022

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, June 9, 2020

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, June 09, 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 G. A. CLARKE, J.P., B.Sc., Dip. Ed. (Deputy Speaker)

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

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

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.), (Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs)

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

Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS, B.A., LL.B. (Minister of Tourism and International Transport)

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

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

Hon. D. G. SUTHERLAND, B.Sc., M.Sc., M.B.A. (Dist.) (Minister of Small Business, Entrepreneurship and Commerce)

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW, LL.B. (Hons.) L.E.C. (Leader of Government Business) (Minister of Education, Technological and Vocational Training)

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

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

Hon. C. S. V. HUSBANDS, B.A., M.Sc. (Hons.) (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 (Minister of Youth and Community Empowerment)

Hon. C. McD. GRIFFITH, B.Sc. (Minister in the Ministry of Housing, Lands and Rural Development)

Hon. P. R. PHILLIPS (Minister in the Ministry of Transport, Works and Maintenance)

Hon. J. A. KING, B.S.S. (Minister of Creative Economy, Culture and Sports)

Mr. I. G. P. GOODING-EDGHILL

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. N. G. H. ROWE

Prayers were taken by Father Reverend Mark Harewood.

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

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Leader of the House.

Hon 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, June 02, 2020, be deferred.

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

Mr. SPEAKER: The question is that the Minutes for the Honourable the House of Assembly for its Meeting of Tuesday, June 02, 2020, be deferred.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR THE SPEAKER

PAPERS

Hon Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay:

1) The Audited Financial Statements of the Caves of Barbados Limited (CBL) for the financial years ended March 31, 2017, March 31, 2018 and March 31, 2019.

2) The Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements of the Fair Trading Commission (FTC) for the period April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

FIRST READING OF BILLS

On the motion of Hon Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW, seconded by the Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE, the Police (Amendment) Bill, 2020 was read a first time.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUSPENSION OF STANDINGS ORDERS

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

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

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER No. 15

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

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I rise to lead this debate this morning, Sir, in the context that this Government came to Office, Sir, at a time when the economy was in freefall and as we came to office, Sir, the country had not yet learnt that the previous Administration had committed to the Organisation of Economic Corporation and Development (OECD) and others to, in sense, dismantle what we refer to the international business sector as we knew it. You would recall, Sir, in this Chamber that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North had in December of 2018, having come to Office and recognised what the commitment was to ensuring that we had change the legislation by the end of 2018 that the Ministry of International Business and Industry, led by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North, working in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, Economic Affairs and Investment and the rest of the Government, in moving with great haste to put the legislative framework to be able to allow Barbados to not be in a worst position than we had found the economy in, Sir, at that time. You would recall that in that December which, I think, was on record, Sir, given that as a newly elected Member of Parliament, I believe, Sir, and I speak subject to correction, that we were meeting almost up to Christmas because we had to deal with those critical pieces of legislation as well as others to be able to ensure that as we were in the midst of rolling out and implementing the Barbados Economic Recovery and Transformation (BERT) programme that we provided the country and certainly the rest of the world, the confidence that Barbados, Sir, would be able to handle its business. Whilst those six months were particularly challenging up front, we recognise that at that time, notwithstanding the fact that the previous Administration had given a commitment to dismantle an element of our economy which over the past 30 years or so, Sir, we had use as an opportunity to help diversify the economy away from what used to be predominately sugar and agriculture lead back 30 or 40 years ago to the transition to being led by tourism that in that interim period, under the leadership first of the Right Honourable J. M. G. M. "Tom" Adams started to put what we referred to as the international business framework in place to allow for a different pillar upon which the economy would stand. Notwithstanding the commitment and just for the record, I know it has been said in this Chamber already, but I shall repeat it here, that the decision was taken by Cabinet the week before the election, Sir, formerly to commit the country to dismantling what was the international business sector. Sir, having come to office in the midst of a significant economic crisis, a significant debt in terms of the debt to Gross Domestic Product ratio, the fiscal

position, as you are aware, Sir, was in tatters, the reserves were plummeting and there was little or no growth really to speak of and that more importantly, not that any of those things are unimportant but the truth is, Sir, there was very little confidence, whether amongst consumers, amongst the business community, amongst investors, that Barbados was on track so we had to, not just focus on repairing the macro fundamentals but certainly, Sir, seeking to ensure that we can restore trust in Government amongst the various stakeholders. So I start from that perspective, Sir, to give context for the amendments that are here before the chamber, this morning because it was not just the fact that the previous Administration had committed to dismantling what was referred to as the International Business Sector but we were in the midst, Sir, with respect to determining how we were going to frame our public policy by way of taxation and therefore we felt as a Government coming to office faced with this clear and significant danger that the only credible way forward in the environment in order to be able to maintain business in Barbados and to restore confidence was to also focus on how do we converge between domestic taxes and those taxes that were viewed as offshore or international business given that those were some of areas that were of concern with respect to the treatment. The perception was that we were giving better treatment to a certain segment of the economy than the others in the context of the Organisation for Economic Corporation and Development, the Financial Action Task Force, the European Union (EU) all of those international bodies, with respect to profit-sharing and base erosion, those issues that the developed world seemed to be a little bit obsessed with in recent times.

Sir, having said that we determined from a policy perspective that we will converge our tax rates with respect to corporation taxes and as a result it meant that there were changes that needed to be rolled out. You would recall, Sir, that in that context we converged and moved what was the corporate tax rate which was 30 per cent at the top having come to office, and the Prime Minister would have delivered a Budget on June 11th of 2018 in this Chamber, not this one but the other one, but you get my point, Sir, that would have temporarily increase the corporation tax from 25 per cent as it was when we came to office to 30 per cent in order to stabilise in the short term the fiscal situation as we saw it. Sir, we would recall that those were the emergency measures that we indicated as part of our mission critical response that we would put in place in order to stabilise the fiscal situation and so by the December, Sir, you would recall, that was June, and then having found out that the previous Government had committed to dismantling the international business sector we then recognised that it would have been particularly challenging to be able to maintain a significant part of our economy by way of contributions to corporation tax that if we lose that that the mechanisms through which we could provide stability to the public finances would have been

compromised and therefore that led to the determination that we will converge our tax rates so in December of 2018 the new rates which were converged meant that we moved effectively from the 30 per cent that was introduced in June down to a top rate of 5.5 per cent all the way down to 1 per cent. Sir, you would be reminded that there were tiered levels upon which those taxes would apply so the more profit you made the less the percentage but of course as you know, Sir, that a small percent of a lot of money generally speaking generates money.

Sir, lest it be said that we gave away a wash of money to corporate interests which have been levied upon us the reality is that based on our calculations and in essence the determination upon which taxes are levied is the key because it would make no sense... Sir, just for the benefit of the Chamber I will make this abundantly clear, when the tax rates were at the levels that they were 25 per cent, 30 per cent or whatever it was, there were a whole hosts of allowances that were given so businesses would be able to claim for all kinds of things as being able to write off against the profits and therefore what the effectively meant is that even though we had a corporation tax rate of 25 per cent for a good while companies were in fact not actually paying 25 per cent because of the allowances that were allowed in the system which were legitimate meant that the actual monetary tax rate was much lower than the 25 per cent, so when we reduced the corporation taxes we also eliminated a whole set of allowances because as you would imagine if at 25 per cent and you had a whole set of allowances, which meant that depending on what you would have qualified for, would have effectively meant that your marginal rate would have been reduced, we could not then just move from 25 per cent or 30 per cent to 5 per cent and leave those allowances in place.

I recall, Sir, there was some noise in the public space saying that the Government had given away all of these millions of dollars to business interests at a time when we were increasing taxes in the short term with respect to ordinary citizens and nothing could be further from the truth because if people would just take the time - in another debate I will raise another matter - to read and if they have questions just ask the questions if they are not sure rather than going into the newspaper and saying all kinds of things...

Sir, the reality is this Government looked at the data and determined how we will chart the way forward and we continued as a matter of course to strengthen our capacity to collect data, to mind it, so that based on the information we have available to us we could make the best possible decision that we can make based on data. Having made those decisions, Sir, we continue to monitor and evaluate such that if there is any need for change in policy that it is on the basis of credible data which we could come to the

public and share as we have been doing since we came to office. Sir, we reduced the tax rates at that point in time.

Sir, just for the benefit of the public, you would recall that what was referred to as the international business sector or offshore sector as was known in the streets by ordinary Barbadians a number of companies that were in that space were paying as little as 0.25 per cent in income tax as part of the corporation tax rate so effectively part of our response then where we moved as I said, from 30 per cent down to 5.5 per cent at the top level to 1 per cent depending on the level of profit that you declare to 1 per cent effectively meant that for those companies that were paying 0.25 per cent for the most part, and some were paying none based on the structure of the companies of which some were insurance which is the essence of the amendments before the Chamber we actually increased the tax rates on those businesses to bring them in line with what was then regarded as domestic business such that the achieved convergence is on the basis of the level of income or profit that you would declare and therefore the tax rate that is applicable to you would be based on the level of assessable income, let me use that term for the avoidance of doubt.

Sir, the basis for that assessable income depending on the activity that you are in requires a little more finessing and therefore you would expect, and as people I believe I hope would understand, when we made the determination then you recall that the stakeholder engagement and we indicated at that time that there would be period of three years for which some companies would grandfather before they would then have to come into the new system and we committed that we would set in place a regime to be able to look and see what would be the appropriate conditions if you like that would allow for those persons who would grandfather up until 2021, which as you know, Sir, is really just a few months away now, to continue to do what they are doing and transition into a new regime, given the sudden change with respect to how the reforms were going to roll out. As you would appreciate, Sir, as a jurisdiction whose capacity is limited as a domestic space, we have always focused on how we could engage the world, and while the current pandemic certainly demonstrates how dependent the economy has been and continues to be on tourism, that is part of the thrust as to how we engage the world. Sir, I really view tourism as part of the retail version of how we engage the world. People travel and come to Barbados, they spend some money, we earn foreign exchange and all of the businesses that supply those services are, in a sense, earning foreign exchange through the consumption of the services offered to those who visit Barbados.

Sir, as you would know and when last I checked there were almost 800 000 or so long-stay visitors and then we were inching very close to almost a million cruise

visitors. The reality is that tourism is a large part of the economy, but I viewed it as the retail side of how we engage the world. Sir, the other part was the commercial side which is where, since the early 1980s, we would have gone out and tried to bring business to Barbados. In the early days, there would have been some manufacturing, and, Sir, you would recall that Sheraton used to be Intel. They used to make chips in my constituency, and the reality is that as the international landscape changed our engagement of commercial activity in that instance also changed over time, because then it moved from those types of manufacturing industries into more financial services as well as other things. We have tried to diversify the economy over the years, and even within segments of both tourism and the commercial side of how we trade, we always sought to do that.

Sir, it is critically important that Barbadians understand that when we last left office at the beginning of 2008, our corporation tax take at that time was just about \$525 million, and at that time in that regime the corporation taxes were almost two-thirds coming from what we referred to as the international business sector. It was almost two-thirds of that, Sir. This was the contribution just by way of corporation tax at that time. Of course, Sir, you know the last Administration never really paid much attention to the sector and, certainly, for a whole host of reasons businesses left. Either it became untenable to be in Barbados or others were offering better terms and conditions which, rightfully so, others can choose where they can locate. Perhaps I think the biggest criticism is a lack of understanding as to how those businesses and companies actually impacted the Barbados economy.

Sir, I recall as a youngster -- when I was a little younger because I am still a youngster -- that when I was first entered the field of economics just about 20 years ago, there was a big discussion about what was the contribution of the off-shore sector, as it was referred to at that time. There was a big debate because there used to be a lot of one-door shops around the place of which people never quite understood their purpose. There was a lot of misunderstanding in the public, I would say, with respect to what they were seeing as one-door shops, for lack of a better term, vis-à-vis the actual activity which the service providers were providing. There are thousands of these in the country which provide services to international businesses; whether they are lawyers, accountants or management service providers. There is a whole range of activities within the professional space, Sir. While in the early days that was a type of structure that was created, it also evolved to become much more substantive; and I use the word "substantive" because we have been accused of lacking in substance when I think we have not -- over the course of the last decade certainly -- done a good job of communicating to the rest of the world, whether it is the

European Union, the (OECD) Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, or anyone else, Sir.

Sir, in terms of the service providers, the level of service being provided by professionals in Barbados to what is referred to as the international business sector is by far different from those early days, even the early 2000s. Sir, things have evolved but we just did not tell that story effectively enough to be able to push back against the negative reputation, if you will, or connotation that we were somehow involved in some kind of scheme to help people move money around the world. We simply did not tell an effective story, Sir, so things have evolved to the point where careful analysis and communication about this industry, this sector and this part of the economy has to be done with the public because I think it is important that the public understands not only the contribution the sector is making by way of taxation but also the contribution it is making by way of employment, professional services and spending in the local economy. More importantly, this needs to be done with the various bodies that assess Barbados' compliance, if you will, with respect to the regulations.

Sir, the last Government through a whole host of mis-steps, if you will, pretty much chased away people. The truth is, Sir, there are some people who will always be looking for a place where they can pay the least tax but Barbados cannot be operating in a space on the basis of where you can pay the least tax. We are providing substance to businesses that operate globally, we have professionals in Barbados, and we are certainly looking to build more capacity in that space, Sir. We have provided substance, but we just have not communicated effectively over time what that substance happens to be. Of course, Sir, as you know and as we have seen recently, a goalpost can be moved at any time because once you meet a standard, they can just change the standard and you will keep going in this loop all the time almost perpetually, Sir. Sir, in the context of what is taking place to the north of us, no matter what you do it never appears to be enough in the minds of some that you have actually met a standard. The truth is, Sir, that is unfortunate but as a country and as a Government we have a responsibility to ensure that we defend Barbados' interest wherever we need to do so, and we will do this loudly and respectfully, Sir.

The reality is that in terms of the International Business Sector, a part of which are some of these insurance companies that I will get to in these Amendments, it is critical that we put certain issues into focus. With a rapidly evolving global economy, as a country we have regulators within the space -- whether they are the Central Bank, the Barbados Revenue Authority (BRA) by way of taxation, the Immigration Department, Invest Barbados, the Corporate Affairs and Intellectual Property Office (CAIPO) or any of the other agencies

involved in regulating commerce and business in the country. Barbados' mission Sir, is to do as much global business as possible and therefore, the way that we now have to approach these things is not in a cellular way, but we now have to regulate for growth, we have to regulate to engage the world, and we have started that process. I know that the Honourable Prime Minister has been focusing on how to deconstruct and reconstruct all of those processes and regulations that we have across the board and the Honourable Member for St Michael South Central Sir has been doing some quite important heavy lifting in order to ensure that we can pull the various agencies of Government together to examine every single element of what we do and how we do it with a particular focus not only on international business, but on business, so that whether you are a truly Barbadian company or someone who chooses to move their business to Barbados Sir, that we can actually do business as seamlessly as possible. The Government is committed to that. But there is an element, even in the private sector, there is a need for elements in the private sector to equally to deconstruct and reconstruct their processes to ensure that the efforts that the Government would be undertaking not only from a legislative perspective, but certainly by way of process within agencies and the various regulatory bodies, that as the Government is moving, that the private sector and those various service providers who have been complaining for years about Government not moving, but Government is moving now, and if the Government is moving, it means that everybody else must be moving lock-stock in step, Sir, to ensure that we get Barbados to a place where anybody could do business in Barbados easily Sir and we are committed to doing that. Trust me Sir, it is not the most...I will use the Prime Minister's word, 'unsexy', Sir. It is the kind of work that there is no glory in it Sir, but it is critical work to go through exactly what has been the thought process with respect to why we do things the way we do things. And the truth is Sir, as you may well know, if you asked somebody why we are doing this, the response would be that is how I learn it, I come along and see it that way; but there is no real sense, given that everything has changed, the technology, processes and all of that; this is a collective thing here in Barbados Sir. We choose to do the things that are convenient when we have to, but the things that would actually make a difference Sir, we now have to ensure that we are very deliberate, and ensure that we unpack those things. Because Sir, we converged the tax rates, not just because of taxes, we are doing the hard work with respect to the deconstructing of all of the processes, Sir, and putting them back together with a clear view Sir of being able to do more business globally, to allow, Sir, our businesses to do their business globally, to allow businesses that are operating in a global space to want to come to Barbados and help build up this Barbados economy. And therefore it is on that premise that we have set about this particular path of ensuring that we can do just that. And so it is important that we understand that we have

not given away any money to corporate interest as I know has been said inside of this Chamber, accusing this Government of easing big business. Because if you understood Sir, that what we have effectively done and notwithstanding Sir that it is a fact that we have increased taxes, on businesses. It just happens to be those businesses that were paying a very low tax rate or none at all; and in this context Sir of a global environment where there is pressure on corporations to be able to demonstrate that they are paying a fair share of taxes, that all we are doing Sir is facilitating the ability of this country call Barbados to be able to compete in a global space and to be able to attract business to this country and if we can attract more business Sir, it means that the way that we regulate has to be, in a sense Sir, together. So that the Central Bank cannot be doing something contrary to what immigration doing, contrary to what BRA doing, contrary to what CAIPO doing, contrary to what anybody else, the FSE, is doing, Sir. Everything has to be seamless so that at any point that an entity engages any of those regulators, they pretty much have to hear the same thing. Whilst each regulator may have a peculiar requirement, it has to be seen in the context, Sir, of a coherent policy position so that we can go and promote Barbados in the global space and allow Barbadian businesses to get out through that pipeline, and equally engage the world. That, Sir, is where our thinking is with respect to the public policy as it relates to the convergence which we undertook in late December 2018.

As I mentioned at that time, there was a three-year period with respect to the 'grandfathering' and it related to some degree, Sir, with respect to some insurance companies. You would recall Sir, that having increased the rates, some companies chose to leave and I know the Honourable Member for St. Michael North would have indicated on numerous occasions that while companies may choose to leave to go from one jurisdiction to the next, we know Sir that those are the ones that are looking for just the minimum tax and respectfully Sir, that is their view. We are however trying to build up an environment where business can be facilitated easily and be as competitive as anybody any part of the world Sir. That is our mission in order to set Barbados up in that context. Now Sir, as you may recall, recently whilst some of those businesses would have gone to some of our neighbours, there has been a lot of turmoil in terms of Brexit and I would anticipate that some of those jurisdictions may now find themselves under a little more scrutiny because the tremors that we were getting were emanating from a certain lot and I would anticipate Sir that there would be a greater degree of scrutiny on those jurisdictions. But let me point out Sir, that whilst during this pandemic tourism was significantly impacted, it was the Government's view as we started this process, that we wanted to ensure that we keep building out the capacity within space in order to attract more business. And you would recall Sir that we were mentioned on a list just a few weeks ago, by the EU, which sent a shockwave

across the bow because whilst we saying to ourselves Sir....and the truth is Sir it is like hitting a man when he is down...But nonetheless Sir, we will get up and dust off ourselves and move forward. But the reality is that it meant that some businesses could not complete transactions because Barbados, all of us, are now in the midst of a pandemic. So imagine us trying to engage the world, as a country, or as a company, and now to find yourself where people are not taking money from businesses because somehow they view Barbados as a place which is some way a threat to the stability of the European Union. And as I said to you, all of this is predicated on data Now there is a concept called M-3, the money supply, which is only about ten million dollars or so Barbados dollars which is just US\$5 billion. The truth is, Sir, that is our money supply that pretty much circulates in the economy on an annual basis. The truth is, Sir, we would love the money to circulate faster so the faster money is turn over and it is generating more money and therefore it means demand, but the reality is that I find it particularly difficult and challenging to understand how for an small economy that only has a money supply of BDS\$10 billion approximately just over US\$5 billion, how that could be threat to any jurisdiction where trillions of dollars, Sir, are in circulation across that space because the truth is, if you wanted to hide something you are not going to hide something in the middle of a place that is pretty much barren because in comparison, US\$5 billion compared, Sir, to trillions of dollars that are circulating whether in the EU, whether in the United States of America (USA) or in any other jurisdiction, Sir, certainly it is easier to find money circulating in Barbados that it is to find money circulating in jurisdictions where you have trillions of dollars in circulation therefore it really does boggle the mind how one could reach such a conclusion. The truth is, Sir, whilst we know that rationally that is the case, it is the reputational damage that these things create for us and for companies that operate in our jurisdiction. We have always been on the front expecting or knowing that at any time somebody can change the goalpost on your and just drop your name in a report without any real understanding - I am assuming that there is no real understanding, Sir, that they do not understand the impact that would have on the operations of the economy, let me assume that -- but the reality is, in this environment and certainly in a Covid-19 environment and trying to respond with a broader fiscal stance, it is critical that Barbadians as well as others get an appreciation that we need, in the absence of tourism, to ensure that we can continue to build out the other elements with respect to the business environment such that we can keep this Barbados economy, Sir, at a knee level until such time as the rest of tourism and the rest of the world certainly normalises. That is important, Sir. I have to underscore the importance that this particular part of the business sector, how critical it is, it has always been critical as I mentioned to you, Sir, that it represented almost two thirds of the corporation tax revenue in 2007 and it

declined rapidly because companies left and a whole host of other reasons but it is even more critical now, Sir, with respect to our ability to respond to the demands that are now placed upon use in this Covid-19 environment so it is critical that we secure and protect that part of the business community whilst we pivot to try to expand its reach. Certainly, Sir, it is a challenge that we continue to face and we will work through it as we have done with a whole series of other challenges that we have met since we came to office.

It is against that background too, Sir, that I raise these amendments today because it is now about charting the path post the 'grandfathering period' which would come to an end next year, 2021 and therefore companies would be in a position now to determine whether they would chose to wait until the end of the 'grandfathering period' or come into the new regime as possible because the Government is giving a commitment that we would not just consult but certainly set the platform for how we will transition with respect to the reforms that were done at the end of December 2018 and to be able now to chart the path going forward. The bridge, Sir, would amend the Income Tax Act, CAP 73 to make provision for changes in the taxation of life insurance companies. Those are the essence of the amendments that are before the Chamber and it is important, and this part is somewhat technical but as you know, Sir, insurance is different from any other business and even within insurance you have different elements because you have general insurance, life insurance, you have pensions, and medical and a whole host of other specific elements that require a different type of treatment based on what they are doing.

