
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2018 – 2022

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, October 12, 2021

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met in a hybrid meeting at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, October 12, 2021 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 N. G. H. Rowe, J.P. (Deputy Speaker)

Mr. G. W. PAYNE, Q.C., M.P.

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

Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE, J.P., L.C.P., (Minister of People

Empowerment and Elder Affairs)

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

(Attorney-General and Minister of Legal Affairs)

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD, J.P., B.A.

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

Energy, Small Business and Entrepreneurship)

Mr. E. G. HINKSON, LL.B (Hons.) L.E.C., LL.M

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

(Minister of Youth, Sports and Community Empowerment)

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

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

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

of the Opposition)

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

F.D.R.C.S., M.Min. (Minister of Housing, Lands and Maintenance)

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAM, LL.B. (Minister of Home Affairs,

Information and Public Affairs)

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

in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade)

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

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

Security)

Hon. A. R. FORDE, RPh. (Minister of Environment and

National Beautification

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

of Water Resources)

Hon. P. R. PHILLIPS, (Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security)

Hon. J. A. KING, BSS (Minister in the Prime Minister's

Office with Responsibility for Culture and the National Development Commission)

Hon. G. P. I. GOODING-EDGHILL, (Minister of Transport,

Works and Water Resources)

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

Social Partnership Relations and the Third Sector)

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

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN, B.Sc., M.Sc. M.P. (Minister in the

Ministry of Finance)

Hon. Miss M. K-A. CADDLE, B.A., M.Sc. (Minister in the

Ministry of Economic Affairs and Investment)

Ms. T. N. S-A. MOORE, M.B.A.

Prayers were taken by Rev. Father Mark Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: This House is in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, October 05, 2021.

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, October 05, 2021, be confirmed subject to any omissions, corrections and/or observations.

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

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUSPENSION OF STANDING 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 today's Sitting.

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

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER No. 6

PREVENTION OF CORRUPTION BILL, 2021

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

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, there are or there have been occasions during the life of this particular Parliament that in my respectful opinion represent tremendous changes in the way in which we go about things. Last week, we began the process of changing our constitutional relationship with the Monarchy, this week we come to address an issue that while it has far-reaching consequences externally it is more particularly addressing in a sense who we are as a people and what we think of ourselves. It is not often that I would begin a presentation by reflecting on words of the last Prime Minister but on an occasion when the last Prime Minister spoke about the issue of corruption he referred to the 1929 Statute and his first ten or 12 words are what I think could begin to set the context for our discussion today, and those words are, it is a phrase, "When Barbados was in the hands of merchants

and planters in 1929, a Bill was passed in Parliament which is still the law of Barbados".

Sir, the historical context of corruption and corruption legislation has hung around our neck like the proverbial albatross. Sir, if you look at the piece of legislation that was passed in 1929 and ask yourself who this legislation was passed for, you would immediately say well not for people of our colour, not back in 1929. In 1929, Sir, the majority black population of Barbados had virtually nothing. They were not engaged in any serious degree in commerce, I admit there were certainly one or two, but we know the planter class and the merchant class of that era.

This legislation that is still on our books was passed at a time and became law at a time that is very, very different to today. In 1929, Sir, the concept of gentlemen and gentlemen's clubs and things of that sort were very prevalent. A lot of things were done by handshake and things of that sort. When you think about corruption back in those days the dollar value, though important then, makes no sense in today's environment. In fact, Sir, if you look at the 1929 legislation it refers to acts of corruption as misdemeanours and that alone should tell you how people saw these things now almost 100 years ago, in fact eight years short of a century, because for the planter class and merchant class of those days those arrangements were but misdemeanours, and that is why I say it continues to hang as an albatross around our neck because there are still a lot of people who seem to accept that those things are part and parcel or should be part and parcel of daily lives. Sir, I regret to say that in recent times a set of Barbadians have emerged who seem to think it is almost natural and normal for you to pay somebody to get what you want -- a licence, a permit, a permission, something. It seems as though we do not feel that these things belong to us as of right, and that we need somebody to do us a favour. Sir, perhaps it starts small, if such a thing could be considered to be starting small, because I am aware, I have had conversations with people who have said: "Man, you can't give somebody a little something so that it can get done faster?," and that tells a tale because there are people like you me and everybody else who seem to feel faster -- not in order to get it done because they accept the certainty that it will be done, but they begin with the premise that it is going to take long; that it is going to take long to get a planning permission; that it is going to get long to get a liquor licence; that it is going to take long to do anything at all relating to Government and therefore they wonder whether or not they should give somebody a little something to get it done any faster. Then there are those people who believe that what they want they are not sure that they are going to get and therefore the next question would be, can they give somebody a little something to make sure that they get through. Now, Sir, I do not think that Barbadians over the years [have] recognised how those