So the concept really of profits and insurance is not the same as a profit for a normal business that is just buying and selling goods and services run of the mill because as you would appreciate, Sir, and in the context of life insurance, given that you are trying to match long term liability, sir, and it is important too, that in understanding how life insurance companies make money because all the average citizen may perhaps appreciate or understand is that an agent might come to you and ask you to buy a policy and you pay these premiums every month or every year depending on how they structure it and that is pretty much the end of your understanding as to how life potentially makes money, but, of course, within that there is a whole set depending on the level of underwriting and all of that that you have to undertake, the level of coverage that you are provided, that too is important. There are elements with respect to the provision for critical illness which allows claims to be made under those circumstance and the reality is that life insurance companies have to keep what are called reserves, Sir, in order to be able to potentially pay out in the event of our death to your family what is the benefit. The truth is, Sir, you pay monies into a life insurance policy for your family or your beneficiary,

not necessarily your family because you can determine who your beneficiary happens to be so you are paying money into a policy with the understanding that upon your death that somebody else is going to get that money and therefore, for the insurance company, they do not know when you are going to die, therefore, if you take up a policy today, you know, they send you to get the health checks, which is refer to as the underwriting and all of that, Sir, to assess whether you have pre-existing conditions and how they were poised for that because, unfortunately, if you have diabetes and high pretension and whole host of underlying conditions and depending on your age, they have to reasonably assess the risk of you dying in the short term because if in the event that you die within the first year, two years, three years, then the insurance company would not have gotten enough money from you, relative to the claim that you have taken out with them that you now have to disburse to the beneficiary, so life insurance is a very complicated environment, therefore understanding how the concept of profits in that environment is calculated or assessed is very different from a company that just is going to have the cost of selling a few items today and the profit or revenue that you may get in that particular period and you know the difference between the revenue and the cost, it is your profit and therefore, whatever allowances you have made you can do that. For life insurance, it is not as straightforward as that. Life insurance companies have to hold reserves in order to give the company and the regulators and everybody the assurance that when the time come and of all of our passing into another life, that they have enough money to be able to pay the beneficiaries of the policy.

I am not going to rehash the whole thing with CLICO because there is another Bill with which I will deal with that particular aspect this afternoon. The reality is that those reserves are critical to understanding the capacity of life insurance company to be able to pay.

Sir, the truth is that actuaries, which many Barbadians may not be aware of, are the people who actually price and determine how much money you would pay for a life insurance policy and actuaries are the ones that also calculate the reserves with respect to these things. Sir, I just want to indicate here that whilst this is a very technical part of the discussion, it is important that the understanding as to how life insurance companies are taxed in an environment especially given that, and there are two things while in the past we would have done it on the gross investment income for those insurance companies that were domestic in purpose we would use that as a metric and allow that and of source every time you pay your premium -- and whilst it is not here -- your premium include a tax which is about 5 per cent on it but we are talking about the overall performance now of the company with respect to the reserving that is required to determine the assessable income upon which we would levy the taxation.

You would remember, Sir, that I indicated earlier that there were a number of insurance companies that were not paying taxes or they were relatively low given their status within the Insurance Act so now that we are moving to a new regime then it means now that we need to regularise all of this so that whether domestic insurance companies as we refer to them before or international companies - which you will know, Sir, that insurance companies operating in a global environment they get involved as ours do too in transactions in order to be able to ensure that they can match the liabilities that are on the their books and therefore the provisions before the Chamber here today just reflects the ability for us to have clear sight between the Barbados Revenue Authority in this instance working collaboratively with the FFC in terms of ensuring that (1) the calculations of the reserves are done in a way that allow for the Barbados Revenue Authority to be able to be comfortable that the assumptions underlying the reserves, which means that some of those reserves which releases come which determines in a sense the profit or lack thereof with respect to life insurance companies, that the underlying assumptions with respect to that are sound in the context of being able to assess whether the life insurance companies given its liabilities that it has on its books that what is being released from those reserves merit the validity. Of course, whilst the actuarial profession, and I use that term deliberately, have a certain code of conduct with respect to how actuaries will do these calculations and in the context of not just the company but the fiduciary responsibility that actuaries have for life businesses in the same way that an engineer who is constructing a building will normally certify that the methods and techniques and materials and all of that have gone in that it is structurally sound and executed in that way an actuary has that type of responsibility in the calculation of not just the reserves but certainly in the context of the pricing that would lead into the policies that are issued.

Sir, it is important that we understand that we are in the position now where we are shifting from what is gross investment income with respect to life insurance companies to net income. We will be allowing obviously deductions with respect to reserves releases in the context in the calculation for the assessable income for life insurance companies, so I will go through now, Sir, just for completeness the provisions that we are making here by I wanted to set the context for why we are making these adjustments now because in the context of the grandfathering period coming to an end in 2021 we want to ensure that we settle this policy framework now as we gave a commitment to do so that companies that are operating in Barbados will know what the lay of the land is and therefore on passing these amendments we can then move to the next stage of seeking to go out into the marketplace and as I said truly start to, not just for insurance companies but certainly for the rest of the business communities having settled the policy framework with respect to

taxation, and promote Barbados not only on the basis of tax but certainly on the substance which a number of our professionals offered to companies globally such that we can start to build out.

Sir, the truth is this was always part of the plan but of course Covid-19 has kind of made it even more important for us to move forward with haste because until the tourism part of the economy and certainly the travel part of the world economy... As I said, Sir, you go to any metropolitan city and you would understand immediately that it is tourism that drives those local economies, so New York, Paris, London, Frankfurt, Berlin, you name it all across Europe, Toronto, it is tourism, it is visits by people from all over the world that drive those economies and therefore until travel comes back Barbados is no different to those economies and therefore until we can get travel started back we now need to ensure that we move forward with vigour because obviously we can still attract business but we have to attract business in the context of the rules and regulations that we are pursuing, so just permit me, Sir, to just go through very quickly the amendments in the Bills, just for absolute clarity.

Sir, Clause 2 at (r) it says: With effect from income year 2020, in the case of a life insurance company, the amount of a decrease in the actuarial reserves stated in the accounts of that life insurance company in the income year, so therefore what we are saying is, as I said before, the amount of reserves releases and how that is assessed will be critical with respect to the calculation of the assessable income for the insurance companies. Of course, this is in the context of reading the entire rest of the particular section of the Act.

At Clause 3, it says at (q) with respect to income year 2020, in the case of a life insurance company, the amount of an increase in the actuarial reserves stated in the accounts in that life insurance company in the income year, where the amount does not exceed the appropriate amount; and then at (s) with effect from income year 2020, where the amount of the increase in the actuarial reserves claimed by a life insurance company in an income year exceeds the amount then, in calculating the assessable income of that life insurance company no amount shall be taken of the amount of the excess claimed.

Sir, we had conversations with the service providers as well as a number of representatives of the insurance companies because as you would appreciate, Sir, in moving this, as you would see in some of the following amendments, we have to take account for the fact that the global portfolio of insurance companies obviously move relative to the market. Of course, insurance companies like any other entity have to invest in order to match those liabilities and therefore it is important that (1) the calculation with respect to the reserves on the basis of the

actuaries are done consistent with what is in the portfolio and the claims experience of the life insurance company. We all know what happened certainly in the 2009 crisis with companies that would have given loans, and with insurance contracts with mortgage-backed securities and the relevant investments, so certainly we want to ensure that the calculation with respect to that is consistent more with the risk associated with the claims experience as opposed to the risk taken with respect to any speculation or anything of that nature. Sir, in terms of Clause 4, for the purposes of Paragraphs (r) and (s) of subsection 1, “appropriate amount” means the amount of the increase in the actual reserves in the income year that is not excessive. In Clause 5, Sir, in determining the appropriate amount referred to in the subsection 4 and actually appointed in accordance with Section 45 of the Insurance Act, CAP 310, it “shall support the determination with a written opinion that (a) follows the actuarial standards recognised in Barbados, (b) states the circumstances prevailing at the time at which the opinion was adopted and (c) includes no more than a reasonable margin that takes the following into account:

1. The nature or type of risk to which the actuarial reserves of a life insurance company are exposed, and
2. The uncertainty associated with the risk referred to in subparagraph 1.

Sir, just for emphasis: We know that companies, especially life insurance companies, have to make investments with respect to being able to match their long-term liability. Banks have a slightly different mechanism in terms of determining their reserve requirements for the regulators in order to ensure that depositors can claim their monies when they need them. Part of the reforms that came out of the financial crisis was to ensure that large banks globally separated the retail side of the banking from the investment side, so that the risk being taken by a company was segregated such that ordinary people who might have had deposits in the bank could still go and get their monies without being exposed to the investment side of the bank. The same is true here with respect to insurance companies because once people are paying their premiums on a monthly basis, yes, we understand that those premiums have to be invested, but it is the manner in which they are invested, the level of reserves you are holding, what are you investing those reserves in vis-à-vis the other part of the portfolio that may be related to more risk-taking, and we accept that insurance is risk, Sir. The whole concept of insurance is risk, and therefore the focus here is to ensure that where appropriate there will be the kinds of investment practices undertaken that would allow the actuary, in a sense, to indicate what level of risk is associated with the portfolio. Obviously, this would be a written opinion and it would obviously be calculated and done with a tremendous amount of data, Sir. I know that under IFRS (International

Financial Reporting Standard) 17, in the context of the European Union and with companies operating in a global environment, companies have to meet Solvency 2 requirements. IFRS 17 is the accounting standard with respect to insurance companies, and therefore there is a framework with respect to how insurance companies are expected to not just report but to meet certain regulatory requirements. The reality is that, as we have seen in the case of what happened with CLICO in 2009, while the actuaries have a responsibility to assess the risk on the books, it is the management of the company which has a greater responsibility now to policyholders.

For a life insurance company predominantly, upon your death there is really only a benefit paid to the beneficiary but there is a commitment that once you pay your premiums, even if you surrender, there is always a discount for surrendering policies. The regulations of this whole thing now have been strengthened in the context of where the Financial Services Commission (FSC) is but we still have to be conscious that companies still have to invest, and therefore with investment there is risk. As I said, insurance companies embody risk and quantify risk -- that I this: We have to ensure the calculations for the reserving, and what is and is not released has to be on the basis of the underlying nature of the portfolio and not only necessarily as it relates to whatever volatility exists in the market.

Sir, at the top of Page 6 which speaks to the Clause 4(a):

“With effect from Income Year 2020 in the case of the life insurance business of a resident insurance company, the assessable income of that company shall be calculated on the basis of its net income.”

In Clause 4(b), by deleting subsection 5 and substituting the following, it reads:

“With effect from Income Year 2020 in the case of the life insurance business of a non-resident company carried on through a branch in Barbados, the assessable income of that company shall be calculated on the basis of its net income attributable to the branch.”

Sir, you would recall that in the existing legislation these calculations are currently done on the gross investment income, and that is predominantly because in the previous dispensation only domestic insurance companies would have been in the mix with respect to the calculation for taxes. In Clause 4 (c):

“5(A): With effect from income year 2020, where an insurance company seeks to make a mark-to-market election for securities, equities and long-term derivative contracts, that company shall notify the Commissioner in

writing on or before its filing due date for the taxation year in respect of which such election is applicable. 5(B): Where an insurance company makes a mark-to-market election for securities, equities and long term derivative contracts pursuant to subsection 5(A), that election shall be irrevocable unless otherwise agreed by the Minister. 5(C): A life insurance company may be irrevocably categorised as a Class 1 or a Class 2 licensee as defined by the Insurance Act, Cap. 310, subject to the approval of the Financial Services Commission, unless the business undertaken changes significantly.”

Sir, let me just finish this Section and speak to the mark-to-market element. In 4 (d):

“A ‘derivative contract’ means an agreement or an instrument that is:

(a) a swap agreement;

(b) a forward purchase or a sale agreement;

(c) a forward rate agreement;

(d) a futures agreement;

(e) an option agreement; or any other similar agreement and includes an agreement or an instrument which derives its value from derivatives.”

Sir, parts (c) and (d) of Clause 4, in a sense, reflect the fact that, as I said earlier, Barbados now has to position itself to operate fully in a global space and within a global context. You would appreciate that in terms of some of these companies that are in Barbados and which we would want to attract to do business in Barbados based on the size of their portfolios, this is where things get interesting. The size of some of these companies is pretty much larger than the size of the Barbados economy, and operating in a global space the size of some of these companies and the kinds of derivative contracts and the kinds of investments, equities and bonds which they hold are significant and therefore within that context we will anticipate, Sir that notwithstanding, the fact that the market is volatile we all know that the elements of growth, and the fundamentals that go into what drives the market is data and information; obviously sentiment is a critical part of this process, but the purpose of the mark to market analysis it really does allow for a better valuation of where the market and the valuation of those.. of the portfolio rather than having what you would normally refer to as the book value component of it and as with most things, depending on where the market is at any given point in time, obviously there are days when the market is down and they are days when the market is up with respect to the valuation of the portfolio, whilst the market mark to market element will form a critical part, in terms of what the valuation is, we feel that operating in a

global environment that if we can attract enough companies to Barbados; that want to do business from Barbados to engage the world from Barbados; not just Life Insurance companies as we have done here but we have to accept that operating in a global environment comes risks and therefore with those risks they are strong upsides and they maybe some downsides for a short period of time but I can tell you Sir that more often than not companies tend to have more of an upside than a downside.

Therefore, as a Government, as a country we have to be prepared to accept that there is a certain level of risk that you have to operate within and whilst public policy has to be focused on providing as we are doing now for ordinary Barbadians the only way that we could effectively over a period of time provide the kind of services that we can for ordinary Barbadians is if we can open up the space and attract more business into the country such that we cannot just maintain but improve certainly the standard of living for Barbadians.

These amendments this morning are critical to Barbados’ transition, having converged our Income Taxes in December of 2018; this now would give those companies who were in a period for ‘grandfathering’ a forward signal, in terms of where the public policy is, with respect to what would obtain and therefore as we have sought to do. You would recall we came to office and it was pretty much a baptism. We had to respond quickly. We now feel that this gives us an opportunity to do a little bit of forward thinking planning which is what we would like to be in a position to do and so we have worked hard in the last two years to get ourselves into a position; Covid-19 notwithstanding, that we still have to give signals for forward planning as much as possible and I believe that these amendments today pretty much holds faith with what that commitment has been to the government to give a clear, forward view as to what the policy position would be from the government so that people can go and make decisions with respect to what they are going to engage in or not. Whilst we are still in this pandemic we still have to be very nimble. We have to respond to a number of challenges that are facing Barbados. I believe that having done a lot of the heavy lifting over the last two years that this forms one element of how we will conduct ourselves for the country and hopefully Covid- 19 will pass quickly and the world will get back on track I hope quickly, but we want to be in a position always from a public policy perspective and to build confidence in what the government is doing to be capable of giving a foreign review as much as possible and legislation notwithstanding, and you know more than perhaps any other Speaker that we have been in this place many times trying to ensure that we adhere to the good principles of good governance.

These amendments I hope will find favour with the members of the chamber and certainly hope that the public

would understand the context with which we have brought these amendments today and rest assured that we will focus on ensuring that there is much more collaboration amongst the regulatory agencies because this is about Barbados. If one regulating agency is doing well and the other is not the reality is that businesses interact with all of us and we all have to make sure to lift our game to respond.

With those very few words I wish to commend these amendments to the Chamber and beg to move that this bill be read a second time.

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

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I believe the only reason why a person who is relatively quiet spoken would be said to be making noise is because what he or she is saying echoes loudly the sentiment of the public house or resonates very clearly in the vision of the public. That's the only reason I could think of why it would be said that a person who is relatively quiet spoken is given to noise making. Now the honourable member for Christ Church East Central spoke for an hour perhaps and ten, 15 mins without making a noise and I lay that to his credit. He whispered such that they are some important things I would wish that I had heard which never reached my ears because of his whispered tone that you and I both know, however Mr. Speaker that this government tends to respond to noise.

Repeatedly it has shown that this position that when noise is made in the public arena this government responds. It feels prodded to respond and I can mention all kinds of instances but I would not want to take the hour, ten minutes or 15 minutes that the last speaker took, but they are several important issues that have come up for public debate out there and they should be debated in here which has rendered his government subject to position where it felt forced to respond to the noise. The Honourable Member who last spoke made several references as to risk taking on the part of insurers. He mentioned several times the notion of the obligation of insurers who have reserves to meet the necessary required amounts of liability when they arise. That is an important thing. I recall not too long ago raising the question in here as to the level of compliance on the part of insurance companies that is attaching to this obligation. That was when we spoke of disaster events and catastrophes. The obligation to have a resource fund that is laid on the doorsteps of insurance companies..... what's the name? Compliance. I did not hear it whispered or shouted response on that occasion. I did not hear reference made to that despite the repeated references risks, liabilities and obligations of reserves on the part of insurance companies. I have not heard anyone suggest as to what the level of compliance is in Barbados and Barbadians have been brought to a place of surprising

shock before when dealing with insurance companies and several of us are familiar with those things and we would not want to know that we have to face that type of thing again as we go forward for what is a level of compliance with respect to the obligation at the doorstep of insurance companies with respect to reserves. I imagine that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North will say in fairly clear terms what the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central failed to convey in his whispered notes but the questions still have to be asked. We have been talking in this debate about the international business sector and we all know very well what that has meant to Barbados in the past. Again the last speaker made reference to this, the level of contribution it made to revenues in Barbados, tax revenues as well as other revenues in Barbados and I think when this administration came to Office they had been a decline in that sector, a serious decline and deterioration in the level of revenues generated through that sector, I think up to \$200 million. This is a sector that has built more than Barbados. This is a sector which came out of the policy bosom of this Administration in former years and I think we were reminded of that today but a sector which was given to serious decline for various reasons, some domestically identified and some to be associated with policy changes in Canada but that sector decline, it built modern Barbados, it built much of middle-class Barbados, it built an economic sector in Barbados which presence manifest itself in various middle-class developments across Barbados so that was significant for us. What the Government has been clearly engaged in doing and it has brought us to this Parliament several times in this regard is to threat to the matter of compliance and the Parliament of Barbados, this Honourable Chamber, Mr. Speaker, has responded with alacrity and with repeated and sometimes long lasting sessions to bring us into line legislatively so that they can compliance so we have been treating to the matter of compliance with respect to what some of the international institutions claim to be our obligations. We are treating clearly to the matter of corporate tax conversions and much of what the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central said revolved around that, the whole business of tax conversions. A case can be made that these things were necessary, but my question really is, beyond compliance and beyond addressing the matter of tax conversions with respect to corporate Barbados, what else have we done to address the decline in the sector? What is the investment interest that has been identified? What is the investment indicators that are manifesting themselves? Beyond our eye of interest in some nebulous potential for another industry development sourced out of Canadian finances, what else have we put on the table going forward? What is the policy platform for international business in Barbados? I am not saying there is none. I am saying we need to hear it and I am saying in that context I therefore expect that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North will speak and

will probably speak to some of those things so that we may get beyond the whisper and get to some substance.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North is a rather quite outspoken gentleman himself, but I expect that even in whispered domes, he will give something of policy substance to us, to encourage us, that with respect to the sector we are not simply going to let it slide. This sector declined, while the sugar sector declined. This sector declined while manufacturing had already been on serious decline and so forth but I am saying it and most of all, of this decline, this sector had emerged and was thriving until there were reversals and Barbados needs to know as we seek to diversify away from tourism? What are you doing? What plans are in the pipeline? What prospects are they? What potential is there for some revival of investment in this sector? I think that those questions, Mr. Speaker, are relevant.

Asides.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Yes, those are my views and humbly submitted. I have a feeling that Barbadians will also feel so and that those questions are relevant. If it is irrelevant to this Government especially those who sit on the Front Bench that interest in the financial and international business sector of Barbados is not a matter to be raised as a serious consideration then I would be forced into a sense of shock. If it is the view, as it seems that I am hearing, that it is only my position that these matters are important to Barbadians then I am forced to a sense of disbelief, but I think, Mr. Speaker, that you identify with the average Barbadian thinking and mind set and that you will equally concerned to hear what is the policy platform for international business and the revival of that sector as we go forward. Mr. Speaker, you rule this House with a wise and fair hand most of the time and so if I am out of line in asking that question please draw it to my attention but I do not know that question is out of order, out of any decree or impudent wrong.

Sir, we must make some noise whether it is necessary because we cannot continue to boast of seeking to improve business facilitation in Barbados and that is to be commended and Government has put a lot of effort into that lead, I think, but the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central and we would improve business facilitation. We have got to try to increase the interest in business investment as well and therefore I will think that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North would feel some measure of obligation in this particular debate to tell us what we are doing to revive the international business sector. Compliance is insufficient. Corporate Tax concessions are insufficient and we have adjusted the Corporate Tax rates and we brought about some conversance and because it was expressed fairly popularly in Barbados that it would seem as though again we are

giving the breaks to the business sector while imposing harsher tax measures on the individuals and households in Barbados, I thought that that was an important issue to raise and I still think so.

It seems to me from what we are doing today that Government will know going forward that it has to develop and derive revenue from sources. We are looking to see what we can do to adjust the tax policy with reference to corporate Barbados specifically on this matter of insurance companies so Government is looking to see how it can get back some money from the insurance sector in Barbados.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, I will not detain you for very long but I thought it necessary...

Asides.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: And did not have much to say and I know when to stop and you stop when there is nothing more that you need to say. Some people need to learn that art of stopping when you have nothing more to say and to stop especially when your colleagues are not listening. Some people need to learn that art.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Can I have some order in this Honourable Chamber, and allow the Honourable Member for St. Michael West to speak?

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Speaker, let me repeat that. You need to stop when you have no further need of speaking. You need to stop and to know when to stop when even your colleagues are not listening to you.

Asides.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: As someone just said to me I have no colleagues in here so I cannot be referring to myself. Sit on that for a while. Mr. Speaker, my point there, succinctly put, is that we have heard much said in this debate from the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central who is opposed to any form of noisemaking but what we did not hear said because it did not reach our ears in the distance, is what is the policy platform in relation to the international business sector, the financial sector and the offshore sector going forward, what are we going to do beyond compliance and convergence of tax rates, what are we going to do to attract investment and further interest outside of business facilitation which is necessary and to be commended or what are we going to do except casting an eye of interest towards some nebulous investment in marijuana deriving out of Canadian finance. Mr. Speaker, that is all I am saying and importantly it ends

where it began, what level of compliance is there with respect to reserves held by insurance companies in Barbados, and I ask that in the interest of Barbadians.

I thank you.

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

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I propose to enter this debate to be fairly brief but also to lend some support to the excellent, quite in-depth presentation of my friend the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central and coincidentally, Mr. Speaker, my parliamentary representative.

Mr. Speaker, if the Honourable Member for St. Michael West had taken the time to really stick around in the bosom of the Barbados Labour Party after the last election he would have had perhaps a more of an insider's view of the challenges that really confronted this Administration in relation to the international business sector from day one when we assumed the governance of this country, and there were really serious challenges.

As the Honourable Member from Christ Church East Central said, the first thing we had to do was to embark upon conforming with a commitment that was made for us by a previous Administration to disband a system, a sector in effect, that has served us well for over four decades prior to us coming into Cabinet. Mr. Speaker, that commitment that was made compelled me, a man thrown in I must confess at the very deep end, to come to grips with a subject area and to take action to save this country from disgrace within a short period of some six months of coming into office. We had to face, I do not want to say the word "forum" but a formidable international organisation that was imposing on us certain things we had to do in the shortest possible time, so we were confronted with allegations of there being preferential tax regimes in Barbados that we had to do away with. There were some, I think eight or nine of them, Mr. Speaker, that we had to come up with solutions. It was no excuse to tender that we were a new Government and therefore give us a little more time. Nobody was interested in hearing us making that point, we had to get up and do. I remember being on the phone with reputable players in this industry, men of the calibre, with your permission, of Ben Arindell in the Ministry, the Director of International Business, at some two o'clock in the morning trying to get things together to get to Parliament to ensure that we comply with the requirements that we were asked to meet within a very, very short period of time and we met the deadlines. We met them not only by the efforts of the Ministry that I have the honour to lead but also by the efforts of the Prime Minister of this country and the Ministry of Finance who decided that we had to look at this thing differently where we had to

stop thinking of the international business sector and the local business sector and to think globally. We had to put a global spin on what we were doing and that is the orator and the genesis of the motion that we enacted of tax convergence. Then we said we were going to bring one common corporate tax rate to bear upon this country. We had a choice to make having decided on convergence, are we going to converge up to the rate of the domestic business sector which would have been 30 per cent and write off the international business sector or were we going to converge downwards to the rates being paid by the international business sector and fight for an industry that we had built almost actually from scratch and built it up to where it was and we decided that we were going to opt for the latter and use a convergence rate downward of a range of between one per cent and 5.5 per cent.

Sir, I am not going to stand here and be guided by someone who cannot even control his own party to come and talk about who has to say what, who went through the fight. We did not run, Mr. Speaker. He ran. We decided to stick around and face it and deal with it and we dealt with it so I am not going to be guided by him.

Mr. Speaker, when we decided to have a tax rate of 1 per cent to 5.5 per cent we went into the international community after that and they found... First of all, Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I hear a lot of noises, and this is not referring to the Honourable Member for St. Michael West now, but there were some who raved and ranked in Barbados about things that Government should do and needs to do and so on and you know when I went overseas and interfaced with a number of the major players over there, stakeholders in the sector, who have local and in chapters of their business, big accountant firms, do you know, Mr. Speaker, that they did not even know over there about the changes that Barbados had made over here although they had local chapters here. If you talked to people overseas at world fairs, they would tell you in a place like London that they were hearing things that we were presenting for the very first time, Sir, and I was shocked to hear that. The interest was so great -- very, very great -- but they were hearing it for the first time. You do not succeed in this sector by sitting here in Barbados and doing things by Webex or by Zoom and those sorts of things. You have to get into the market, you have to be in people's faces all the time. That is what we were told. We were hearing, 'I hear you have now come from Barbados. Where were you all these years? Where were you all when Bermuda?' They named the countries which were always up there at their doorsteps and in their boardrooms and conference rooms sitting around the tables explaining to them their products. Where was Barbados? We had to do that.

Mr. Speaker, of course I overlooked the first point that I should have made in all this, and that is the fact that

after the events of around August 2018 the first thing we had to do in Barbados was to change and regain the image of Barbados, particularly in the area of international business. We came in and in very short order a very serious stain was placed on the international business sector right here in Barbados, so the first thing we had to do was to let it be known that those things related to historical issues, historical transactions and a previous Administration. I know people tend to see a country as having one Government, a continuity of government. You have to fight very hard sometimes to convince them that although there is that concept in truth, it is different and there are new players at the table and new governors of the country. Mr. Speaker, we had to deal with that.

We went out into the market and decided we had to promote Barbados. What were investors saying when we told them that we were converging the tax system? They were very pleased because investors like simplicity and they like certainty, and they now had a situation where they could go to one place, by and large, especially in relation to taxation, to see what they had to do if they wanted to invest in Barbados in terms of their tax liability. No-one would have had to go and look through individual pieces of legislation to decide what was the tax rate if they wanted to be a society with restricted liability, if they wanted to be an international business company (IBC), or a trust which would involve a different tax rate. Mr. Speaker, they could go to one place: The Income Tax Act, and they could see the rate of tax that would have been applicable to them, to Barbadian companies and to what we used to call international business companies. They could see the rate of tax they would have had to pay. Simplicity and certainty, and investors like that, Mr. Speaker. That is a major policy initiative in relation to attracting investment to this country.

Sir, this is not going to happen overnight. In terms of the tax the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central can give the details, but this Government has done a fantastic amount. In any case, in terms of the tax revenue 2019 was the first year that tax became payable for the Financial Year 2019, and those findings are still now currently in progress anyhow. I can be corrected if I am wrong on that but that is my understanding. You cannot at this stage state definitively what the tax take is since the change in legislation in relation to the tax band which this Administration introduced. Mr. Speaker, we have gone all out and in addition to doing things like that, marketing and promotion, we are strengthening at home our framework which we are putting in place. Having dealt with the December 2018 deadline, we had to also meet a 2019 deadline in terms of the economic substance. We met that deadline, Mr. Speaker. We passed the legislation. In addition to legislation, we ensured that we set up the relevant IT (information technology) platform to ensure that we captured all the applications and assessments of

substance declarations by all of the service providers and other entities under the legislation.

Sir, we also sought and obtained a number of additional persons to staff the international business unit to be able to handle the increased influx of applications, Mr. Speaker. We have done a lot to ensure we have systems in place to strengthen our appeal to the international business sector, and we are going further into the International Business Unit now. We are also going to make it for all applications being made by service providers for licences or renewal of licences, and we are also setting up a database system. All of that now is going to be done online as well in the International Business Unit, so people have not been sitting idly, Mr. Speaker. We have been putting systems in place to ensure we have a viable and presentable international business sector with all of the supporting infrastructure, Mr. Speaker. Maybe the Honourable Member for St. Michael West is a good athlete; he may run. We did not run, Mr. Speaker. We stuck around and put our shoulders to the plough.

Mr. Speaker, this was another issue we had to deal with. We really did not stand the chance of a ghost in Hell with this one, where the global forum arm of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) had set out certain requirements for the previous Administration in relation to the compliance with the transfer and exchange of information standards, dealing with the issues of having current and up-to-date beneficial ownership information and promptly exchanging information between the relevant tax authorities of Barbados and other countries requesting information. After an assessment was made in 2012 by the OECD under the previous Administration and then one again in 2015 more relevant to this point, they were specifically told that certain things had to be done by June 2018. Sir, we came into Government in the last week of May in 2018, so for all intents and purposes we were not the Government. We had not even started to govern by June 2018 when certain things were supposed to have been done in relation to complying with that standard. Mr. Speaker, those things were not done by that deadline.

We, a committed Administration, shoulder to the plough -- through you, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael West -- set out to ensure that we could try to salvage it, but we knew we were up against an impossible task because the time had passed. Mr. Speaker, we still put systems in place to the point where last year we brought to this Honourable Chamber in a different physical location a whole set, a slew, of legislation. Not only that, because the requirement is not that you only put legislation in place but you also have to put systems in place to monitor compliance with the legislation; we have again acquired additional personnel to monitor now on-site inspections and the like, Mr. Speaker. However, since it

had been done post-June 2018 we did not stand the chance of a ghost in Hell. Is that the correct terminology: a ghost in Hell? A sno-cone in Hell.

Asides.

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN: We did not stand the chance of a snowball or a sno-cone in Hell, Mr. Speaker, so as a result of that we were given recently by the OECD a partially compliant rating in relation to the compliance, or failing to comply, in the time stipulated by the standard in relation to transparency in the exchange of information. We intend to review that within the rules of the OECD. We have already indicated that we intend to have a supplementary review, but the rules are that you can only have a supplementary review entertained a year after the original assessment which was April 6 this year, unless there are exceptional circumstances which are not defined. We have to wait, in essence, a year before we have that supplementary review. In the meantime, the European Union (EU) says that they make assessments and listings taking into consideration the position taken by the OECD in these matters, so they are due to meet anytime and God knows what they will have to say on it but I hasten to add, Mr. Speaker, that it is very painful and hurtful when you have to take the blame for something which you did not do and which you are not responsible for. But that is the position on that matter in which we find ourselves. But we have done all that we as an Administration could have done. Sir, all is well with my soul. Now I well remember Sir, the member for St. Michael West and some other Members talking about this issue of compliance. You know reality is reality. Now I remember last year when there was the threat of Barbados being blacklisted, eventually we were, for not giving a certain commitment that was required by a certain time. We just sought clarification as to what they wanted us to commit to, but they said no: Commit or be blacklisted. A delegation was mounted to go to Europe to face the European Union to make a case that this was exceedingly unfair, and that it should not happen. CARICOM took the decision to send the delegation. On the delegation, CARICOM has what? Fourteen 15 countries, somewhere around there, the countries that were sent up had representatives from St. Lucia, Barbados and Antigua. Antigua, to its credit, does not even have an international business sector to fight for, but their minister went. I went to represent Barbados and the St. Lucian Prime Minister went as the leader of the delegation. Three countries of the whole of CARICOM, went to Europe to fight on behalf of the region. Three single countries. How will we ever mount a serious challenge for the devastation that these big organisations, and entities and countries and so on, that they inflict upon us? How will we ever mount a serious resistance to it when we cannot even unite on matters that are of interest to us as individual countries and as a region? How will we ever do it Mr. Speaker? So I hear those who will be critical of us and they will talk about not

letting yourself be pushed around and all of that is true. We can't let ourselves be pushed around and you really should be in a position where you cannot be pushed around. Mr. Speaker I am basically ungovernable. That is a fact. Me, personally Mr. Speaker. So when I find myself in a position where you have to be marching to certain drumbeats and things like that, I take tremendous offence at it, I really do. But when you have an economy to think about, an economy that affects nearly 300 000 people, Mr. Speaker you have to live in the real world. Otherwise you run the risk of being accused, and some would say rightly so, of playing fastness and reckless with the welfare and well-being of around 300 000 people. So that when you look around and you expect certain people to be behind you or walking with you and you do not see them, what will you do? Play 'powful foolish'? And then end up in the dump? So when it comes to that Mr. Speaker, you have to make a choice and the choice is pretty obvious. If you decide you want to stay in the game you have to play by the rules. That is very simple and straightforward and that is what we have had to do Mr. Speaker. I do not feel less than a man, less than a minister, or less than a member of a government when people say that we need to "cast off all of these shackles" and so on. Yes, we should and we would love to, but the fact of the matter is what are you then going to do in terms of accountability to the people that you are governing? If you attempt to do it alone, it is suicide and the other countries that you would want to work with you and not working with you. They will tell you they have their own issues to deal with. So you have to decide to make choices in the real world Mr. Speaker and I believe, we can hold as an Administration, our heads, very, very high, in the work that we have done to ensure that we comply with the requirements that were set for us before we even assumed Government for a single day. We have been able to meet our targets and comply with everything we had to do. And subject to the one issue that we said that still looms, Barbados can say that we have planned well for the sector, that we are now a force in the marketplace; obviously there has been a setback with the COVID where we could not get into the marketplace, but then we will be able to hit the ground running as soon as the dust settles and we can plan a strategy. But Mr. Speaker I can say that I am very proud as to what we have done as an Administration. I was quite...to hear the Member for Christ Church East Central go into so much detail, even in relation to my own territory, but that is the nature of the game. But he spoke very well and this Administration is doing well. Mr. Speaker this same issue that the Member of Christ Church East Central raised as the primary object of the Bill, which is the insurance point, I remember that in Canada, last year when I was on a road show, that one of the persons that we engaged up there was from a very large insurance company, raised that same point. I remember that by being up there we were able to bring back the issues and communicate them and as a result of that, with alacrity, the Government has now moved on this matter. So Mr.

Speaker Sir, there are a number of things that we done to get this sector up and running. It will be up and running and I daresay, is performing as well as any sector in these circumstances can be expected to perform. Mr. Speaker I am very pleased to have been able to get up and speak on this matter for just those few minutes and I am obliged.

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

Hon. R. R STRAUGHAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker: Let me commend the Honourable Member for St. Michael North for a very spirited intervention and to assure him, through you, and the rest of the country and to repeat what he indicated, that Government has been working to ensure that we can respond to all of the challenges that this country faces. And like him I would want to reiteration that had the Honourable Member for St. Michael West, stood around, then he too would have been in a position, not only as an insider, but as an informed citizen who would be able to communicate effectively to the rest of the country, the very serious nature of the challenges that we have been responding to from day one. And it has not gone unnoticed by the public that we have been responding to the issues and it is instructive that the Member for St. Michael West said that the Government responds to noise because I would like to think that we live in a country where a Government is in touch and feels the pulse of the people and responds to people in a mature way, Sir, with respect to the challenges that are confronting the country. And therefore as a matter of course, given Sir that we were in a certain mode prior to Election 2018 where we rubbed shoulders with the people and we did not do so just to win an election; but we rubbed shoulders with people to have a clear understanding of the issues confronting the country. And he rubbed some of the shoulders too Sir. And we have continued Sir, to rub shoulders with the people in a slightly unorthodox way recently with ZOOM and Webex and all kinds of things, Sir, because as we have been governing we still have to engage the people and therefore we will respond once we have been able to deal with the appropriate issues effectively from a policy perspective and to put the mechanisms in place, Sir, that will allow the people to see that we were not just out there rubbing shoulders because we wanted to get in here. We rubbed the shoulders, Sir, because the country required its Government to understand what was impacting the lives of people and therefore in the midst of this pandemic as we seek to respond to those very urgent needs of the people we equally, Sir, have to ensure that once we are focusing on that relief in the short term we still have to build out the rest of the economy. We still have, Sir, to look forward to transforming this economy and I know that may be a little difficult for some and I think when the Honourable Member for St. Michael North said that the Honourable Member for St. Michael West ran he claimed he was not up for the fight because this effort on the part of the

Government has been sustained and it has been two years of incredible work and this is not about blowing trumpets or anything. I believe, certainly in the last three months, I feel as if I have done more work that I did in the previous time that we were in office because the situation demanded that we all dug deep in order to respond to what was clearly, Sir, a crisis that if got out of hand could undo the hard work that we would have done in the previous 18 months and we set about trying to ensure that we can manage to keep people's dignity. The Prime Minister set about in the wrap up to the Appropriate Bill, Sir, the second reading speech, articulated the principles upon which we will operate in the short term and there has been calls from all sectors and interestingly for Ministers to be cut and all kinds of things, Sir, but I know and I want to single out the Honourable Member for St. James Central because I heard on the radio people saying that he should be fired because there is no tourism. It is amazing, Sir, because that work that the Tourism Task Force has been doing to ensure that Barbados once this cloud of gloom dissipates that we are in a position to hit the ground running and the engagement that is required to ensure that not just the hoteliers but certainly the workers and the various players, Sir, understand the dynamic of what is taking place and what the Government is doing to try to ensure that the various protocols that we will now have to roll out and we know that the Honourable Member will articulate at the appropriate time but the things that are not seen, Sir, are the very things that this Government, when we were in opposition, went around the country and we saw that the previous Government did not see or responded to therefore as we go through this very difficult period now, I want to, through you, Sir, remind the country that yes, we will respond to the basic needs of Barbadians right now but we equally, Sir, have to ensure that we chart a path that does not see the economy come to a screeching halt because of the noises of a few who ran from the fight. This Government is committed to improving the lives of all Barbadians. It is part of our DNA. We will continue to engage with all the stakeholders, Sir, and we have to govern because in this very uncertain world that we are in now, we, and we meaning Barbados, have to keep our heads because they are those out there, Sir, who are losing theirs and we have always been a responsible country, this is a responsible Government, this is a responsible party, and the people have given us a responsibility to govern the affairs of this country and this Government is committed to ensuring that whilst we are responding to the short terms needs of Barbadians that we should continue the very good work of ensuring that we lay the foundation such that when we come out of this period as it relates to Covid-19 that we can fire back on all cylinders, therefore we cannot just rest and say cut this Minister, cut that ministry, cut this and cut that because people, who want to get the attention of Barbadians, cannot see and do not have the vision to recognise the good work that this Government has done in the last two years, the very good work and the intense work

and the intense work that is still ongoing and it will become even more important that the plans and preparation that we have put in place now, that as soon as the so-called proverbial gate is open, Sir, that we can get back to business as quickly as possible.

Sir, I am proud to be a part of a team who for the last two years have given a million per cent and despite giving that million per cent the country would know that the Prime Minister has asked for a billion per cent even in this environment because we understand that what we do would impact the lives of every single citizen in this country and this Government remains committed to ensuring that we can meet those expectations but in meeting those expectations we cannot just do the basic things, we equally have to transform and it is that commitment, Sir, is what is going to allow us to be able to get through this period of time and therefore I know there are going to be a series of debates in the coming weeks that will raise all kinds of issues because in the end, Sir, I know the public and the people of Barbados would be able to see the difference between a party with vision and those who simply cannot see.

Sir, as I said before, these amendments are critical as part of the transformation of the international business sector but certainly, Sir, the business sector in general and it becomes even more important now and takes on a different perspective in this environment because this is what is going to allow us, as well as the stakeholders, to be able to plan effectively going forward. Mr. Speaker, these also would put to rest, notwithstanding the Covid-19 environment and the Government naturally having made some adjustments to the Barbados Economic Recovery and Transformation (BERT) plan, it is not envisaged in any way, Sir, for any further adjustments with respect to taxes. You would note, Sir, that the country on June 03, just last week, we were approved before the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Board for the third review of the Barbados Economic Recovery and Transformation (BERT) programme and those would have been based on data up until the end of March which is a clear signal to all that the fundamentals of the Barbados economy up until that time was on track, notwithstanding the impact of Covid-19, the underlying macroeconomic indicators, Sir, for the country still remains sound. There is work to be done, yes, because of Covid-19 to do things a little differently but all of the basic ingredients, Sir, are still there in the cake to be mixed and therefore, during this particular period of time, we have made adjustments in terms of the BERT programme, the IMF has approved and that is before the Board. We have also been able to augment under that agreement in terms of the additional assistance that we would see from the firm and the reality is, Sir, that too is a signal to all that the programme was on track, and Covid-19 notwithstanding the Government still remains committed to executing the

Barbados Economic Recovery and Transformation Programme.

The next few months, as I said last week, Sir, will still be difficult because with 45 000 claims for unemployment up until June 4th - and you would notice, Sir, that very week I come the number inches up a little more - it is imperative that the debate that will come critically soon - I am not being presumptuous -- will explain further how we are going to re-engineer some of our expenditures to be able to put as many people back to work as possible will be critical. I know that there will be more noises but the truth is the Government has to govern for all of Barbados and therefore if we are all in this together then in these extra-ordinary times we have taken the time to consult, we will continue to consult and we will engage the people as widely as possible but time is critical and therefore the Government has to govern. We are committed to governing and we are also committed to consultation and that will continue. At the end of it those who wish not to see or wish not to comprehend, well I will leave them to the judgement of the people of Barbados but I believe that this Government has been faithful to its commitment to good governance. We have always sought to bring whatever legislation to support the policy initiatives that we have announced, and Covid-19 notwithstanding we would have been here sooner, but the point is that we are at a stage now where the country is opening up and therefore it gives us an opportunity to ensure we can tie up any specific loose ends from a legislative perspective in order to ensure that we can go forward with clarity.

These amendments today, Sir, as I said, will provide a little more certainty with respect to the business community in being able to plan ahead and that is the position that we as a Government certainly want to be in to give all and sundry clear sight with respect to the public policy stance for any particular sector such that people can go ahead and plan and execute knowing full well that we will create an environment that is relatively certain, and notwithstanding the impact of Covid-19, that the underlying fundamentals still remain true and therefore whilst we have to make a slight adjustment with respect to Covid-19. We are conscious that we have to maintain a level of economic activity such that the social stability in the country can be maintained.

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

I beg to second that, Sir.

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

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

COMMITTEE

MADAM CHAIRMAN: This House is now in Committee.

Clauses 1 -- 4 inclusive were called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN, seconded by Hon. E. G. HINKSON, MADAM 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. R. STRAUGHN, seconded by Hon. E. G. HINKSON, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Income Tax (Amendment) (No. 2) Act, 2020.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Leader of Government Business.

SUSPENSION

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 2.30 p.m. today.

The question that the Sitting do now suspend until 2.30 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

RESUMPTION

ORDER NO. 8

To move the Second Reading of the Public Transport (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, 2020.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Christ Church West.

Dr. the Hon. W. F. DUGUID: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As we actually have two Bills on the Order Paper that both relate to transportation -- the Transport Authority (Validation) Bill, 2020, and the Public Transport (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, 2020 -- I hereby request that the two be considered together as a cognate debate.

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

The question that the two mentioned Bills, Orders 8 and 12, be debated as a cognate debate was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Dr. the Hon. W. F. DUGUID: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and colleagues, for recognising that both are matters which relate to transportation and therefore we will try to do the two of them together. I promise that this will not be a very long debate. One essentially is a Validation Bill and what it is essentially doing is validating the monies that were collected for bus fares. You would know that when the Minister of Finance speaks in a particular Budget and gives an increase in a tax, fare or fee, that you have a period of time in which to actually bring that legislation. If that legislation is not brought within that period of time, then a Validation Bill is required, and that is what the Transport Authority (Validation) Bill, 2020, seeks to do to be able to bring into actual law the changes that occurred in bus fares from the time of the Financial Statement to the present time. That is all basically that the Validation Bill does, and I would ask that it be considered as such.

The more important matter is the Public Transport (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, and what that Bill is seeking to do is to be able to give some teeth to the Transport Authority. When the Transport Authority was first put into place around the latter part of 2007, I believe it was under the current Honourable Member for St. George North. Apart from the Bill which brought the Transport Authority into life, there were supposed to be additional regulations which accompanied it. Unfortunately, those regulations were never put into place and the Transport Authority has met with us on several occasions together with other stakeholders in the transport sector - the public service vehicles and the Transport Board - and we have come up with a series of regulations. Clearly, we could not have the Transport Authority being asked to regulate the sector without those regulations being in place. Unfortunately, before we could actually get to put those regulations before this Honourable House there was a requirement to bring three other Bills together and be able to synchronise and harmonise them. That is what the Public Transport (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill does, so in other words, in order to bring the regulations we first have to bring this Miscellaneous Provisions Bill and that is what we are seeking to do, so that then the Ministry would be in a position to actually bring the regulations. It is not a wrong Bill, but essentially what it does is to give us the opportunity to bring the regulations and put them into force so that we have the Miscellaneous Provisions Bill.