things were eroding the very foundations of our society and they erode the foundations of our society because it means that the person who has would get through faster than the person who has to wait; it means that the person who has can get what he or she wants, while the person who is not in a position to pay a little something ends up being left to the fates and fortunes. It eroded our society and our governance because it meant that decisions might not be made on a rational basis but purely on a basis for self-gain.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the problem with this is that when it becomes so pervasive it almost seems to be acceptable.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in our Manifesto we said that corruption was a stain on our society and that it was our pledge to root it out. Now, Sir, we spoke extensively in the last election campaign about dealing with the issue of corruption and I know - there is no point hiding from it - that a large number of Barbadians expected and still expect that they would get their pound of flesh; they expected then and they still expect that individuals will be dragged before the courts. They have expressed to me and to others a disappointment in this Administration not having been able to achieve that particular aim within the time that has passed so far.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are the Government and the buck stops here. I want to assure Barbadians that notwithstanding that they may not have seen any charges [being] brought against anybody, please be aware that that process is continuing. There are a number of investigations of corruption that have taken place in Barbados since we became the Government and they continue. We brought in a team of 'high-powered specialists' very well regarded in the field, coming from as far as Australia, Turks and Caicos and other places in 2019, to begin the process of examining the state of affairs at a number of our statutory bodies, and I have spoken about it in Parliament before. They gave a report to the Government, with recommendations. They set out a Work Plan to go forward and it was presented to us in February 2020. Plans were afoot for them to come back to Barbados in 2020 and go into a deeper level of forensic analysis. We shut the country down at the end of March; all of the territories that these various specialists would have come from were also shut down; Australia was shut down tighter than a drum, and we had some considerable difficulties in getting a reconstituted team. We had considerable difficulty in planning for these individuals to return to Barbados to do the work. Then, of course, there is the practical matter of Government resources because these specialists do not come cheap.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have told this Honourable Chamber that the Trinidad and Tobago Government, the current regime in their first term, brought in 30 specialists and made them all police constables and stationed them to work out of the Parliament building for the purpose of

doing nothing but investigating corruption. They have only been able to bring one charge so far, so let us begin by looking at some fundamentals. Acts of corruption are easily alleged [but] difficult to prove and it bears repeating. Mr. Speaker, Sir, since we became the Government a lot of the people who had come to us and told us that they paid this body bribes, that they gave this body \$40 000, that they gave this body \$120 000, and on and on and on. When we went back to them and said that we wanted to put this matter into the hands of the police they withered like a spinach leaf in the hot sun and the excuses come out: "Oh, I would have to explain where I got the money from", "Oh, I don't want nobody to know I was involved in nutten so", "Oh, I still gotta do business here and my children still going to school with so-and-so and I don't want to create that problem for myself and my family".

Mr. Speaker, Sir, a level of cowardice came to the fore and these people withered and therefore absent people coming and giving testimony you need to take a different approach to how you investigate, you have to now begin to investigate accounts, how the money moves, where it moves to and our reality is that we do not have in Barbados the level of specialisation that is able to address those issues. We are building it, but we do not have it.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, there areas in which we are focusing our efforts are not things to be discussed on the Floor of Parliament but let me say that our efforts in investigating acts of corruption continue. Investigations are conducted but they are not conducted in public glare. They are painstaking, they take time and they take precision. I give you the assurance that the work continues, Mr. Speaker. However, there is another element which is relevant and that is how we deal with the problem going forward, and that is why we are here today. We are here today to pass a Bill, Mr. Speaker, and as I said, it is ironically just eight years short of a hundred years. Eight years from now will be the 100th anniversary of our Prevention of Corruption legislation. We are catching it in time, Sir. This new Bill, based on a piece of legislation in one of our OECS (Organisation of Eastern Caribbean) sister states, Grenada, to be precise, is a modern piece of legislation which will form the centrepiece of a whole suite of corruption legislation. Therefore, when you ask how we are dealing with the issue, the first thing we are doing -- we are investigating, yes, but that is investigation for past transgressions -- is putting a new piece of legislation on the table.

Sir, let me say that there was a Prevention of Corruption Bill before Parliament. It was on our Order Paper in 2020. I think it got on our Order Paper in January, 2020, and the plan was to complete the work on the Integrity in Public Life Bill and then immediately afterwards to pass the Prevention of Corruption Bill. Sir, we all know that the Integrity in Public Life Bill was

defeated in the Other Place and then Parliament was immediately prorogued, so this particular piece of legislation -- the Prevention of Corruption Act -- died with the last Sitting of Parliament. We took the opportunity, inasmuch as we had to bring it back to Parliament, to do a few additional things to it to help to further strengthen and to help give better investigative powers to the entities who are going to be doing the investigation. Sir, I will go through the Bill very shortly but the point I am making is that based on what is here today, it is not as if we did not bring it to the Chamber earlier. We brought it to the Chamber, I believe, in January of 2020; a mere 18 months after we won the Election in 2018.