Sir, it brings together the Road Traffic Act, the Road Traffic Regulations and the Transport Authority Act, and it brings changes to those particular Acts and gives us the opportunity to bring the regulations into fact. We all know that the public service vehicles in Barbados have had a chequered past, and we appreciate very much the work that

all the public service vehicle workers do. You have to understand that at times we only have 60 to 70 Transport Board buses on the roads, but there are 500 to 650 public service vehicles sometimes on the roads. They are our partners in transport and we appreciate the good work that they do, the vast majority of them, but some of them sometimes flout the law. Some of them sometimes are off-route, they stop at inappropriate places that are not designated bus-stops, they overload the vehicles, and by so doing they contravene the insurance required for them to transport the public. What the regulations seek to do is rein in that bad behaviour and bring that bad behaviour to an end, so that we can have better control and a better understanding of the sector.

Sir, essentially what the regulations will do when they actually come into force once we get this Miscellaneous Provisions Bill through both Houses and then get the certification of the Attorney General -- the biggest part of the regulations - is what you would have heard me speak about in the past as the three-strike rule. What the three-strike rule is and will be, Mr. Speaker, is that essentially if you contravene any particular part of the regulations, you get three chances to contravene. First strike, you will get a fine of an amount which I do not now recall. I think it may have been \$1 000 or somewhere in that range. If you contravene it a second time, then you get a second strike and another fine. The third time you contravene, you will lose your permit or your driver's licence. There will be certain regulations specific to owners and certain regulations specific to drivers. Let me say that the genesis of this actually came from the Trinidad legislation, and we looked at that when we first looked at the Road Traffic Regulations and we found that the Trinidad regulations were perhaps even more stringent and they required, after two contraventions of the law, that you would lose your permit for life; not lose your permit and get it back after a year. Your permit was gone.

Sir, after meeting with the stakeholders in the sector and the Prime Minister we decided that was a little tough and difficult. We decided it would not be a complete loss of your permit or your licence, and that rather than a two-strike rule we would go to a three-strike rule. We had full agreement from all of the players in the sector, and we are ready now and in a position to actually bring the regulations once we can get this Miscellaneous Provisions Bill through both Houses. That is essentially what it will be. The biggest part of it will be the regulations, because we recognise that we have to bring control to the sector. We appreciate the work that the public service vehicles have been doing, especially at this time in this COVID-19 environment. We recognise that they are under significant strain as well with the 60 per cent rule of capacity and occupancy, and I have been advised by the Minister of Health and we are looking to see what we can do to improve that. We are in significant discussions and I hope

and believe that he will soon be able to make an announcement very shortly about that occupancy level, because at the end of the day and as everybody keeps saying, "We are in this together", but we are indeed in this together. Just as I have to be your keeper and you have to be my keeper, those people are essential service providers in the frontline, working in the transport sector, meeting people every day, transporting essential workers, transporting children as they go back to school, transporting construction workers to and from home and to supermarkets, doctors and wherever, and they are absolutely critical to the whole infrastructure and the way this society is set up. And therefore Mr. Speaker I would commend that we both support of these bills. I therefore now ask that the Public Transport Miscellaneous Provisions Bill be read a second time.

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

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S Atherley: Public transport is a social good, it is essential and critical in facilitating economic activity in Barbados; and if for no other reason, that is why we must get it right with respect to with respect to the State and its involvement in the public transport sector in Barbados. I want to repeat a call that I made some time ago that the State withdraw itself from the commercial aspects of public transport in Barbados. And that the state sees its obligation to provide for that service in so far as facilitating the movement of schoolchildren and the like, but in terms of being involved in what I call the commercial aspects of providing that public service generally, I believe very strongly that the state should redraw the map. The state should facilitate private sector development of that area of economic activity and should confine itself, meaningfully and seriously so, and obviously so, to regulation, not just to talk about it, but to properly regulate the sector. I believe that the state must commit to an element of subsidy. If the state withdraws, I imagine that studies will show that millions would be saved. Even in withdrawing, if the State can commit to subsidising, to some measure, private operators to provide a universal public transport service in Barbados, I believe that savings would still be made. Absolutely necessary is the business of concessions. The sector has been asking for that, unheard, for years; to reduce the cost for operators. Rather than give an attentive ear to the acceding of such requests for such concessions, the State has in the last couple of years has imposed some further financial burden on the sector. So I am suggesting very strongly that the state withdraws from providing the public service as a social good in the universal terms in which it seeks to do and instead incorporating the private interest in so doing in the context of strong and obvious regulation, not just stated or documented, allowing for the saving of the costs associated with its involvement right now through the use of subsidies, so that universal service could be still provided

that operators could not operate at certain times on certain routes and go into certain distant places in Barbados. If that is subsidized, I believe interests can feel a motivation to go. If you do not subsidise that then they will not go, then the Transport Board, the State entity has to provide the service, and to me at a greater cost than if you offer a subsidy; and the third pillar of this first proposal is that we need to give a bit more consideration to the matter of concessions to reduce the costs of operators in the private sector. Mr. Speaker whether we want to admit it or not, bus fares are killing the poorer sections of the public in Barbados. I pass through St. Michael West for one reason or another every single day, and I say that for those who might think otherwise, for per chance if I do not find St. Michael West, St. Michael West finds me, even up here. And I can tell you that bus fares are killing the commuters whether you are coming from the south in St Michael or St Lucy, the northernmost point of this place, you know that bus fares are killing. It is a story not sounded with frequency and loudness much anymore these days but it is a truth which remains. And they will come at me if they will and whomsoever it may be but in attempting to provide a greater base of financial support for operations if it becomes still necessary, after we withdraw from providing universal State provided service in Barbados, that Government's coffers be supplemented, and we understand very clearly that the \$3.50 in bus fare that does not take the Transport Board where it ought to be in terms of the finances, I am suggesting that perhaps consideration should be given, certainly that a study should be done, to determine if some sort of levy would not help us better to reach better the financial goals could be met while alleviating some of the financial pain of commuters, especially poor commuters in urban St. Michael Central or rural St. John. And I think in the same way that we can apply across the board a garbage and sewerage tax, and that people are asked to pay, especially poorer people who are not linked in to the sewerage system, perhaps those who are more well to do and who travel by costly vehicles, could be asked simply to set aside a little for a transport levy to help out the cause of the poorer lot among us because after all we are all in this together. I want to repeat the call, I have made this before and I have heard in recent weeks, of the Honourable Prime Minister making this same call that we incorporate the presence of the public service operators at all levels in helping with transportation of the public in this time of Covid-19. We do not know how long it will last. Many of these people have been displaced because of the collapse of the tourism sector upon which their livelihood depended, whether they are at the Airport or at the Seaport or around the various parts of Bridgetown or elsewhere, I believe and I overhear the Honourable Minister suggesting it is already done. If it is already done I applaud that but I call for it and I have heard the Prime Minister recent days and weeks talking about it and I support the call however, with this qualification, Mr. Speaker, I do not think that when we make such a call it

should be the intention that we seek to offer some kind of favour to any select group so that select interest that benefitted from private contractual arrangements with Ross University which now lie dormant because of the absence of the university should not be an indication that is the preferred group. Our friends or allies or our supporters or even our constituents if that applies should not be the ones that we single out for benefit in such an exercise. I say that simply from This Side to offer the view that this is a good move, a good thing if we can properly structure it but that the initial stage should not be pursued from a perspective of offering help simple to our friends or those who support us or those we know well. There are some cost hardships that apply in the sector among the private sector operators. Rather than allow for concessions as has been asked for quite some time of both Administrations there was increase in position with respect to the field tax that put a lot of these operators in a spin. I have heard it described as nickels and dimes. That is certainly not the language I would have expected. When you put this kind of increase with respect to public sector operated vehicles among private interests, you cannot say it is nickel and dimes. The price at the pump became rather painful for them especially in the context where some still had to pay half of their Road Tax, still had to pay the permit fees annually. I raised this matter before and I raise it again because I think it is important. We cannot stand and in one breath say that the sector is a partner. We cannot stand in one breath and say that they provide an essential and vital role, in fact, they were classified as an essential service when other entities where not. You cannot stand and say that in one breath and then in the other breath do not facilitate them and allow some of these hardships to stand and to affect their operations. I heard the Honourable Minister speak with respect to the regulatory entity we call a Transport Authority and he made passing reference to the undesirable behaviour and conduct exhibited by some who operate in this sector and it seem to me that his attention focused squarely and perhaps solely on the drivers of these vehicles and it seems to me that his emphasis in terms of the robustness that the regulations will bring that relates again to the drivers and conductors if they have those, but Mr. Speaker, there are some things to be considered. There are some entities, agencies, embodiments we call them owners and we have to address the obligations responsibilities of owners as well.

If I own a vehicle and ...

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, on a point of elucidation.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Are you elucidating his speech?

Dr. the Hon. W. F. DUGUID: I thought I made it clear ... I can elucidate on my own speech.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: I know you can.

Dr. the Hon. W. F. DUGUID: I thought I made it clear to the Honourable Member. If I did not I will go through it again.

The regulations so structured when they come, they come, there are some regulations that relate just to owners and there are some regulations that would relate to driver, driver/conductor so we have recognised that in the past the drivers took most of the brunt, but sometimes the owners did not so I am hearing the Honourable Member, and just to elucidate, yes, in the regulations that come, there will be a section, three flight rule as well, for owners/permit holders.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: I am glad to hear that, Mr. Speaker, and I apologise. Maybe the Honourable Member did not make enough noise when he said it previously but I am hearing him clearly now and noise has reached my ears. I am glad to hear that he will be paying some attention to the owners as well because they have a responsibility with a licence for a vehicle on the road and the privilege to have one and some four and five and I do not know where their number stops and how they got so many but that is another story to be told, but they have a responsibility being so privilege as they are to have these vehicles on the road from which they make some money. Whatever the arrangements are for the actually day to day operations and movements, they have a responsibility and the regulations should speak to them. A lot of the undesirable behaviours as I understand it, and I believe the same signals reached you, derived from the fact that these fellows are hustling. It is the competitive nature of the business. I saw one overtake me recently, Mr. Speaker, and stop diagonally across the road in front of me and I am glad it was not you in my position there, Mr. Speaker, the outcome probably would have been different.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Meaning that I would have represented one of them, Sir?

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: All I mean to say is that I held my peace and asked for Grace for the moment.

Mr. SPEAKER: Continue Honourable Member.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: I try my best to ignore certain things. There are certain things that do not sit well with me and I do not see them as party political, I

see them as character assassination, but I will ask for Grace again in this moment, Mr. Speaker, and push on. A lot of the bad and undesirable conduct derives from the hassle in the environment out there around the activity. These increases of recent times could only have added, I mean the increased impositions, notwithstanding the increased bus fares, could only have added to that culture of hassle out there. We have got to understand the dynamics operating in the system, try to address them fully and frontally and we will stand here and commend any effort that is designed to achieve that goal, that we address these matters and this element of the sector, the private operators, owners, drivers, conductors, what have you, we address issues around them through whatever regulations we need to put enforce frontally and fully but also fairly and that is simply the position I want to represent. Maybe we ought to take out of the mix the element of hassle not only by providing for regulations that run counter to that instinct to hassle and misbehave and indulge in undesirable conduct, but perhaps we need to put into the mixed a fee structure for these operators, these drivers, which are regulated. The Transport Board driver is paid X amount of money and I am simply saying that perhaps it could be studied or could be considered that there is a flat fee that is regulated in terms of what a PSV operator, a ZR driver, a B man, however they are labelled earns and take this hassle out of the situation - when I say "Bee" I mean the letter "B" please, let me quickly come to that because I saw a quick glance from my friend from St. Michael South, I tell you our bosoms meet together -- because left as it is where the more I can pick up the faster I can turn around the more I can make especially in this time of hardship we are going to have hassle on top of hassle. We cannot simply say two three strikes you are out, we have been doing that repeatedly and what we would find is that we are recycling the same type of behavioural models all of the time. I simply want to offer this.

Mr. Speaker, my honourable friend from Christ Church West did not trouble me much so I am not going to trouble him.

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

His Honour G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I want to briefly agree with the suggestions that were made today by the Minister of Transport, Works and Maintenance. I think that the Minister has handled the situation to my mind correctly and precisely. It seems to me that when you look at what has happened over the past 30 years since this Act was passed in 2007 bringing in the Transport Authority, it is very first time that we see anything being done to fast-track the regulations which will inform and help to move this sector forward which clearly is with the Barbados Labour Party's mode of understanding public transport.

From 1955 to 2007 we recognised that public transport was essential and that there must be some level of subsidy by Government. When in 1955 the Transport Board was privatised and in 2007 when the Transport Authority was established to regulate public transport in Barbados, we were supposed to go to a different stage. Mr. Speaker, today does not permit me to properly address the whole mode of public transport in Barbados, but I just want to say that we envisaged in 2007 when the study was conducted and we brought the legislation here that indeed the whole question of bus fares and behaviour on the streets and so on would have come to an end at the time and that to some extent minimised, but we were hoping to look at how we could embrace because we were looking at an economic model and then when the Minister of Consumer Affairs, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North, brought the Fair Trading Commission into being that the Commission itself would be the entity to help to regulate public fares so that even though there must be some level of subsidy by Government to protect the most vulnerable that we would have the correct or decent fare because I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael West lamenting the fact that bus fares are high but when we compare what it is to other parts of the world, to what happens in other jurisdictions, one would see that the level of bus fares here is not high at all. If a person plans their work or plans their trips you can buy a number of tickets per week or per month or so on and this would help you.

Mr. Speaker, more to the point public transport must be properly regulated. With the whole notion of fair trading, I hope that eventually we would get there where all of these public sector entities, the Barbados Water Authority, and the transport sector could apply to put themselves in order. All of these public sector entities by 2008 were supposed to go to the Fair Trading Commission to get proper regulations and to get proper fares set. It should not be arbitrarily set by us as politicians or by the Board itself.

Mr. Speaker, these are things that we want to put in place and that is why I must say that the Government is on the right track here getting regulations in place in allowing the Transport Authority to do the work that it has to do. There must be regulations. I am not looking at a case of how we are going to penalise workers and owners because we need to also look at the positive side. They have made a contribution. Yes, in other countries they make a contribution but they have to be regulated properly.

There have to be fairness in the sector. We have to ensure that persons are able to receive transportation on demand. By 2008 we were on the right track. The last ten years have seen a decline in everything having to do with public transport, road maintenance and everything in this country and that is why we now have to now pick up as a Government to move his sector forward. I would want to

say that even though we cry that the sector is bad behaved, they provide a beautiful service in my mind and efficient to some extent that persons are able to get to back and forth to their destinations and that is not a negative but of course we have to be able to sit with these guys and say these are the norms, behaviour and so on so we have to look at the positives of how we can encourage the private sector.

Mr. Speaker, we still have a long way to go and I would want to encourage the Minister to continue to work towards regulating the sector not necessarily policing it because, I do not want to use the word policing because policing seems to be a bad word these days, but to be able to see how we can work together to improve this sector. Only this morning someone said to me that they could not get to their destination and they had to go back home and that work for one day had been lost, and we want to stop this. Persons must be able to get to their destination when they want to whether it is internally or externally so that the sector is playing a vital role.

Mr. Speaker, I want to us to understand that transportation is vital for the economic survival of a country, we must see it as that, and therefore all planners when we are planning the economy must not only think in terms of how money move, how money comes, how people work or how they save their money but also think in terms of how we can get from St. Philip to St. Michael, to Bridgetown at the time we want to get there. By 2007 we were thinking that an hour on the road is too long and that is one of the reasons why I said that the Barbados Labour Party understands public transportation. Between 1980 and 1985 when Prime Minister J.M.G.M 'Tom' Adams looked at the ABC Highway, he knew what he was looking at. How do you move from one destination to another in quick time? When we looked in 2007-2008 at the fly-overs, we were looking at how we would move persons from one destination to another in quick time. Now we have seen what the pandemic has done to our country, and we do not have much transportation on the road today but in normal times we are still spending too much time on our roads and we have to look carefully at public transportation. I do not want to speak long on this matter but I can only encourage the Ministry and the planners to revisit all of the documents that are still in the Ministry, revisit what has happened in other destinations across the world and see what planners do to move the sector forward. I can only encourage the Government to look, because I would hate to know that due to costs we have to abandon the Transport Board or we have to abandon the private sector transport. We as a Government must understand that we have a duty to subsidise public transportation in some way, and I think we need to sit down over the next couple of months or years or whatever to put our heads together to plan this sector in the same way we are planning other sectors within the economy. Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Thomas.

Hon. C. Y. FORDE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wish to laud the Honourable Minister of Transport for bringing these two Bills for us to be able to give teeth to the Transport Authority. I know that for many years as a young girl we relied on the private transport to be able to go to and fro. Our population of children going to schools, especially the crisscrossing that we now see, was not there. Fewer children had secondary education, and therefore there was no need at that time for so many buses and so many other forms of public transportation on the roads. Those few private sector-owned buses belonging to the private concessionaires were extremely reliable. Bus drivers and workers were persons who were responsible, mature persons who made sure that we got to and from our various destinations, but I know that Government took over. Bus fare was so expensive at that time, and I am referring to many years ago when I was a young girl.

I was one of the people really very happy that Government had taken over the system because it had good regulation and, of course, everything else worked out well because there was a high measure of discipline in every aspect of it. I know that a past Barbados Labour Party Administration came up with the vision and the novel idea to come up with business that would empower other Barbadians, so that families could come together to buy a minibus. First it was the 'B' bus, then the 'ZR' and so on. I thought it was great, but then I and all Barbados experienced an element of disorder and indiscipline that is not in keeping with the Barbadian culture at all. Sir, I believe that with all the good intentions things got out of hand. Some people were able to access five and six and eight permits in one person's name or in a family's name or in a group's or company's name, and the Transport Authority did not have the necessary regulations in place or the teeth to be able to treat to the matter.

Sir, I am treating to this in a very impassioned way because what I see happening on our roads is now infiltrating our general rural communities. It is really not in keeping with the culture that Barbadians have grown accustomed to, it is extremely dangerous and it is creating numerous problems for everybody in every sphere of a route, no matter where it is now. Our senior citizens cannot deal with it, I must contend, and when our young people see it, they too are getting involved in the level of indiscipline that is contrary to Barbados and the life and lifestyles which we have lived. I am therefore happy to see that some element of strengthening and some teeth and authority is being given to the Transport Authority to be able to tackle this matter. Sir, if it is not treated to as early as possible, it is going to become worse. Regulation, for me at this stage and for the Labour Party, is critical in order for us to bring the sector and an element of discipline into our

system so that people can feel safe on the roads, whether they are using the private transport system or not. I have used it in between. I still try because there are times when you have to take your vehicle somewhere and you need to get to where you are going, but I am extremely selective because I have elements of fear in me every day as to what I see on our roads.

Sir, I want to say that the system is in a mess; meaning the PSV system. I heard some of the discussion on a programme on Sunday night that even gave me more opportunities to speak with a little more authority in this respect. The law needs to be practised. The system needs to have more teeth to be able to bring those perpetrators out of the system and let us go forward with a better, smoother and more efficient transportation system. There are other countries in the Caribbean which have gone this route, and the systems are running exceptionally well. The bad behaviour, the loud music, the threats, the fights, the videos that we see and the cursing are contaminating our schoolchildren, and unfortunately there are some parishes and communities where there are no Transport Board bus routes as such, and because of our limited bus system now some communities have no transport system at all when it comes to the Transport Board which a lot of more mature people would prefer to use. However, I see our schoolchildren every day and I am going to focus, in my small intervention, on what I see on the Jackson route which really needs to be attended to as a matter of urgency.

Sir, sometimes you can see 25 to 30 children packed into those buses. You see the drivers smoking the weed, drinking the alcohol, cursing everybody and blocking the roads. All of our Members in here, I believe, are exposed to that kind of behaviour wherever they are going in this country, Sir, and it is an element that bothers me tremendously because sometimes you see some very serious accidents. People are injured and sometimes the bus is a bus that is off-route. Honourable Minister, I have given up now treating to the Transport Authority because I would have been seen as a pest, but I do not mind because I am going to stand up for what is correct and proper. I come in here and make my little jokes and so on, but I can get very serious on matters where the indiscipline is so rife that people have to jump out of the road and skip out of the road in order to save their lives. They snake on the road, and that Warrens Junction is going to cause quite a few people to be seriously injured or to lose their lives, because outside of the Warrens Polyclinic, which is now the Eunice Gibson Polyclinic, the buses stop there for inordinate periods of time. Anyone leaving or entering into the community that is to the east of the bus-stop between the polyclinic and the same bus-stop to take you into Bridgetown cannot get out from their homes. There are clinics in there beyond the polyclinic, where people have to go to get their various blood tests done and so on, and it is one of the most dangerous areas. They do not respect

pedestrian crossings. I do not know what form of education has to be put into place for people to know a pedestrian crossing is for people who are crossing the street and therefore they should be able to do it freely, but when buses, especially the 'ZRs' and the 'B' buses, are stopping on the crossing at Warrens and soliciting passengers, it is wrong. I cannot say it in any other form but to tell everybody in Barbados how angry and upset I am. I have a problem Mr. Speaker Sir with the speeding and the accidents. Yes, attorneys at law will get you off. Nothing wrong with that, that is their training and their responsibility but why must the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and other institutions be saddled with people with critical injuries and then the services that the taxpayers are paying for, sometimes they have to go and wait in the Casualty for hours because of an accident of that nature. It is wrong and we need to have it corrected so I am in full support of this particular validation for the Transport Authority. I believe that we need to put more officers who have the responsibility, I don't remember what you call them but they wear cream tops and a brown pants or shirt. Whenever they are at their rounds, junction inspectors; whenever they are at the junctions, you see elements of order. Why as black people, cultured people as we are supposed to be, must we have a police officer or some authority of that wear for us to do what is right when we are impacting on the lives of everybody? There are people who lose their employment when they have to sit in those buses, wherever they are in Barbados to wait ... and then when they see a Transport Board bus coming, then to scratch off and stop in front of it. All of us know and I believe it is something that needs to be brought to the fore. I spoke about the ZR and the PSV's. Once I was here in Parliament and by the time I got to Jackson I was cursed. Why? I am not afraid because anybody who knows me and anybody who should stand up for what is right and proper will speak out because it is only a matter of time. We see it every day. A little girl lost her hand in the River bus-stand as we call it, she got her hand cut off because of foolishness again. Mr. Speaker Sir I am here very upset. I just want to say that the court system, and I am thankful to the Honourable Attorney General, and the efforts this Government is doing, for getting more judges and magistrates and putting systems in place, for the fast-tracking of those hundreds of cases, no ZR man or minibus driver should be going to our courts with a hundred reports, what is happening in this place? And then we want to know how the youths get so. Well the youth get so because those persons who should be treating to matters of this nature are just overlooking it or, they are talking to the bus owners who are people in authority but may happen to be high society people who are not treating to the matter. Now, finally, I agree that workers in the system should be given a flat salary instead of having to hustle to be able to earn extra money to earn good money to carry home. Every last one of them Mr. Speaker, man or woman, have got children of their own and therefore we need them to get enough of a salary or wage to take home to feed their

family instead of having to be all over the place hustling to make an extra dollar bill. The owner says you have to bring home 500 dollars at the end of the day and this causes them to be moving in a reckless way in order to do it and it seems as though the Authority has no teeth. I have refrained from sending information to the Authority. I have taken videos, I have taken conversations, I have written official letters, I have sent numbers of vehicles. Yet I am seeing more and more on a daily basis, minibuses and ZRs that should not be on the route where I live. Four or five have been given permission but sometimes you may see as many as ten of them plying the route, driving recklessly, picking up passengers, dropping them down, not conforming to the COVID protocols, doing as they like and people seem to think that it is fun. The other thing is they are not going to the extent of the routes that they have been given permission to travel. And so many of them may take the folk of Lion Castle...??? The people of St. Thomas voted for me resoundingly to represent their interests and I am saddened to know that the people from Lion Castle have to walk nearly three miles after they exit the bus by the post office in St. Thomas, have to go through the hot sun, if they are ill, if they are pregnant, if they are disabled when the route says that any bus going to Sturges must go to Lion Castle, come through Highland, come through Welchman Hall main road, go through 1st Avenue, come through 2nd Avenue, go through Bryans and Lukes, come through to Welchman Hall Main Road onto Harrison's Cave, go to Sturges onto Vault Road and come back to town. But that is not happening Sir. I am hurting and I am expressing it here because it is pointless me now raising these matters with the Transport Authority that are so critical when unfortunately I sent a video and the person was given a notice from the Transport Authority to be suspended from January 2020 for the entire month. Yet for every day of January 2020 it was never pulled from the road, maybe because this validation bill was not in place. Mr. Speaker Sir, I shall continue to look out for the interest not only of St. Thomas people Sir, but Barbados and Barbadians in general, to be able to make sure that people conform with the laws, and I agree with what the Minister and Honourable member for Christ Church West said about the strikes that they should have and if they make the three strikes, you should take away their licences or the permit or whatever. Mr. Speaker Sir, there are some of them that are driving around with fake ZR numbers and one of them that I wrote a report on, it was found to be so, so it means I was not lying, my photographs were not wrong. You could see the bigger frame of what would have been on the Zr's before and another one is over it. We must get serious in this country to protect and save people's lives, to let them get to their work on time, to let them get to their various destinations and to stop breaching laws and rules and regulations. It is not happening and I am so happy to be at the age I am at because I don't have to tolerate it at this point in time once the Lord spares my life. I believe Mr. Speaker, I have been told, that the Transport Board has to

be an integral part of a public service for people. And the Honourable member for Christ Church West made the point that they must protect the most vulnerable. There are some people who have not got the necessary resources to improve their quality of life and so the senior citizens must be protected as well as those from the special needs category. A service has to be made available for them. I do not know of any country in the world that has not got a public transport system where the state has a special provision for them to travel to and fro. I close Mr. Speaker on this issue of indiscipline when it comes to going off-route, when it comes to running through red lights, when it comes to the wearing of the uniform, when it comes to the drinking and driving, driving and using the cell phone -- all of that is still going on and it is escalating. I agree and strongly support these two bills, the Transport Authority Validation Bills and I ask that the infractions when they take place are dealt with speedily to save lives, to give people a measure of hope, to take out some of the fear, and for an example to be set for our young drivers and young children that they know when living in a society they have got to conform with rules and regulations if we are to be the disciplined, productive society that we should be. And therefore Mr. Speaker, it is with those comments that I would wish to highly commend the Bill and to let us go forward and move our transportation system out of the gutter because we are not accustomed to it and it is creating too many challenges and causing families to suffer with death, to suffer with serious injury for the insurance companies to be paying out large amounts of unnecessary funds and for the creation of chaos in some aspects and communities in our country that we can do well without. I wish to thank you, Sir, for giving me the time.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I can see that you spoke with a degree of passion. I just want to remind you that in the adjudicative process there is something known as the due process of the law, so while I appreciate the passion that you spoke with and that there might be infractions there is something known that you subscribe to the rule of law in relation to due process of the law.

Asides.

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

Dr. the Hon. W. F. DUGUID: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First let me thank all Honourable Members who spoke. In the past I would say on This Side and on That Side, but there is only but there is only one on That Side, but still, I want ...

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. W. F. DUGUID: We are all in this together, but let me thank all Honourable Members who

spoke. First let me reassure the Honourable Member for St. Michael West that, yes, in fact, I cannot even suggest that I would be able to look into the future and see what the will of the Cabinet will be but I can tell you that we are very far in discussions into what we call the Mass Transit Authority and that is going to be coming to the Cabinet very shortly and then, once we get an agreement that would be coming to the Parliament of Barbados to be able to bring a better structure to transport within the country.

With respect to the subsidy that you asked about. In fact, if you were to look at the Estimates of this year, you would in fact see that the transport sector got a \$31 million subsidy last year and the approved estimates were for a \$15 million subsidy this year so subsidies are a definite part of the transport sector and that would be something that we are looking at because obviously it is a cost that everybody has to carry out of their tax dollars and it is something that we are looking at. With respect to the onerous question that I got up on a point of elucidation, in fact, if you had a closer look at the Bill itself, I do not mean to be disparaging, and the actually Bill itself, when you look at it as presented to Parliament, in fact, does say what the subsequent convictions would be relative not only to the license driver or conductor but 23A the offender may suspend the permit of an owner/operator of a vehicle. We recognise that for a long time the brunt of the infractions were carried by the driver, but there were some infractions that related to the owner and the regulations will capture the owners as separate.

In respect to people being off-route that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas spoke about, we recognise that this is a problem, not only for you in St. Thomas but the Honourable Member for Christ Church East suffers tremendously by people going into Thyme Bottom, Parish Land, and so on. I am not seeing him here, but he suffers tremendously by people cutting the route short. I recognise this is a significant problem. People being off-route, people trying to go through side roads to beat the traffic and all sorts of things so we have required a (Global Positioning System (GPS) mechanism to be placed on all vehicles going forward and that will be a part of the regulation. You must be required to carry a GPS system as part of your regulations.

The Honourable Member also spoke about whether we had only chosen certain people to join the TAP programme during the Covid-19 period. I first want to enlighten the Honourable Member that we had asked anybody and I met with all of the BT people in the past. I met with all of the ZM people, the church people actually who had tour buses in past to ask them if they wanted to come in and provide transport to the sector. That was before Covid-19 and since Covid-19 all of those applications and all of those opportunities for people to come in to the programme were still open and we had

seven BT tour bus people who have actually come in and are providing service to the programme and 25 ZM people. They have, in fact, started to provide the service, they were trained by the Barbados Transport Board, I met someone recently who told me that he saw quite a few of them in the St. Joseph area and these were the BT people who are actually providing the service to assist with the Barbados Tourism Authority. This is because we recognise that when the 60 per cent restriction was put in place there were a lot of people who would not be able to access transportation so we brought in these people to help to provide that transport. Whether that practice will continue, we will assess and see what is require because we want to get everybody to and fro and transported.

We have also seen in the Press that we have also looked for RFP for somebody to provide a school bus-service. By providing a separate school bus service - and that RFP I actually saw last night -- which would take the school bus service out of the Barbados Transport Board realm and put it for independent person providing it in collaboration with the transport Board and then that would mean that other buses that are normally used to provide the school bus service will be available for the routes. We are trying all sorts of things to provide a good, safe, effective and reliable transport for all of the people of Barbados. With those very few words, Mr. Speaker, - and I will do them one at a time -- I would ask that this Bill, the Transport Authority Validation Bill be read a second time.

Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

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

COMMITTEE

Madam CHAIRMAN: This House is now in Committee.

Clause 1 -- 2 inclusive were called and passed.

On the motion of Dr. the Hon. W. F. DUGUID seconded by Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY, Madam 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 Dr. the Hon. W. F. DUGUID seconded by Hon. K. D. M. HUMPHREY the Bill

was read a third time and passed and cited as the Transport Authority Validation Bill, 2020.

ORDER No. 12

TRANSPORT AUTHORITY (VALIDATION) BILL, 2020

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

Dr. the Hon. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

I beg to second that, Sir.

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

On the motion of Dr. the Hon. W. F. DUGUID, seconded by ...the House resolved itself into Committee, Dr. S. E. BROWNE in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

MADAM CHAIRMAN: This House is in Committee.

Clauses 1 -- 2 inclusive were called and passed.

On the motion of Dr. the Hon. W. F. DUGUID, seconded by ..., MADAM 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 Dr. the Hon. W. F. DUGUID, seconded by ...the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Transport Authority (Validation) Act, 2020.

ORDER No. 14

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE UNDER SECTION 3 OF THE SPECIAL LOANS ACT, CAP. 105, THE BORROWING BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SUM OF BBD 2 493 271 FROM SCOTIA BANK (BARBADOS) LIMITED TO REPAY AN EXISTING OVERDRAFT FACILITY HELD BY THE CARIBBEAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

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

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As you are aware, Sir, upon coming to office the Government announced a comprehensive domestic and as well as an external debt restructuring of which the central Government took responsibility for a number of debts and monies owed or owing by a number of State-owned enterprises and therefore the Resolution before the Chamber this afternoon is one of the aspects related in this instance the overdraft facility of the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation. Permit me, Sir, just to read the Resolution for the record of the Chamber before I get into the particular substance of the matter.

Sir, the Resolution reads:

“WHEREAS by virtue of section 2 of the Special Loans Act, Cap. 105, the Government is authorised from time to time to borrow from another government, any bank, corporation, company or other institution sums of money not exceeding in the aggregate BBD 2,500,000,000 on such terms as may be agreed upon between the Government and the lender of any such sum of money;

AND WHEREAS by section 3 of the said Act it is provided that any money borrowed under the authority of this Act shall be appropriated and applied to such purposes as Parliament may approve by resolution and that such money and any interest payable thereon is charged upon the general revenues and assets of Barbados;

AND WHEREAS the Government considers it necessary to borrow the sum of BBD 2,493,271 from Scotiabank (Barbados) Limited to repay an existing overdraft facility held by the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation;

AND WHEREAS the said sum of BBD 2,493,271 is borrowed on the terms and conditions contained in the Commitment Letter, the main provisions of which are set out in the Schedule;

AND WHEREAS the said sum of BBD 2,493,271 is within the authorised borrowing limit given to the Government under section 2 of the said Act;

BE IT RESOLVED therefore that Parliament approve the borrowing of the said sum of BBD 2,493,271 from Scotiabank (Barbados) Limited to repay an existing overdraft facility held by the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation on the terms and conditions contained in the Commitment Letter, the main provisions of which are set out in the Schedule.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Government came to office in 2018 and immediately embarked on the comprehensive debt restructuring of both the domestic and the external commercial debt and the Government assumed the

responsibility centrally on behalf of a number of State-owned enterprises, approximately some \$718 million in loans held by state-owned enterprises, which were exchanged as part of the new Government of Barbados Securities.

In accordance with the terms negotiated, overdraft facilities were excluded in the domestic debt exchange and so therefore we felt that it was important that in order to assist some of the State-owned enterprises, notwithstanding the central Government assuming the responsibility for the debt, that structurally they needed to go through a number of reforms. As you know, Sir, under the Barbados Economic Recovery and Transformation Programme a number of State-owned enterprises, of which the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation is a part, have gone through a series of reforms to be able to put these institutions on a much more financially viable path but certainly being able to improve the quality of services they are offering to the public. Sir, we proposed then that the overdraft facility be closed and converted to new loans which obviously would be serviced by the Government so in this context we sought to address the overdraft facility held by the CBC, the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation, with Scotiabank.

The truth is, Sir, is that this facility is meant to be paid over the course of 18 months. Based on the term sheet, which is in the Schedule, the amount as I said before is \$2 493 271 and would be paid over the course of 18 months which is the term of the loan. Sir, the loan shall be paid in 18 monthly blended principle-and-interest payments of BDS\$144 062.08 each month, and the balance of the loan together with all accrued interest and amounts outstanding shall be paid on or before the date, which is 18 months from the date of the initial advance. Sir, the interest rate on this particular facility we are negotiating is actually five per cent, and interest is payable monthly and calculated on the basis of the calendar year for the actual number of days elapsed, divided by 365.

Sir, the reality of the situation is that when we came to office -- just to give a little bit of history -- the interest on the overdraft facility that has been renegotiated was around ten per cent. Just to give a little bit of history on this particular facility, this specific account was opened in August of 1972 at the Bank of Nova Scotia. The overdraft facility in 2006 was increased from \$1 million to \$3 million, which seemed natural in response to the growth of the business, Sir. Then in 2009, the overdraft facility then was increased again by \$2 million to \$5 million to fund obviously an anticipated increase in business. Sir, the reality, as you know, is that the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation has been operating over its inception primarily by being able to source material from outside. As you know, Sir, based on intellectual property you have to pay the appropriate royalties with respect to that in order to provide content certainly to the Barbadian public. As we

would have seen over the years, there has been an expansion in terms of where the MCTV component would have moved from STV to MCTV, and while Barbadians would have subscribed to that initially the liberalisation of that market space would have seen new entrants into that space. Certainly, over the last ten years. TV on Demand has become a much more prevalent option for Barbadians as they then increased their access to the Internet, and therefore I can watch TV whenever I want as opposed to waiting for the Sunday Matinee on Sunday afternoons like when we were little boys.

Therefore, the Corporation has not always kept pace with what has been happening from a technological perspective, and certainly in the media business one has to be particularly aggressive and agile in an environment driven by competition and being able to produce content, which then can be priced accordingly for the appropriate distribution to the market. Sir, I do not know a lot about media. I do not know a lot about production but we all know that a majority of what the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation does in the context of what the public sees.... We know that it has a lot of radio stations. We know that it also has the MCTV component, and we also know that it has Channel 8 as its primary lines of business. The truth is, Sir, there is a private entity that when one compares it to CBC -- notwithstanding the full backing of Government over the years -- it does similar things with the exception of producing for Channel 8. I remember as a boy watching Channel 3 before it went to Channel 9 and then became 8. Sir, the reality is that while one can understand why you would move from one platform to another, we have seen in the space other competitors deliver similar services to the public competitively, which then obviously would have potentially taken market share away from what CBC would have been able to garner. When I was a little boy the only thing to watch was either CBC or some tapes from the video shop, and the reality is that this too has changed because as we know, Sir, nobody rents tapes anymore for the most part, and I think that certainly in the last 15 years nobody has really rented tapes in the way that we used to when we were growing up.

Sir, these are some of the things which the public understands happens obviously in an environment where you started from cassette tapes. First, it was cassette tapes which you stuck into your radio and you dubbed off a few tunes or whatever you wanted off the radio. Then VCR (video cassette recorders) came into the mix, Sir, and therefore you would then go to the video shops to be able to watch content perhaps other than what CBC was offering. Then came DVDs, Sir, which allowed for a much greater level of storage, and then, as I said, in the last 15 to 20 years with the increase of Internet penetration and access to global television, we have Netflix and Amazon and a whole slew of options available now that we did not have when we were growing up, Sir. CBC has not

necessarily changed its structure to respond to what has been a very aggressive form of competition, not just domestically with the other entities and players who have come into the market and have not only been competing directly with the lines of business, with the exception of the free-to-air -- I say this in a very loose sense, Sir, because it is not free -- which is the only space in Barbados in which CBC operates, but it comes at a cost. In all of the other lines of business there is strict competition. Not only is there strict competition in that space, but other entities are also offering additional services on top of that.

Therefore, when you put all of that into the mix, Sir, and no significant investment is made to upgrade technologies over the years, while we would have been spending money at CBC we were not necessarily spending money over the years in terms of improving the underlying information technology (IT) infrastructure that CBC was operating under. Therefore, what we have found is that CBC, while still providing a credible service to the public, is doing so at a cost that really and truly should be done at a fraction of what it is if investments were made in respect of being able to upgrade the underlying technology. Sir, the truth is that notwithstanding this -- let me say this for the benefit of those who are keenly listening -- the Government is still committed to ensuring that there is access to news and information, and certainly in the 21st Century it is critical. It is even more critical now in the midst of this pandemic, as you would realise, that people have access to information. Therefore, the Government is still committed to ensuring that people get access to credible information which they can trust, especially in an environment in which we are operating where there is access to all kinds of things and where the slightest thing can be distorted within a nanosecond on social media, Sir. There is nothing that we can put on any channel that could potentially pull what has gotten out there so quickly, and therefore whilst all of the media in Barbados operate in the social media environment because they have to, and I do know that CBC has the capacity to fill that space, but there are always still, Sir, the traditional avenues that once delivered appropriately Sir and once properly funded and staffed that we can see a better use perhaps of the resources to be able to move forward and so the restructuring of this particular overdraft facility for CBC, as I said was part of the restructuring. When the Government came to office, as you know Sir there were headlines prior to our coming to office that CBC was in debt by over 100 million dollars which nobody could really understand, Sir, how that could even be possible for an institution of that nature, could be allowed over time to increase a set of debt that clearly became unsustainable because, as you would appreciate Sir, notwithstanding the performance of MCTV which was the operation that provided the cash to CBC, that even though MCTV was the underlying business-line allowing CBC to run on a day to day basis as a result of the subscriptions, that so long as you had such competition in the market Sir,

and the competition has been stiff adding services beyond what CBC offers, and therefore it would have been clear that CBC would not have been able to sustain itself in the current structure, or the previous structure and composition, given where the cash flows were going. Now Sir, a part of that debt relates to the pension fund and I will not get into that specific element today because notwithstanding all that was happening over the years, the pension fund as it relates to CBC, was not appropriately or adequately funded, the corporation was running deficits for a significant amount of time to the point where at one stage the corporation was running in the vicinity of 15 million to 16 million dollar-a-year deficits for the last three years which is inconceivable Sir with respect to good order and good management of any institution, and therefore when we came to office, as part of the BERT plan Sir, we undertook a series of reforms at the Corporation and whilst I can say to the Chamber, the reforms did not necessarily go as far as we would have liked, the operational deficit at CBC today is just over half a million dollars a month which is still high with respect to where everything else is, and as you know Sir, there will be further reforms to be undertaken at CBC because it now has to come fully Sir into the 21st century in order to right-size itself in order to being able to become self-sufficient. The truth is Sir is that there are elements in the country, from a production perspective that whatever form or structure CBC may have going forward, it will have to be capable to accommodate the content that is being produced in the country as an outlet with respect to not only reaching people in Barbados Sir, but certainly on satellite TV and a host of other outlets that potentially CBC can play a role with respect to unleashing a lot of talent that is in Barbados and that is something that I would love to see coming out of any proposed restructuring of the CBC to change the underlying mechanism through which they supply services to the public. And so Sir, let be just state for absolute clarity, and these are CBC's statistics, the cumulative annual deficit Sir, jumped from 73 million dollars in 2008 to \$100 517 606 dollars by 2017. Now, under the programme, the Barbados Economic Recovery Transformation Programme (BERT), the Government, CBC notwithstanding, across a number of state agencies Sir, engaged in an exercise where a number of obligations were written off across agencies. So you had a situation where some of the state agencies may have owed CBC while CBC may have owed somebody else, the Barbados Water Authority for example or the SSA, or a whole host of inter-agency balances, so when we came to office with respect to the debt restructuring we looked at which Government departments owed other Government departments money, and we simply wrote those off because if I owe you and you owe me and everything is in the same pot essentially Sir, it really does not make any sense all of us carrying the same headache with you trying to collect from me and I trying to collect from you, so therefore we settled that and so at the ending of the fiscal year of 2019 it

meant that the debt for CBC was just above \$41 million. This was after we cleaned out all of the inter-agency stuff that was what was left, with respect to CBC.

So the resolution here today whilst it speaks to the overdraft facility we had to deal with that big stock of debt, which has been as you know, based on the domestic debt restructuring, the debt Validation Bill that came, the Debt Holder Bill that came in 2018 Sir, which would be rolled into one of the instruments with respect to what was issued as new debt and in a sense all of the state-owned enterprises now have a clean slate with respect to debt except that obviously Government has taken the responsibility and having taken that responsibility, of course you know Sir we passed the Finance Management Bill and people always like to say that they are autonomous, but as you know Sir, if you want to be autonomous you know you have to be able to pay your own Bills and therefore having taken over a series of obligations on behalf of State-owned enterprises, that naturally meant, Sir, that transfers that would happen on a normal basis would not happen because you need discipline in order to be able to move forward. We have sought to put, from a financial perspective, the best solution in place with respect to the structure of CBC financially, as it stands but now the next phase is for the other reforms now to take place to ensure that the operations now of CBC can move forward with respect to being able to operate truly in the 21st century with 21st century tools in order to be able to compete with all of the other entities out there who are investing in the 21st century. I believe that over the course of the next few months, certainly the public, once everything goes well with respect to the results of the RFP that has been put out, that through that process Barbadians will be able to see and hear what will be outcome of those deliberations with respect to being able to bring CBC into the 21st century. Sir, I must say to you that, and I cannot take my seat without indicating, even though I said it before, that the CBC has been, through its Multi-choice Television (MCTV) Division which has been the cash flow for CBC for some time, those revenues clearly have been declining because as I indicated, Sir, the competition out there is actually very, very strong and certainly with the advent of video on demand, you have YouTube, you have a whole host of services out there that Barbadians can stay in their homes at any time and watch what they want, when they want. You can pause it and go to the toilet and come back. You can do that with live television except that CBC does not have that digital platform to allow us to pause a programme and go and do what I have to do and come back and do it, therefore, that is the kind of pressure that the Corporation is under and they need to respond. That is not the only reason but certainly, Sir, the subscriptions with respect to MCTV have been declining over the years and certainly we have seen a significantly decline over the last five years in terms of the subscriptions to MCTV and as a result, as you could imagine, Sir, if the subscriptions drop,

it means the revenue drops and when the revenue drops, it means that those operational deficits that I was referring to earlier means that they are under pressure, therefore, it is important that certainly I think with being a new way of doing things in terms of being more efficient and being a little more entrepreneurial, Sir, because we cannot sit back as a State-owned Enterprise and just assume that the taxpayers will cover you without having the business plan in place to be able to compete in a 21st century because you essentially are not even on the tract. You are not even prepared to get on your mark to be able to compete with other and the truth is that the CBC has to go through a process now where that is done such that better service can be provided and I believe, Sir, that under a new framework that can be done and it will take some time, and it will take some investment therefore, I really do look forward to seeing a new look Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation that can actually do some wonderful things for exposing a lot of talent in Barbados.

I would not go much further into the details with respect to CBC but I know that, Sir, we have an obligation, certainly in a small society, to ensure that persons have access to credible information and whilst I know that tangentially the Government has access to, I think it is 10 per cent of all airtime out there. Whilst that is so, we are still pretty much at the mercy of persons of determining when they will play or give access to that 10 per cent. We, and when I say we now, this is Government, and I know that the Barbados Government Information Service provides a very good services with respect to what it offers to the public, its engagements with the various media houses and what have you and in that vein there have been using with a lot more regularity, the social media component but as you know, Sir, social media is not the only platform that is out there and we do have to still ensure that we engage a full-court press to ensure that we can reach the segments of the community where they are because not everybody has a smart phone, not everybody has Instagram, not everybody has a Facebook account which, contrary to what people may believe, not everybody has access to all of these things therefore there is still a responsibility for Government to ensure that persons can have access to information so in whatever form that comes in, I think it is safe to say that I can assure the public that was still, some element of that would still be in place going forward in order to ensure that persons can have access to information. It is how you may access it, that may be the issue in terms of whatever media that is used but whatever is used it has to be capable of reaching the widest cross-section of persons in the country.

Sir, that is, in essence, the Resolution before the Chamber which is to restructure the overdraft facility for the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation with the Bank of Nova Scotia which is an extension of the domestic debt restructuring and I do believe, Sir, the restructuring of this would allow for a little ease with respect to the CBC in the

context of the total monies that were already rolled into the Domestic Debt Exchange therefore this should provide a little more certainty with respect to the financial operations of the entity.

With those few introductory words, Sir, I am obliged to you.

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

Bishop J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I must begin by saying that I will not support ...

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

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Yes. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

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

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Michael West, please continue now.

Bishop J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, I will not support this Resolution before the House for a few simple but I think very important reasons, some of which are philosophical, but inherently important to how democracy plays out in Barbados, but I will begin on something perhaps which is not so profound.

I am looking a copy of the Auditor General's report which suggests to me that auditors were unable to confirm or verify by any alternative references or means ...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, can you make reference to the page ...?

Bishop J. J. S. ATHERLEY: It is Auditor General's Report just laid here and it is at Section 5.54 of Chapter 5 on Page 91 which has to do with the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) which states: The Corporation was issued a Disclaimer of Opinion as the Auditors were unable to confirm or verify by alternative means accounts receivable of \$2.8 million at the 31st of March, 2019. The Resolution is asking of the House that we approve Government's borrowings of \$2.4 million in the interest of the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation. A statement from the Auditor General's Office says there is a disclaimer of audit opinion with respect to CBC's accounts of upon March 31st in that year under review which reflects no proper accounting for receivables stated to be \$2.8 million. That is more and the Resolution is asking of

us for Government to have leave to acquire through Scotia Bank to help, as the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central put it, restructure the overdraft facility up at CBC.

I cannot, especially in light of much of that which the Auditor General has said in this Report, which we would have plenty of time to look into, support this. Much ado has been made about a \$1.45 billion inquiry by the Auditor General's in respect to the Barbados Water Authority and that has to be looked into. It signals very poor practices and I will make my language no stronger than that at this time on behalf of the Barbados Water Authority. I know that we can compare or contrast the amounts and say that we are talking about chalk and cheese but the principle is the same. If we had a State operated entity that is not properly accounting for its operations, then we have to take pause. When we are faced with a circumstance that Parliament is being asked by the Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance via this Resolution to support this access to funding and loan through Scotia Bank to restructure the overdraft mechanisms at CBC, then I have to stop and say I will and cannot not support it unless we can get some clarification.

I can go on and I will not take much time on that because it goes on the next couple of lines to make reference to another \$700 000 for which there is again a Disclaimer of Opinion and this has to do with accounting for inventory, and the auditors were unable to verify with respect to the inventory to the value of \$700 000, so I am not going to move forward operating blind not knowing the source of these concerns or the cause for these concerns and vote in approval of this Resolution.

Now, I have to ask because the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central did not say that the State operated entities are operating with a clean bill of health and that that must be the case but I do not know he told us what is the level of indebtedness to overseas programme suppliers currently by the CBC? I raise that because I saw it raised in a public arena by interests overseas that Barbados was defaulting on its obligation to pay the necessary liabilities and royalties with respect to programming that it was using from overseas sources. I have heard nothing said with reference to the current level of indebtedness on the part of the Corporation with respect to its overseas creditors who supply programmes and other content for its use. The inference could be drawn and certainly the implication was given that the entity we call CBC is basically pirating and that is a reputation that that we were developing but that is not the charge which I lay. I am simply suggesting that is what was put into the public's domain by interests overseas and it would be good therefore to know the level of indebtedness with respect to the Corporation vis-à-vis overseas creditors and suppliers of programmes and other content.

I would also like to ask, and I do not know if the Minister is in a position to state... The Honourable Minister with primary responsibility for this portfolio does not sit in this House, she sits in an Honourable seat in the Other Place, but perhaps someone here holding a brief for that Ministry can speak to this. What about the members who have been laid off at the Corporation in the last two years because I happened to know that this Administration held a certain view that the Corporation was over populated in terms of its employment complement and that even when you compared it to other bigger and larger entities, that still held true, that there were too many people... That is not what I am saying, that is what this Administration said, that was its view, that there are too many people employed at CBC, so I am asking in the last two years how many of them have been severed, laid off, cut, reduced or eliminated or what have you in terms of their jobs. In that regard and with reference to that how many persons have been newly contracted at the Corporation and for what services have they been contracted as in persons like yourself, Mr. Speaker, I see you are smiling and I am learning a little bit of the art of raising queries. I am suggesting I need to hear how many have been laid off since the Administration took that view that the employment levels were oversubscribed and how many have been taken on contract in the last two years and for what services.

Mr. Speaker, I think those things are important. They may constitute nuisance value in the eyes of some but I think Barbadians want to know if Government is going to continue to borrow to address financial gaps at the CBC what exactly is going on. I am not saying that if the operations of the Corporation are in such a state, all other things being equal and in proper place, that the Corporation should not be from time to time subsidised by Government's assistance but if we have queries and everything else does not seem to be properly in place, I am suggesting that I cannot comfortably vote in support of this.

Mr. Speaker, let us get a little bit more to the philosophical or ideological. I watched on my TV Channel 8 part of a programme a few Sunday nights ago, the People's Business intended to give a two-year review of this Administration's performance. I really felt a little bit of a sense of shame as to the composition of the panel and the focus of the programme. I mean, if you are going to review a two-year performance of a party in the office of Government, you cannot bring to the panel exclusively three persons who have either served or are serving currently in the Cabinet of the same Administration. You cannot have them attended by a fourth who is known to look with an eye of favour upon the Administration, especially in his very senior years, but that was what I saw. I saw earlier that afternoon a panel discussion among some young people, and there were obviously a number of people there with mixed views and mixed party affiliation,

clearly, but in the night with a panel more adult and more experienced reviewing the two-year performance of this Administration, I saw four persons, three of whom lived in the bosom of this Administration.

Asides.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Three of whom still live in the bosom of this Administration, and one who has an affinity for the Administration. I thought that this was grossly unfair, and I thought to myself, “Why not a voice from the Democratic Labour Party. Why not a voice from Solutions Barbados? Why not a voice from the United Progressive Party?” I did not have to ask with respect to the (PDP) People’s Party for Democracy and Development. I understood why, but I wondered why not a voice from one of the other three parties. I thought further to myself, ‘What does this Administration, for all of its boasting, for all of its competence, have to fear in this Honourable House?’ The configuration politically, party-wise, is 29 to one. In terms of debate, Mr. Speaker, it is 28 to one. In the Other Place, it is 12 against nine. For debating purposes, I would like to think it is 11 against nine. I am sure about here. I am not so sure about in the Other Place. The numbers I go with are 28 to one up here and 12 to nine in the Other Place. That is 40 against ten, Mr. Speaker. What does this Administration have to fear by allowing for other opinions to be presented? What does this Administration have to fear by allowing for its prominent voices to be cross-examined or interrogated by alternate opinion? You tell me, Mr. Speaker.

In Barbados in 2020 with Parliament so configured as it is, with the Government as popular as it thinks it is, and in many people’s minds as it actually is, what then is the problem that you are reviewing and you can only find comfort in having opinions expressed which you know will be in keeping with the message you are trying to market? I tried to call that programme, Mr. Speaker, and nobody answered me.

Asides.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Not a fellow answered when I called, and I called about five or six times and as the programme opened to call-ins.

Asides.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: No answer. I resolved next morning that I would be making some more calls and I called, and I called more than one person, so you cannot identify what I am going to say with anybody in particular. Do you know what I was told, Mr. Speaker? That was our view too that the unbalanced perspective which was given was wrong. Do you know what I was told? The person who said this said that they felt a sense of

a little bit of shame when they recognised the quality of the earlier youth programme when compared to the one in the night. Mr. Speaker, I was told, ‘We feel the same way you do. We felt that there should have been better balance, and we wanted a couple of other persons who would represent an alternative opinion, but it went right up the line.’ I will not, in the interest of decency, say how far up the line I was told it went. I cannot swear that it is true, but I was told that it went up the line, up the line, and ultimately the instruction was that the panel was to be so comprised as it was. In 2020 that is bad. With Parliament configured as it is and the Government carrying the mandate which it does, that is not only bad. It is wrong. I said I would address this in a formal letter because I want equal time for opposition voices. I can speak for me. I want equal time. I said I would put it in writing and I did request access on the same subject for the PDP, and I got a response which I will not share here. Needless to say, I have seen no invitation, I have seen no furtherance of the matter, but that is the Barbados in which we live.

Sir, I say this, and those who sit here in their right minds better consider it, because the CBC as a broadcast entity is being overused by the Administration currently to its advantage and to the disadvantage of other opinion in Barbados. The point I really want to make is that those who sit in this Chamber as a part of this Administration perhaps needs to realise as well that even they, some of them internally, are being marginalised from access. There was once a time when I would see on our screens every night on CBC four or five or six or seven Ministers of Government. Nowadays I do not see that. Some of you are being sidelined. It is not your voice that is being amplified. It is not your image that is being embellished. It is that of others. It is that of others, so that CBC is being used as a mouthpiece for marketing and putting out the message of the Government, and when I speak to the message of the Government, I am really localising that to the embodiment of one or two people because some of you are becoming just as excluded as the rest of us. Yes, we all appear there from time to time, but you people are bright people; you went to the best schools, and colleges and universities in Barbados, and as you know it is not only showing a man’s face, it is his posture, use of technical stuff to enhance or to deflate or distort images; it is more with the positioning of a person in the item lines, it is what you allow a person to be heard saying, sometimes the least important; it is when you camouflage and cover the message which is most pertinent, the things that would cause Barbadians to stand up and question the quality of performance of the Government. There are some in the media fraternity...

Asides.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Look, don’t get me stirred. We have now come to a place where in Barbados, the power of a Government in control over CBC

is such that we are seeing often hour often eclipsed so that the messages of the Government, the ones it wants marketed can be seen and heard. We are seeing long speeches and addresses and if they are not long enough they are then repeated and repeated more than once. You can sit there in your discomfort and not publicly in any way show visible acknowledgement that this is true, but you are intelligent people and you know that it is true. All Administrations have complained over time, all political parties have complained over time about the use of CBC and the Administration of the day and its abuse of power with respect to that entity. I think we have now reached a stage in Barbados where it is the worst I have ever seen. The Honourable Members know that. That is a reality. There are some in the media fraternity who will tell you that political pressure is the thing which most influences news output in Barbados. That is documented, there are several who will tell you that if you speak to them quietly; then there is the power of the advertising dollar, so that if business entity A does not like a story, it does not come; it is discarded or it is withdrawn. And if Ministers make gaffs, calls can be made to ensure that those gaffs are not carried. I know, because media people tell me what they have to go through.

What am I talking about? You think I am talking about CBC, Mr. Speaker? I am talking about democracy, I am talking about the threats to democracy; I am talking about the power and the danger it poses to democratic practices in Barbados, that is what I am talking about, not CBC. It is a bigger issue than CBC. CBC is a struggling entity, financially and otherwise that seeks to play a viable and positive function. But it is subject to political pressures and to the influence of advertising dollars; not only CBC, the regular private media, and I am saying Mr. Speaker therefore that I am talking about democracy in Barbados and the manipulation of the media to serve narrow political ends or the narrow ends of select business interests in Barbados. That is the reality that we face. It is true, and I don't accuse the wider media fraternity of this, but it is true Mr. Speaker, you know them and I know them, they are some that are very unprofessional and you know how their lack of professionalism is made most evident? Not in the bias of what they say or write, it is made most evident when you make reference to their career moves. Are you with me Mr. Speaker? The greater evidence is to be seen when you observe where they move from and where they move to and how fast they move. That is the greater evidence. Lack of professionalism. What am I talking about Mr. Speaker? I am not talking about unprofessional people, I am talking about democracy and the media's role in preserving democracy. That is what I am talking about. CBC may be operated and managed by the Administration but CBC is owned by the people of Barbados, not by the Government of the day and the manipulating fingers and the power of political pressure and influence wherever and however it is embodied, must be checked in the interest of

our democracy. That is where we are in 2020. The role of the media is to guard against the dangers of an apparent imbalance in the state and right now there is a power imbalance. That power imbalance is not only reflected in the numbers configuration, that power imbalance becomes even more worrisome when those who sit in the majority are weak men and weak women and will not stand up to power...

Asides.

Hon K. D. M HUMPHREY: On a Point of Order. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition is suggesting that democracy is under threat in relation to the power imbalance in this Place, but it is democracy that determined the power imbalance in this Place. It is through a full democratic process that the Members in this Place were elected through a democratic process, Sir, by the people. So to associate the structure and the composition of this Place is through an undemocratic process is to mislead the people, Sir.

Bishop the Hon J. J. S. ATHERLEY: I thank my Honourable friend for his intervention, but he is off the mark. I am not questioning the legitimacy of the process or the outcome of the exercise of that process. I am saying that in the face of the present configuration, which presents an evident imbalance of numbers and power, one must be strong and stand up in defence of democracy so that that power, represented in those numbers, does not go unchecked and unbridled, that is all I am saying, and men must be ready to say 'No, that is not good we should not have a two-year review with all of our people in there'. That is an abuse of the power given by the force of numbers that is what I am saying. Don't get me stirred, I am trying to be quiet and cool and to bring this to an end, but when you come to subjects like these, we are dealing with realities here, we are dealing with the media...there is no bitterness here, Mr. Speaker, there is concern for Barbados. Now I hear I am fishing, Mr. Speaker, but there is nothing wrong with the activity of fishing. Do you know? There is nothing wrong with the activity of fishing and if you are sensible you go to fish where there is fish. If you are sensible you go to fish where fish can be found or ought to be found. Now let me repeat that because I see some getting stirred now. Come let us get ready. Numbers result from a legitimate process but numbers can give such a level of comfort that some Trans-interpret that as licence to do whatever they will. When that starts to happen and it starts with first creeping steps and when that starts to happen, men who are strong and women who are principled, should stand up and say come back. Do not gnashing your teeth and try to talk me down. Stand up and say, come back. The media has a roll in this very dangerous period. You know what they say about power and its tendency to corrupt. You know what they say about total or absolute power.

Asides.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Yes, and we do not want to go there. Nobody is saying that we are there, Mr. Speaker. I am simply saying that we have to be careful to be aware of the dangers to democracy and to say come back when we see those dangers beginning to show themselves. The media needs to learn to report fairly. Everybody will have their biases and their party preferences and all of that but when you speak and you report, when you write, write as fairly as you professionally can. The media has a roll to investigate and to follow through on matters and so much is allowed to go a begging in Barbados, to help safeguard our freedom, to highlight the dangers and the threats to that democratic process that gave a 30-nil defeat to the last Administration. I have never otherwise not said it was 30. That was the result of the last General Election. It is not the configurations of Parliament now and it may very well not be the configuration of Parliament for the course of this term.

Mr. Speaker, why do you not warn these Honourable Members. Coming back. Do you see this Honourable Member, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central, and all of this come back talk? I am not going to go there. I am not going to trouble him. I have quietly advised a couple of his colleagues, speak quietly to your ministerial colleague and ask him to desist from trespassing on that line because it is improper and it is inappropriate and I was going to speak about it, but I am not going there because that is not my style of politics, but do not tell me about coming back. I would have thought that you would have given up on that by now because despite your pleas, your prayers and your proffering's I am still over here and there are somethings that all of you do not know and there are somethings that some of you will never know. It has gone awfully quiet in the Chamber, Mr. Speaker. Nobody is making any noise right now. I have spoken in recent times about what I observe in my view to be a trend and that has to do with the power being conferred on ministers, and the power being concentrated in the hands of the Honourable Prime Minister. The last occasion I spoke to that in this House was at the time of the Emergency Powers Act when the Cabinet amended a Bill it had brought here to put absolute power in the hands of the Prime Minister devolving the responsibility from themselves to one pair of hands. They did it as though they do not have a sense of responsibility and a sense of judgment that can be trusted, that they cannot look at things with a sense of dispassion and maturity and make decisions. They devolved the responsibility to one pair of hands under Emergency Powers Act. This Cabinet did that and I am saying, if you look back at legislation that we have brought here over the last year, within the last two years you will see this trend emerging where power, either with respect to statutory corporations and how the administrative structures are changed and adjusted and how they are restructured, power

goes to the Minister to appoint, to approve, to dismiss, sole power; that is what the wording says you know, sole power, that a minister has a responsibility like the power to create positions and to have those positions functional for some time. We are talking about putting in the hands of a minister the power to approve this appointment or to dismiss an appointee either at the hospital, do it at CBC, do it all over the place. I remind you, I did not disagree when the matter was brought here for the appointment of the person who holds the position as Chief Executive Officer (CEO). I did not disagree with that because I think where people bring value to a situation irrespective of who they are or to whom they are related, if they can get the job done, give them the job. I supported that. What I do not support is the power that is put in the hand of a minister to make appointments and to have people dismissed. That is too much power. There are mechanisms that can be put in place to deal properly, more transparently with that and we do it with respect to the Prime Minister. Look back at the legislation. You would be planning legislation, Mr. Speaker, there is a Committee set up to give approvals for planning application and yet there is a provision in the legislation that with respect to certain, about 10 or 12 very significant areas, the power goes to the Prime Minister to overrule the position or the Committee. You can come down through the line and look at the legislation. We have done it more than once. Put power in the hands of the Prime Minister. Put power in the hands of the Minister. This Administration today that holds office, Mr. Speaker, may not be disposed to abuse any of those powers. Hear me very clearly, but you do not know the Administration that comes tomorrow. This Pharaoh that rules over the land today, may not be the Pharaoh -- and I do not mean that in pejorative terms, I mean that simply in terms of a position of "rulership"; a position of leadership. That is all I am saying. The leader of today may not be the leader of tomorrow and that is why we must get the legislation right, my friend, the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, but strong men, when the chips are down must stand up and declare that is the wrong path to take. Weak men who are fearful of their own well-being, whether that is professional well-being or otherwise, weak men who are fearful that Cabinet cuts might come or this might happen. Look, look, look, stand for principle.

Asides.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: I will not get into that because I do not want to be party to that discussion. What the Prime Minister wants to do she will do, if she feels it necessary. I did not invent that. I have not commented on those things. You have not heard me say up to now that the Cabinet is too large, not a single time. You have never heard me say that, not a single time. Voices in the public are saying that.

I do not want to be distracted, Mr. Speaker. All I am saying is that when you are faced with a moment of truth those who are not weak in the knees and those who are strong in the spirit and in the passion for the democracy of the democratic privileges that we live and try to promote stand up and say no, no, no, and we need to hear a bit more of that.

I did not mean, Mr. Speaker, to be here for this long but those things must be chewed upon. I know that you are thinking man, Mr. Speaker, and that you know where right and reason reflect themselves. I simply offered to this Chamber today, CBC is not properly accounting for \$2.8 million and I cannot vote for a loan for them for \$2.4 million. The CBC is being abused in my view in terms of what it is allowed to do, in terms of what it is forced to do by the Administration. There are certain powers to our practice of democracy that I am not going to subscribe to and I encourage those who feel any measure of strength in their knees, any measure of fiber in their backbone to...

Asides.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: I am not asking you to stand and say anything, I am going to vote against this. I am simply saying if there is any measure of strength in your knees or if there or any measure of fiber in your backbone to stand up sometimes and say no, no, no we are doing this the wrong way, that is all. I do not nod and applaud at the same time, please.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Leader of Government Business.

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Resolution, support given on the basis that the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation, if you take all that has been said by the Honourable Member who just spoke, seems as though it is an organisation in which the Barbados Labour Party has been seeking to censor all other right-thinking members of this society. On the other hand, Sir, I understand that being in Opposition often means that you have to oppose but I do believe that you also have a responsibility to be honest and truthful. I am saying too that when you start to criticise policies or programmes or you are in disagreement with what the current Administration has put forward, you also have a responsibility to offer solutions, to offer recommendations and to put forward proposals from your own party to the country about how you see the transformation that may be necessary for the State-owned entity or for any other entity in this country.

What I hold, however, Mr. Speaker, on this particular Resolution was what I considered to be what we would hear when we were in Opposition, which is, when you come in and you may not be too prepared for a speech you decide to hold on to something, anything that you

possibly can and make a speech out of it. Sir, it is with deep regret that the Honourable Member while asking some valid questions regarding the finances of the organisation would also take this country and those listening on a journey that would convey the impression that the Barbados Labour Party through the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation has in anyway attempted to censor even himself or any other persons who are not associated with the Barbados Labour Party. The questions he has asked about why are not more Ministers perhaps on television, why is it that when we mount a conversation about the first two years in office why was it not more fully represented by other persons, Sir, the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation has had other persons speaking about the Barbados Labour Party's record. It has not censored anyone from being interviewed; it has not stopped anyone from being able to call in on programmes; it has not stopped anyone from being able to mount their own programme or pay for advertising time on the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation to be able to express their view or the views of their political organisation; it has not done so but to convey the impression that as a party that has made significant sacrifices of which the Honourable Member was once a part of and who knows that on coming to office the magnitude of the task that all of our members have had to face in dealing with respective ministries, I think it is unjust and I think it is unreasonable as I sit here and I listen to the Honourable Member for him to behave as though his former colleagues who are still respectful of him as an Honourable Member and Leader of the Opposition that we would in any way through the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation seek to censor him. The Honourable Member repeated over and over about how the media has a responsibility to do this and the media has a responsibility to do that but what he did not say at any juncture is what attempts he has made to participate in the programming on the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation. I think what is happening is that he has now realised how difficult it is to financially fund an opposition party and to be able to get a time on CBC or any other forum. I hear his frustrations coming out and I sympathise with him because it is not easy for any of us as Members of this party either to deal with what is out there.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. That has nothing to do with anything that I said but if she wants me to engage her now on this matter of funding for political parties we can go at that because there is a moral wrong that is going down in Barbados right now with respect to that. You want us to go down there?

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member that is no part of the Resolution.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Precisely so, so do not tell me I am misleading the House... We can talk

about the moral act of the Barbados Labour Party taking all of the subventions. This could never be..... We could go down there.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, that is not part of the Resolution and I do not permit that.

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, again I think the frustration is coming out because it cannot be easy for the Honourable Member to have to face and to walk this road almost alone in defence of what he is doing. It cannot be easy and we appreciate that but I assure you that the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation has in no way attempted to censor the Honourable Member and it has no intention of so doing.

What, however, is of concern is the fact that we have made attempts in coming to office to start the restructuring process of the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation. I think a few months ago we would have had the Bill laid in the House in relation to a restructuring programme that would see a Chief Operating Officer which would also see a Chief Executive Officer being put in place. We accept that there are losses that the institution has sustained. We understand that it requires some restructuring. We indicated then that yes there would have to be losses just as there have been losses across all sectors of the economy but to paint a picture in this environment that in some way that there is some wrongdoing or some deliberate attempt on the part of this Administration to go after the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation employees in any way is unwarranted. It is unwarranted. It is unjustified in the present climate given all that the Honourable Member must know that this Administration has had to do but also continues to do in order to manage the limited resources that we have available to us. I do not think any of us take great comfort in knowing the indebtedness of the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation but we have been doing our utmost best members in the Ministry of Finance, colleagues in the Ministry of Finance and others, to be able to get this economy and to certainly get the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation back on track. It is not an easy task and I think the Honourable Member knows that, but to behave as though he is now bitter because we have had to make these changes and he feels as though he does not have a voice, he would have had a voice if he was still over here. He would have had a voice if he was still with the Barbados Labour Party, but I believe that the concerns which are being expressed by him are as a result of a state of loneliness in which he finds himself. While, as I said, it is okay to be critical of the Administration because that is what opposition parties do, by the same token you have a responsibility to ensure that you also put forward solutions to the challenges that are being faced. I have not heard the Honourable Member mention anything in terms of restructuring of the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation. I have not heard him speak to how to transform the CBC in a

climate right now where there is so much competition from external sources and external competitors. He is not interested in talking about that. He is not interested in talking about how to use various other mediums if required to be able to get his messages out, but he is focused upon giving an impression as though the Barbados Labour Party has created the insurmountable debt of the CBC in the course of two years. We came and found it, and we have actually taken the step, since coming to office, to not only restructure that but to restructure all of the other state-owned enterprises that we have found indebted in this country as well.

Asides.

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: For our two-year anniversary we could have used the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation to let the country know in a forum of worship and celebration what they did for all of us and for the country. We could have used it. We did not do so. It went on social media, and it probably had more views than it probably would have had on CBC. The Honourable Member would do well to utilise those other fora if he wants to get his message or his policies out there, but it is unjust and unreasonable to say these things in this forum. I listen to him carefully because I understand when you have difficulty mounting a full speech. You have to find something to hold onto. I want to assure the Honourable Member, and I do not intend to speak on this too long because this is a further part of our process of trying to restructure and to reorganise this economy. When he can go down the line about talking about the leader of this country and the Honourable Prime Minister and about emergency powers as if we are trying to vest power in the Honourable Prime Minister in a way that has some malice or some wrongdoing, I want to let him know that even if every Barbadian did not believe that she was doing a good job, all of the international organisations have applauded her efforts during COVID-19. The Honourable Member himself has also applauded on occasion the efforts of not only this Administration but the leader of this country.

Let us be fair. If you are going to give licks and you are going to hit the other Side, be fair in what you say but you cannot be supportive of the programmes and the way in which COVID-19 has been handled by the Prime Minister, by the Minister of Health and others during this crisis and then come in here and behave as though we came to Parliament and because we have a majority, we did something underhand in allowing the Prime Minister to have certain powers to be able to manage a crisis. It does not sound right to the listening public. It does not sound right going out across the airwaves. You cannot have a situation where just as we were about to hit the ground running, COVID-19 came. We turned the corner as a country, and our leadership rose to the occasion with all of the civil servants and all of the people in the Ministry of

Finance, and have put this country on a trajectory to be able to manage COVID-19. Then we have to sit down in here and take licks as if we have done something wrong, as if democracy is now being threatened?

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I really did not intend to speak on this but I believe that there are some things which the Honourable Member has said that must be defended, and I will not sit here silently and allow the record of this Government, of its Ministers and of the leader of this party be spoken about in this way without full justification by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. This is too serious a Resolution, it is too serious a debate for us to trivialise it in a way that conveys the wrong impression to the public of this country. I therefore want to just say as I close, so that the Honourable Member who introduced the Bill can start the process of wrapping up, that the Honourable Member knew when he broke bread with us two years ago what lay ahead, Mr. Speaker. We spent long meetings discussing the economic conditions of this country and what we had to do on coming to office. On this Side we have not moved from our position. We have worked tirelessly to be able to get stability back into this country, and if it is that there are criticisms of the way in which we do things, we are not perfect. We are not going to get it right all the time.

I want to give the Honourable Member the assurance that had he been on this Side, he would have been working just as hard and he would have been getting equal air-time, whether on CBC or on social media, and he would do well to investigate some technology to be able to give a voice to the things that he wants to put forward. To come here and to insult the hard work and the commitment of Members on this Side, and to convey an impression that is contrary to the work that we have been doing is just simply not good enough. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I feel first of all honoured to be able to stand at this podium again. The last time at which I stood here was March 20th on the closing of the Second Reading of the Appropriation Bill. On that Friday night I did not know that I would not have been able to return to this Place for some time, because it was only in the course of the following few days that I discovered I would need to have a medical procedure that was serious enough to keep me out of these precincts. First and foremost, I am thankful for your recognising me from this position and for my ability to be back in this Honourable and very good Place after some time.

Sir, I also say that as a result of that it would have meant that I would not have been present for any of the

debates with respect to the Emergency Powers legislation to which the Leader of the Opposition referred in the course of his speech. I must confess that while I signed the last Directive, I am not sure what powers he is talking about that are being abused by this Government or by myself or by the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East who would have acted for me for some of that time. Suffice it to say, however, that this Resolution which is before us is about the authority to stabilise the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation's financial situation, recognising that in this environment how many people do we think are advertising and spending money at CBC? How many people in this country even had businesses open to be able to justify expenditure? Unlike others who have chosen to lay off even though revenue has been coming in, the Government has made the determination that we are going to literally try as hard as we can to work with our employees, recognising that in some instances it is going to be a heavy load because revenue is not coming in.

Sir, at the same time we indicated from the very beginning that it cannot be business as usual at the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation. Still, I must confess that I find it difficult to understand the tone and tenor of the Leader of the Opposition, but suffice it to say there are a few things.... The last Administration made it a habit of ignoring the difference between George Street and the Pine. And as much as I may query very often some of the things that I see on television, I don't believe that in any instances that it is driven by malice or by directives. I believe that that is the judgement of those who have the capacity to do what they have to do editorially. But I go further. I refuse to accept as the Political Leader of the Barbados Labour Party, that the activities of the Barbados Labour Party must be carried on CBC in full, for free, or for monies not paid, thereby equaling free, for so many things, starting of course with the annual conferences and the church services and all of these other things. And I have tried as far as possible to say to my colleagues that this is not what we want to be associated with. So I am a little surprised because, in fact I don't get the chance to watch the Senate often, because the Senate more often than not is during the middle of the day when I am in meetings. But I do get the chance to watch CBC TV sometimes, and I must tell you that I get to see the Opposition Senators getting much, much time on CBC and therefore to believe that institution is depriving the Leader of the Opposition or any of his Members from airtime would be something that I would wish to investigate. I would like the Leader of the Opposition to provide me with the details, so that I can write the Minister and he can feel assured of the fairness and equity to which he has become accustomed with this Government. And why do I say so? On the 20th of March I stood in this spot and I spoke about an Adopt-A-Family programme and I also spoke about the need for this country to help us to support the most vulnerable families. It is to my knowledge that the Leader of the Opposition has given

us names to ensure that those persons are properly taken care of in this country. And that is how it should be. It is to my certain knowledge that when the care packages were provided by the other people, the Sandy Lane Trust, I also made it clear to them that I would not be part of any public process that did not include both Sides. I also included, up to this weekend, another well-known charity that asked who they could give things to. I told them that whenever they are giving anything, they have to give equally to the Leader of the Opposition.

Asides.

Hon Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Well I will make sure that the Opposition Leader is in receipt of whatever is intended for him, and I am a little shocked that they have not called yet because they usually operate with judicious speed and make sure there is transparency and fairness. But I also want to go further. It is easy for people to talk blindly. There are those in this country for example who have said that I have said nothing on Black Lives Matter. There are those who are forgetting that at this point in time I speak not only as Prime Minister of Barbados, but for another few weeks, as Chairman of CARICOM, and they would do well to understand that I have never believed in jumping on bandwagons, never. But I believe fundamentally in supporting principles. This Government is the same Government that would have indicated that moral leadership matters and that what matters is respect for example, to those persons at the UDC, that they should not be disenfranchised and told that they have to buy back something when it was told to them that it would be theirs after ten years. Do you recall? And I am talking about houses that were repaired. This Government is the same Government in a previous Administration that would have introduced Emancipation Day and National Heroes Day and the National Commission on Reconciliation that would have pushed the issue of reparation, not just for Barbados but for the entire region. I want to read into the record of this Chamber what I wrote on the 31st of May at 1.42 on Social Media because, yes, the honourable Member for St. Michael South East is correct, that 30 years ago when I came into public life, the first thing you did was to pick up the phone and call the newspaper or you called a TV station; but we live in a world now that is as driven as much by narrow-casting as it is by broadcasting and the irony is that those that broadcast locally and those that publish locally do not have the same reach globally; and the message that I wanted to share on that Sunday, ten days ago, into the first, second or third day, of the riots, was a message that is universal and is not limited to Barbados or to the United States or anywhere else. And I said then: 'I am watching and I am reflecting. The events of the recent months, globally, have provided the critical evidence as to why I said in Geneva last September during the Raul Prebisch Lecture that moral leadership matters. Much of what is confounding the countries of the world is the

cumulative impact of behavior that is truly within the control of individual citizens. That is why leadership of all types and in all places, needs to say and say loudly, and act decisively, when things are wrong and when they are right. Behaviour fueling racism or other forms of discrimination or chronic Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) or destroying oceans, the land or our air, all of this has to be fought. Let us get on the same page and show our humanity to ourselves and to each other and let us save our world. Together we can, and yes, silence is not an option'.

Now Mr. Speaker, I am not in the business of PR or public relations, as the Leader of the Opposition and others would want us to believe, in this debate on CBC. I don't think I have ever gone to CBC once and said I want to do a broadcast from here and I want to get in here. I don't think I have even tried in any way, not even with the Minister far less with the management or the board at CBC. But I also believe that when we say things that those things have a way of being there for all and that is why the use of Social Media in conjunction with traditional forms of media continues to be a preferred option for me because let us be real, a lot of the people that we think are watch free to air television do not watch it in the same way and that is why the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation's financial situation is as impaired as it is because how many people in here go straight now and watch Netflix? How many in here go straight now and watch YouTube? How many people in here are locked into their WhatsApp and watch all kinds of memes and videos being sent to them and when you check your watch, three hours gone and that is the three hours you would have been watching Days of Our Lives, the Evening News and something else. Times have change and it is of significance to me that in this Parliament we really are going to have to get one or two people under the age of 40. This must be one of the few Parliaments ...

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: No. I am serious. I have asked the Clerk to do the research, that in the history of Barbados in modern times that does not have a preponderance of people in their 30s - and when I went in I was in my 20s -- and I say that not because of any form of desire to discriminate one way or the other, but just that it is reflecting a perspective that does not include that absolute younger generation and we will have to find ways of correcting it, but the generational division is as real as the racial division, is as real as the gender division, is as real as the division that separates us on so many other things. What we have to do, the reason why the Government still has a Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation and a Barbados Government Information Service is that we accept that the Government has a responsibility towards national education, moral reinforcement and to begin to get the kinds of values that are critical in a society such as ours to be able to move

forward people because we cannot assume that everybody has access to the same information, or the same guidance, or the same mentorship across the board in every household, therefore the public space has to do what it can in order to be able to expose people to reinforce the values that we need to reinforce, to expose people to the information and knowledge that they need to be exposed to, and to begin to cause us ... I was reading this morning some social media posts on the same matter and people literally believe that the pandemic is a political ploy to oust political characters in other parts of the world. This is the same pandemic that has everybody in here and everybody in the country in deep, deep concern and that has so altered every aspect of our lives but people can believe what reality they want to believe and that was the example of Goebbels and Hitler, as it was the example of so many others throughout time but you can use it for good reasons and you can use it for bad reasons and we have determined that the public broadcasting arm, whether in Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) or any other entity in the future, has to be about reinforcing what is necessary for nation building, for community strengthening and for the stabilisation and the rooting of families. We may not always be able to treat to CBC as a broadcasting station as it was treated to in the 1960s when it was started because the technology has changed and I just outlined to you the other options that people have. Therefore, the future of the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation in however which way it comes has to be rooted not as a broadcasting entity but as a digital enterprise first and foremost that can facilitate broadcasting, that can facilitate other usages of digital technology in all that we do from the monitoring of streetlights to a whole host of other applications, too many, too varied and too commonly known now for me to even mention and the bottom line is that technology and the digital application us going to impact on us more and more particularly as we are seeing in this environment of the pandemic and I press and pray that we will be able to work with members of the private sector and that is why CBC put out a request for proposals to begin to see how it can be in the third decade of the 21st century as revolutionary and as impactful as it was in the 1960s when television was introduced for the first time in a small independent state being able to allow us to have a sense of our own identity and a reinforcement of our own values. We live in a different world and if we remain stuck in the modalities of the 1960s we will not be able to create the platform for global citizenship for our citizens while anchoring them, most importantly, to Bajan roots. Bajan is who we are but Barbados is not where we can be only. We have to be a part of this world but we have to do it with the Bajan accent intact like Rihanna, we have to do it with the Bajan flare intact like Sir Gary, we have to do it with the Bajan forthrightness that successive leaders have shown, not being afraid to speak truth to power or to defend the principles of Small Island Developing States who, for most in this world, are not seen and very rarely heard. I believe

that we have to do our best to keep CBC's head above water with the Resolution, but bend our minds to the fact that there has to be change and that what was a broadcasting entity established in the 1960s will be an anachronism in the 3rd decade of the 21st century if it does not make the fundamental changes that have been driven by the technology in the industry to which it belongs and those fundamental changes therefore, must require us and I prayed that this is the kind of debate that this Parliament would have been treated to rather than allegations as to who is Pharaoh and who is not, allegations as to who has abused power or not, and when in truth and in fact, it is too small and we are too small and the battles that we are fighting now globally, the battles to be able to get swabs and the Leader of the Opposition should know it because his Shadow Minister of Health is one of the key providers of health services or medication or whatever it is to the Ministry of Health. We have not discriminated against him because he is the Shadow Minister of Health for the Opposition. What is the name of the party?

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: People's Party for Democracy & Development (PDP). I say that genuinely. We have not discriminated and I am not going to take lashes for things because people choose not to get into fights or not to engage in arguments. It is like what transpired on Saturday. I am not happy with the fact of it, but when investigated the Attorney General showed me a letter from an attorney-at-law asking for 10 persons. Now, I still do feel that discretion should have been exercised, I generally feel so, but let us not make it believe or make anyone believe that the Police acted on their own when in truth and in fact the letter says clearly that we would want permission not only to walk but there will be no more than 10 persons in accordance with the emergency declaration directive whatever it was for Covid-19 and that we will remain on the sidewalks.

Mr. Speaker, I give this country the assurance, whether there is a march or not this country is not going to support behaviour that in any way reflects unfair treatment, discriminatory treatment and conscious bias, racism. You know why I laughed? Because for me and the Honourable Member for St. Philip North and the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East and the Honourable Member for St. Thomas once the unwritten part of this equation that is still not spoken, discrimination on the basis of gender, the glass ceilings that are still not broken, the judgements that are made... A man can wear the same suit day in day out, day in day out, change the tired and if he likes change the shirt but a woman cannot do it. The Honourable Member for St. Philip North could borrow my scarf but if she wears that blue and white scarf two or three days, they are going to say: "wait, she ain't got no more scarves". The difference with me is that I do not rent out no space in my

head to nobody so you 'gine' see this yellow scarf 'nuff' times because it is mine.

The battles that we need to be facing are not battles that may be fought in the United States elections in November, the battles that we need to be facing are the battles that stopped our young girls and young boys from wanting to go and buy bleach and use bleach on their skin like if something is wrong with the pigment of the skin with which they are born, and that is why the language of Haile Selassie is as appropriate today as it was when he delivered then at the United Nations and when they were popularised by the great Robert Nesta Marley, 'until the colour of a man's skin is of no more significance than the colour of his eyes', and we can go on and on. I wrote those words on the 31st of May because I believe fundamentally that the solution to the problem comes not simply at the institutional level but in changing the hearts and minds of people in the small things as in the large things.

Yes, it was easy for me to say yes to CBC on the 24th of May when they called at 5:30 at my house 'Can we broadcast the Barbados Labour Party's second anniversary service? It was easy for me to say yes and to ignore the fact that I would then have been getting two hours of broadcast time for free and I said no and they say but we want people to see it and not everybody has social media. I said that may be true but the Barbados Labour Party does not and will not pay for this at this point in time because it is not a priority. Our priority is making sure that people can live and eat in this country not in seeing ourselves on television for glorification purposes. Principles only mean something when it is inconvenient to stand by them. I do need a gallery to tell people what I stand for and what we would tolerate.

Mr. Speaker, if I have in any way misunderstood the tone and tenure of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition I say I am sorry but what I heard...

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: No, no, I was very much in the precincts of Parliament. I was very much in my office and in another room. I am saying to you that the tone and tenor of the debate is not one that I want to associate with and I want to say to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition if he wants access to time say so. We certainly are not blocking you and I would be horrified and I say so genuinely because I do not need to stop him from talking to beat him in Michael West North. I believe that contending views can be... and for our people I maintain that the worse thing we can do to our people is censorship. Why? Because after three and a half centuries of being told you cannot turn left, you cannot turn right, you cannot have the hope that your family would be with you next week, next year,

next decade because people have the right to take up and separate...

Our people, black people, have a vehement difficulty with censorship and exclusion because that is what they have been doing for centuries and the difficult conversations, and that is why I commend the books *Salt* by Earl Lovelace and *In the Castle of My Skin* for everyone to read. The book *Salt* talks to us about reparations but it is of different type of healing and if we are to heal and go forward then we need to do so conscious that even if not me others in my name may have acted. Mr. Speaker, that is why I commend the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East just now at the end of her speech she said it again and I say it all of the time, we are not perfect but we are going to try our best to do right every day and if on occasion we fall never be too proud, never be too haughty or arrogant to say we got it wrong and we will change it because I believe that there is none among us who walk on this earth as human beings who will not at some point make mistakes and who will not have to say I am sorry or I can do it better or I will do it better.

Sir, it is against that background therefore that I say to you that I do believe whether it is CBC in its current form or otherwise that this country must continue and will continue to have a mechanism to be able to shape the minds and nurture the souls and the attitudes so that the kind of behaviour that leads to the destruction of the oceans, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South knows that well, the behaviour that leads to the destruction of our gullies and our land spaces, the Honourable Member for St. Michael East knows what I am talking about with the dumping, and the failure to also take care of our surroundings, our wells, all of the things that would cause damage to the earth and to the people when the waters comes down or whether it is with respect to how we deal with our bodies. Pandemic Covid-19 has shown that more than anything else, that it is the chronic non-communicable diseases and the complications that present the real problem with the virus, and that for the majority who are healthy I asked Barbadians and even as I speak I will keep saying: Boost your immune system; take your Vitamin C, whether it is the tablets or whether it is oranges or cherries, a little ginger, a little turmeric, a little honey and a little lemon or lime juice or grapefruit, or sour orange which the Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central loves. Mix it up. If you cannot drink it every day, drink it every two or three days but it is boosting our immune system. We do not need anybody to do this for us; that is me, myself and I.

Whether it is in discrimination and unconscious bias on the basis of race, class, gender, sexual orientation or whatever it is, I said it in the past and I say it again, a country that knows what it is to have its modern development forged in the bowels of discrimination cannot

now forget the pain of discrimination and justify discrimination for any cause or for any reason against any human being. This is a country that was the first example of post-modern racism in the Western world. This is a country that does know better and that has come a long way but recognises that even in coming that long way, we have not yet reached the Promised Land. When I talk about people not renting out space in their heads, it is because we need to own who we are. We need to look into the mirror and love who we are but we need to care for each other as the Golden Rule entreats us to do: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. If we do not want to be discriminated against, then we know what we must do, and if we do not want to be treated a certain way we know what we must do. If we, as I said at the Gymnasium last week in talking to the public servants, can forge out of this pandemic the true sense of what we want Barbados to look like, feel like, sound like and move like, what is that? A country that continues to revere social justice, a country that continues to revere that we are friends of all and satellites of none, that we do not have permanent friends but we have permanent interests. A country that above all else produces young children and adults who are confident, who are creative and know how to think outside of the box, who are committed to cause because if you do not know commitment you will stand for anything and do anything. Above all else, a country that is caring and compassionate.

Sir, this is not the first time I have said it. You heard me say it on the renaming of the highway for Grynner. You heard me say it many times before I was even leader of this Barbados Labour Party. You heard me say it. For those who know me back from my days as a schoolgirl in Queen's College and even at Ms. Carrington's school, Merrivale Preparatory, you heard me say it then. This is not something that I have become; a Latter-day Saint or Apostle. I was raised in a household that taught me to believe that I am not better than anybody else but equally no-one else is better than I am. More importantly, this notion that all that the world needs in a post-United Nations world is equal opportunity is a nonsense because what we have is a decimation of rights for centuries, and when one person is down here and the other is up here you then want to frame an equality of opportunity discussion when we know that the person who is down here and fallen cannot do what the person who is up here and strong can do.

You ask me why we leave out people under \$36 000, because you and I know that the most important thing in this country is ownership of a piece of land and a house. I say that there are too many policemen, too many nurses, too many teachers, too many gas station attendants, too many clerical officers in this country who deserve to own a house and land like the rest of the people who have. This Barbados Labour Party Government under my leadership will make sure that they get that chance in this country. You ask me why this Government chooses to spend money

on certain capital projects in the heart of Bridgetown, because when that little boy or girl goes to catch the bus at the bus-stand in Fairchild Street and they turn to their mother or father or aunt or uncle and ask, "What is that park over there?" you must be able to walk them across the road and sit down in the park when it is finished and explain to them that there was a time in this country when ordinary people could not get access to decent housing or food or all kinds of things and were treated as nothing but chattels even when the law stopped treating them as chattel, and that this country has chosen in the centre of its capital to pay obeisance and to say 'thank you' every day because none of us knew what it was like for Clement Payne or Israel Lovell or any of them to go through what they went through standing up for others only to be prosecuted, imprisoned and in some instances to lose their lives. From that spot arose all of us who claim for the last 80 years that we belong to something.

The thing that we belong to did not start in the air. It started as a result of people taking a stand cumulatively, and they were not the only ones because before them there were those with the UNIA (Universal Negro Improvement Association) meeting in Queen's Park because of Marcus Garvey's reach, even in the absence of technology and in the absence of the CBC. That would be a lesson, I think, for the Leader of the Opposition as it was for me, and an inspiration, because your reach is what you make it and how you remain committed to cause and find every way that you can to get around the obstacles legally. These are the things that we are choosing. We chose to go into Fairchild Street Market. Everybody in this country used to laugh and talk about how many rats were opposite VOB, as if that was a badge of honour, and this Government says, "No. Take the vendors and put them in proper accommodation." That is part of a new social contract and a new perspective. Taxpayers' money must not only be used for people at the very top. It has to be used in aid of... and I said that conscious of the Auditor General's report got people's heads twirling in this country, but suffice it to say it is not only the Auditor General who got a copy of the report. BARVEN, the Barbados Association of Vendors, for more than ten years was chockablock there in Cheapside. And I said 'no' they have been asking for it for more than ten years, and we have taken them and put them on the highway where people can go and drive to them and I expect in three months, six months, 12 months that that market is going to mushroom. Farmers' markets with all due respect, cannot only exist in Brighton, St George, they have to exist in Brighton, St. Michael too.

Asides (laughter)

Hon Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: So I say all of these things because you judge people not only by their statements, but by their actions. Trust loans, who has ever taken a chance on people, without the collateral. How do

you move from the stage of being an unknown businessman, someone who has just been an itinerant vendor, someone who trying a thing, and move to the next level if you do not have access to some basic capital. And these are the things where we take people's tax money and give these people the opportunity so we can enfranchise them in a kind of way that makes sense. Mr. Speaker I really did not want to spend so much time talking, but the truth is that the Leader of the Opposition reminded of a few things that I wanted to share and I thank him for that, and I end simply by saying look, these are not normal times and there are a number of state-owned enterprises that will face difficulties in the same way that a number of private sector people are facing difficulties. I want to say to some of the private sector people that it is just not back to business as usual. We have to get back there because the world is not going to wait on us, but having said that we have to hold each other up as much as possible because it is us who have to hold each other, not anyone else. So this resolution is brought here in order for us to act consistent with the laws of this land. I trust and pray that we will be able to allow a solution to be made with regard to the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation as a serious digital entity whether on its own or in conjunction with members of the private sector, but recognising that technology is not waiting on us and that the technology which CBC relies on today is obsolescent in a very real sense, not that it is gone today, but I anticipate that in another ten to 15 years you are not going to see the use of free-to-air in the same way that we would have seen it in the last 50 or so years and we have therefore to adapt to the times and put ourselves in that position to be competitive but also to ensure that the process of nation-building that is also about information sharing and reinforcement does not leave the arsenal of a Government in shaping a country or in forging the outlook and the attitudes of our people. I am obliged to you.

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

Hon R. R. STRAUGHN: Mr. Speaker I want to thank honourable Members who contributed to this debate and I must say Sir that I listened very carefully to all speakers and it certainly has been very interesting Sir, the contribution, if one can refer to it as that, by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, because listening very carefully Sir and you know communication is an interesting thing; I mean we are here to discuss first on the one hand the financial situation at CBC and the mechanism that CBC is in the business of communication, and therefore listening very carefully Sir to the Leader of the Opposition, a couple of things resonated with me Sir and in the context of media I must say that whilst the allegation that somehow or the other Government was smothering attention away from others and I must say Sir that having participated in the discussion to celebrate our two-year anniversary of winning at the polls, I can say to you Sir that

for that exercise, I was contacted by a member of the staff of the CBC to indicate 'this is what we would be doing' and this is in respect of the specific programme that he referenced. I say that to say this Sir, I have observed and let me just say these two very specific things. Based on the tone of the Member's contribution, I gleaned two very important things, I mean I could be wrong, but it seems to me that the Member seems to be obsessed with attention on the one hand, and he got quite agitated on the other hand, in reference to money pertaining to the political parties. But during the course of the last few weeks Sir, I have observed from the various Media, that members of his party Sir have got much more attention in the newspapers and within the context of what I have seen than he certainly has over the last few weeks, and perhaps Sir, people are beginning to question how effective he may be as the Leader of the Opposition. I am just saying what I have observed in terms of coverage in the paper and what have you. And I do know Sir, that in the other Place, the Senate, that whenever there is a debate there is a penchant for one of his senators, more often than not Sir, despite what the Leader of the Opposition says here in this Chamber that that Member in the other Place often grabs the headlines Sir, saying all kinds of things Sir that are clearly contrary to what he, the leader of the party says here Sir and he gets the attention Sir, and therefore what I sensed Sir, there is a pressure building...

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member continue,

Hon R. R. STRAUGHN: Thank you. So it seems to me Sir, just from my casual observation that the attention that other members of the party seem to be getting publicly, seems to be getting under his skin because he seems...

Asides.

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

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: On a Point of Order Sir. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. Let me say this. He is giving the impression that is what my speech was about. I don't need to seek any headlines. I have had the honour and the privilege and the power to have appointed to the Upper Chamber of this Parliament two responsible people, one experienced and one young and brilliant, the two best Senators there are...

Asides.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Madam, you had your time.

Mr. SPEAKER: Continue, Honourable Member.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Thank you. I have had the honour and the authority, the right under law to appoint two Members to the Senator Chamber of Barbados, two responsible people, one experienced and one young and brilliant, both of whom the Government would like to see absent from the Senate because their contributions are telling and further, I have never instructed any of them ...

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Honourable Member ought not to mislead the House. I would be very happy to see, what is her name, Senator Drakes? I believe she is a very good Senator and I would be happy to see her as a Government Senator too.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: It confirms what I was saying, Mr. Speaker, so I am not misleading the House. In fact, I have clearly told them, speak your minds. They were appointed before we had constituted a political party. You have leave of lead to speak your minds independently and even disagree with me.

Now this Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central over whom I have been sparing today, ought when he hears big people talking to keep quiet and not to get into that. He is out of his league. Let me say this. He is misleading the House as to what I purposed to say.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, when I speak I think people must listen too when I speak that I have command of the Chair. I do not think there is any need for you to go in any way to use language that might be deemed offensive. I understand ...

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, just listen.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: I am listening.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, you can raise your point of order but I prefer that you coin your language in a different ...

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: What language, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. SPEAKER: I am in the Chair. I would just prefer you to coin your language differently.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: I am suggesting that when the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central hears big people talking he should keep out of it especially with his limited experience in these matters.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Alright. Do not let us get into the side talk. Only one person is allowed to speak at a time in this Chamber.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Speaker, and he has been misleading this House as to what I said earlier and I am trying to correct that, Mr. Speaker. Here is an Honourable gentleman over whom I have been sparing in these debates on this day. I have heard him no less than on five occasions make comments with respect to what should happen to the numbers of portfolio appointments in the Cabinet of Barbados, totally inappropriate. He brought that in here today in this debate.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, is this the point of order you are raising in relation to what ...

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Point of order on misrepresenting what I said.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have to rule on a point of order so I prefer you not to go down that line.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Well that is alright. Tell the Honourable Member not to be misguided by his own inexperience and ignorance; by that, I mean lack of knowledge on these matters and speak to the points.

Asides.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: He may not Bishop like but it is parliamentary though.

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Mr. Speaker, I must admit, Sir, perhaps my inexperience has left me a little confused by what I just heard in the Chamber because I indicated quite clearly what was my impression based on what I have seen in the public as well as on CBC with respect to the fact that members of his party have been getting more attention in recent times than he has and therefore if he believes that is an erroneous assumption on my part then simply say that but I am just saying to you that is what I have seen and therefore I understand that when a man is under a little pressure, Sir, to get attention ...

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Speaker, again, I rise on a point of order. He is totally misrepresenting what I said in this Chamber.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, with the greatest of respect, you have risen already on that point of order. There is no need for you to rise again on it. You have made your point on that point of order so there is no need, Sir, for you to repeat.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My opportunity will come again.

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Pressure is a very serious thing but let me get to the other point because substance in critical in these debates and I raise the other point upon which he got quite agitated in his previous contribution which relates to monies and he raised the specter of the fact that somehow it was immoral of the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) when the people of Barbados quite clearly, Sir, elected all of us as the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) to serve in this place. He suggested that it was immoral of the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) to get the subvention from Parliament and to try to put it in the public's mind that there was something wrong with that but, Sir, we are here for solutions and I would like to recommend to the Honourable Chamber that, notwithstanding what he perceive to my inexperience, that I would recommend to him that he can solve this problem. This seems to be a recurring issue over and over periodically every few months therefore I would like to suggest to the Honourable Chamber that he could resign his seat, allow the Honourable Prime Minister to call a bye-election and if he wins the seat then he can come back to this Chamber, Sir, and make a moral argument for why any party that he may wish to represent in this place may be able to get access to the subvention. That is the only basis upon which any monies from this Parliament goes to any parliamentary party so therefore, if he is interested in democracy, Sir, and all of the talk that he put down in here earlier, he would resign his seat, let the Honourable Prime Minister call a bye-election and let the people of St. Michael West determine whether or not the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) or any other party, for that matter, would have access to the money but the truth is, Sir, this has been a financial debate.

Asides.

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: I know and I voted for him. That is the thing that got me. That is the thing, but the reality is, Sir, when you are under pressure you start to lose some perspective of what it is the Government has been trying to achieve and the truth is, Sir, ...

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This nonsense which is emanating out of the lips of the ...

Mr. SPEAKER: Alright, just tell me the point of order. Just refer to the point of order, Honourable Member.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: This nonsense which is emanating out of the lips of the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, Honourable Member ...

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: I rise on a point of order with reference to ...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you cannot use that language.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: I rise on a point of order with reference to that which the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central just said.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, are you listening?

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Quite clearly.

Mr. SPEAKER: You have to withdraw that. You cannot use the language "this nonsense", Sir.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: The remark is withdrawn, Mr. Speaker, I have gone past that.

Mr. SPEAKER: That which escapes the lips of this Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central misrepresents me in a serious way. I do not know what a debate on CBC has to do with resigning seat in St. Michael West and coming back in here. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member speaks as though were I to face the electorate in St. Michael West tomorrow I would not win. Mr. Speaker, ...

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, with the greatest of respect that is no point of order.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Speaker.....

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, it is not a point of order.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Speaker.....

Mr. SPEAKER: It is not a point of order. I have ruled. I have ruled. It is not a point of order. I have so ruled.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Well you rule. Go ahead.

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. You know sometimes a little inexperience is good because in the manner of democracy, and I will repeat the

point, because the Honourable Member went down a road to suggest that the Government of Barbados duly elected two years ago was in some way using our parliamentary majority to deny or to introduce undemocratic practices in this country... Sir, I simply reiterate, the Honourable Member keeps bringing up reference to the parliamentary subscription as it relates to political parties and the principle is clear if you face the electorate on behalf of the political party and you are elected to this Chamber then you have access to the subvention and so my...

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, will you kindly move on, Sir? Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central, the debate has gone past that, this is dealing with a Resolution relative to CBC, so please stick to the issue relative to the Resolution. You are veering off right and left and you are not centre, please stick to the wrap up relative to this Resolution and nothing else.

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Okay Sir, I take your words of advice and guidance. The Honourable Member, however, raised some issues relative to the Auditor General's Report and I wish to indicate that, based on what I read here from the perspective of a paragraph 5.54 of the Auditor General's Report, obviously in the context of where auditors have changed then clearly one auditor cannot certify other work that other people would have done so in that context clearly as would be the case satisfactorily, sometimes you have a situation where obviously the information that would have been used perhaps is not necessarily as available to the auditors as things have changed and therefore that is perhaps part of the reason why the Disclaimer of Opinion obviously is there. That does not mean, Sir that anything untoward necessarily has...

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: On a point of order. The Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central is misleading the House. The Honourable Member knows better because he understands these things and if you read the Auditor General's Report that is clearly not the case. It may be the case to the \$700 000 not properly accounted for in 2018 because there was a change of Auditors, but it is not the case with respect to 2019 where \$2.8 million listed as accounts receivable cannot be verified. That is totally misleading. The Honourable Member knows better because he can read these figures and understand.

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: If the Honourable Member would allow me to finish the point...

Mr. SPEAKER: Continue Honourable Member.

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Thanks, Sir. As it relates to the accounts receivables as we all know, as has been the case with respect to a number of State-owned enterprises, we have gone through a very deliberate process to ensure... Sir, let me just take the time to explain where the total Government perspective has been. As we have come to Government and recognised that a lot of people were owed by Government, and this is not making any excuse for CBC or any other State-owned enterprise, we have had to verify meticulously invoice by invoice, invoice by invoice to ensure that the process through which we determine whether we owe you money or which entity owe you money that there was a clear pace with respect to being able to validate and verify that and so therefore on the part of the receivables I am not surprised in the terms of the verification or the inability to verify because across Government and if you been reading the Auditor General's Reports for a number of years, the systems within Government have not been as strongly supported by way of recordkeeping all the time and therefore these things happened and we are in the process though of ensuring that we can account for what has been paid and what is to be received because we are well in the process of ensuring that our payment system nationally, that when people pay something that it is recorded in real time. Very often, Sir, as we would have seen instances in the past, and then as I said this is not only related to CBC, we have had instances where sometimes people are paid twice for the same set of invoices, we have seen instances of that, and they have had to be recalled and therefore we have gone through a very deliberate process to ensure that in this overall framework with respect to the settlement of arrears and certainly with respect to account for what is owed to Government that there is a very meticulous process to be gone through. Sir, whilst the audit may say that yes the auditors were not able to verify the reality is that requires us now to ensure that all of the financial systems in Government talk to one another so that we can actually have a real picture with respect to receivables such that we know what is the financing gaps for any financial institution.

Honourable Member, yes clearly I understand the difference between the two, but you have to understand the context in which you are operating. Let me remind the Honourable Member as well that since we have come to office we have put in place a much more rigid regime with respect to being able to account by the end of every month with respect to all of these State-owned enterprises as with respect to their management accounts and it means now that going forward we should be in a better position to be able to ensure that by the end of the year when the audits are completed that it will be as seamless as possible because the systems have been put in place to ensure that from month to month to month the various validation exercises will be completed.

Mr. Speaker, I would love this to happen in two years so that everything is up and running so that the Government would have access to clean data so that we can make decisions but we are pushing as fast as we can with respect to being able to deal with these matters. It means having a comprehensive training programme for all of the financing and accounting staff across Government, both central Government as well as across the State-owned enterprises, to ensure that issues like these do not continue to be reported in the Auditor General's Report like how we have seen in the past. Certainly myself and the Prime Minister give a commitment that we are going to put the support within the context of enhancing and boosting the training for all of the accounting and financial staff across Government to ensure that these matters are put to bed, but it really does take a lot of effort with respect to ensuring that all of the systems and the record keeping is in place.

Sir, this Resolution as the Prime Minister said will allow for us to be able to put the CBC on a different path. The rest of the reforms in terms of how they operate would have to be gone through. As I said I am not a media expert, I do not know anything about media and the operations of it, but I know enough to know that the media landscape has evolved and it is a very aggressive and competitive market and therefore if CBC is to evolve and stay relevant to the people of Barbados then it has to reinvent itself, it has to become fit for purpose in the 21st Century and move to a much more digital form of delivery of its services because at the end of the day there is a strong demographic shift in being able to monetize opportunities and to give access to ordinary Barbadians to the space. As you know, Sir, while that is the case now, and I know that with the advent of 5G and other technologies already on stream globally, it is going to be a significant task to be able to catch up quickly in whatever shape or form CBC may find itself in in the future.

The reality, Sir, this is what we have been able to do from a financial perspective and it is now up for the operational model and the actual internal reforms for the CBC now to be able to move forward such that they can take advantage of this restructuring from a financial perspective of the financial position.

Sir, that is my contribution in terms of the response to the Honourable Member to some of the queries which he posed, but I want to say that this is one of three specific facilities that would have been a part of the negotiations and those will come to this Chamber at the appropriate time. With that, Sir, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

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

The question that the Resolution do now pass was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

RECOMMITTAL OF GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of Government Business.

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, I beg to give Notice of the Barbados Optional Savings Scheme Bill, 2020.

READINGS OF BILLS

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of Government Business.

Hon. Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the First Reading of the Barbados Optional Savings Scheme Bill, 2020.

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

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Miss S.J.O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, with that we have come to end of today's Session. I beg to move that the House be adjourned until Tuesday, June 16, 2020 at 10 a.m.

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

The question that the Sitting do now adjourn until Tuesday, the 16th Day of June at 10 a.m. in the forenoon was put and 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. Order No. 15. The source gives only ‘ORDER No. 15’ with no title; the Bill is identified at the third reading as the Income Tax (Amendment) (No. 2) Act, 2020. At the end of Hon. R. R. Straughn’s reply the seconding ‘I beg to second that, Sir.’ is typed as part of his speech with no speaker label, and his label there is spelt ‘Hon. R. R. STRAUGHAN’. Printed as in the source.

Q3. Orders No. 8 and 12, passing of the Bills. The cognate debate was led on Order No. 8, the Public Transport (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, 2020, but the procedure that follows records ‘the Transport Authority Validation Bill’ being read a second time and passed as the ‘Transport Authority Validation Bill, 2020’. The Transport Authority (Validation) Bill, 2020 is then taken again and passed as the Transport Authority (Validation) Act, 2020. The passing of the Public Transport (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill is not recorded under its own name. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Transport Authority (Validation) Bill, 2020. The seconder’s name is left blank (‘seconded by ...’) in all three procedural sentences, and the seconding of the second reading is typed with no speaker label. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Order No. 14, Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. Atherley’s point of order. After the Speaker asks Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. Atherley to withdraw the words ‘this nonsense’, a passage beginning ‘That which escapes the lips of this Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central misrepresents me in a serious way’ is labelled ‘Mr. SPEAKER’; it appears to be Bishop Atherley’s words. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Order No. 14, Prime Minister’s speech. A procedural line reads ‘Asides (laughter)’. 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, 9th June, 2020 at the Worthing Corporate Centre,

Christ Church, with Mr. Speaker in the Chair; prayers were taken by Father Reverend Mark Harewood. The Minutes of 2nd June were deferred. Hon. Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw, Leader of the House, laid the Audited Financial Statements of the Caves of Barbados Limited for the years ended 31st March, 2017 to 2019 and the Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements of the Fair Trading Commission for 2018-2019. The Police (Amendment) Bill, 2020 was read a first time and Standing Orders were suspended.

On Order No. 15, the Income Tax (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2020, Hon. R. R. Straughn said that the Government had found on taking office that the previous Administration had committed Barbados to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development to end its separate regime for the international business sector, where some companies paid as little as 0.25 per cent, and that corporate tax rates were therefore being converged; the amendments covered the ‘grandfathering’ period and life insurance business. Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. Atherley, Leader of the Opposition, said that the Government responded only when noise was made in public. Hon. R. St. C. Toppin supported the Bill. Replying, Mr. Straughn said that there had been 45 000 claims for unemployment up to 4th June and that the amendments would give the business community certainty. The Bill passed through Committee, with Dr. S. E. Browne in the Chair, without amendment.

After the suspension, Dr. the Hon. W. F. Duguid, Minister of Transport, Works and Maintenance, obtained a cognate debate on Orders No. 8 and 12, the Public Transport (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, 2020 and the Transport Authority (Validation) Bill, 2020. He explained that the validation Bill covered money collected for bus licences, while the other Bill amended the Road Traffic Act, the Road Traffic Regulations and the Transport Authority Act to give the Transport Authority teeth, including a three-strike rule agreed with the sector. Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. Atherley called public transport a social good. His Honour G. A. Clarke recalled the history of the Transport Board and of subsidies, and Hon. C. Y. Forde raised vehicles going off-route and was reminded by the Speaker of due process. Replying, Dr. Duguid said that the transport sector had received a \$31 million subsidy the previous year against \$15 million in this year’s estimates, and that an RFP had been issued for a separate school bus service. The record shows the Transport Authority (Validation) Act, 2020 passed.

On Order No. 14, Hon. R. R. Straughn moved the Resolution to approve, under section 3 of the Special Loans Act, Cap. 105, the borrowing of BBD 2 493 271 from Scotia Bank (Barbados) Limited to repay an existing

overdraft facility held by the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation, as part of the domestic debt restructuring. Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. Atherley opposed it, citing the Auditor General's Disclaimer of Opinion on the Corporation at Section 5.54 of the Report, and argued that the imbalance of power in the House endangered democracy; Hon. K. D. M. Humphrey replied on a point of order that the imbalance had been decided democratically.

Hon. Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw rejected the suggestion that the Government sought to censor the Corporation, and the Speaker ruled out part of Bishop Atherley's point of order as no part of the Resolution. The Prime Minister, Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley, speaking for the first time since 20th March, said that it could not be business as usual at

the Corporation but that the country must keep a public broadcasting mechanism; on a point of order she said she would be happy to see Senator Drakes as a Government Senator.

During Hon. R. R. Straughn's reply Bishop Atherley rose repeatedly on points of order, was required to withdraw the words 'this nonsense', and was ruled out of order several times. Mr. Straughn said that the facility was one of three to be restructured and that internal reforms of the Corporation must follow. The Resolution was agreed to without division. Notice was given of the Barbados Optional Savings Scheme Bill, 2020, which was read a first time, and the House was adjourned until Tuesday, 16th June, 2020 at 10.00 a.m.