Sir, I mentioned the word "suite". It is clear and it has always been clear that a single piece of legislation is not going to be adequate to deal with issues of corruption. Mr. Speaker, let me say that throughout this process we have been guided in large measure by the United Nations Convention against Corruption, the UN Convention that was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on October 31, 2003. Sir, that Convention is the first truly global effort at dealing with the issue of corruption in states. I would like to thank a former Member of this Chamber, Sir Louis Tull who, as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, negotiated and represented Barbados specifically in the negotiation of the text of this UN Convention. Since then, a lot of work has been done on it. We have been guided by the Commonwealth, which has done a tremendous amount of work on that particular Convention and has published an excellent treatise called "Commonwealth Strategies to combat corruption".

Sir, one of the things which this Convention asks states to commit to is not just the passing of legislation but to establish a specific body for the purpose of dealing with corruption issues. Sir, if you would cast your mind back to not long ago, this Chamber passed a statute establishing an Anti-Corruption Agency for the specific purpose of dealing with corruption. When we talked about it people were saying we were just taking away work from the police and kinds of things like that. It is nothing of the sort. It is internationally recognised that in order to deal with issues of corruption in a rational manner and in an almost precise manner, it has to have its own agency, someone who comes to work daily to do nothing but that. Sir, let us be practical. The Royal Barbados Police Force has a financial investigations unit. It is a unit that investigates financial crime, Sir, but it is not a big unit. It is a specialised unit but it is not a big unit, and all financial crimes in Barbados will make their way to that unit, Sir. Therefore, that unit will be dealing with fraud, money laundering and a whole host of issues on a day-to-day basis.

The point is that as a small unit within the Royal Barbados Police Force, it cannot dedicate all of the time of

its personnel purely to investigating corruption matters, and we simply do not have enough people. We do not have the people to add to that unit, and that is our reality. We may not like it but that is our reality. We are strengthening that financial investigations unit but part of our challenge is that when we want to bring in an accountant to do forensic analysis and so on, that person does not want to be a policeman. We have challenges getting that unit outfitted in terms of the skills that we want. Yes, we can buy some skills but that creates other difficulties. We have already established a body whose specific purpose it is to investigate acts of corruption, and if you cast your mind back to that statute, Sir, the only people in Barbados who have better protection in terms of security of tenure would be the Director of Public Prosecutions, the judges and the Auditor General. The individual who is appointed to be the Director General of that entity has his appointment dealt with specifically as well as his removal from office. You cannot say then that he will be a creature of any political body of the day.

Sir, let me carry you back through this. It is not just the issue of setting up a new piece of legislation or bringing legislation to the books. We are also required to set up a specific agency and that box has already been checked. Added to that, Sir, will be the Integrity in Public Life Bill, and I can say to the Chamber that I expect to be able to lay that new Bill in this Chamber before the end of October.

Asides.

Hon. D.D. MARSHALL: Sir, it is unfortunate that it got defeated in the Senate, in the Other Place, but that is what it is. We have gone back to the drawing board and the two areas that the Members of the Other Place specifically said they wanted address -- one area was to do with judges and the other slips my mind -- we have gone and addressed those issues, and that Bill will be laid in Parliament to come back to this House. I pray for its passage in the Senate when it gets to them, Sir.

In addition to that, we recognised that we have to offer and afford protection to the so-called whistleblower. The individual who in good faith, says I have seen something, and I cannot keep it to myself, I really feel that I should draw this to the attention of someone so that they know what is happening. Sir, it is not everybody that wants to be a whistleblower, a lot of people wants to be gossipers, they want to come and whisper something in your ears, and as I said, when you look around and say come, they disappear, they wither like the spinach leaf in the hot sun. However, they are individuals who if given adequate statutory protection, we believe that they would be comfortable enough in their minds to be able to come forward knowing that they cannot be victimize, knowing that they cannot be unfair, because there is a statute to protect them. Sir, that Bill I expect to also bring to this chamber before the end of the month.

Then finally, we have a piece of legislation which is on the Order Paper which is a Remediation Agreement, which will attempt to give us a number of options in terms of dealing with entities who might be found guilty, and in fact not just of corruption, but in terms of a whole raft of other things that may arise. Hence, we talk about his suite of legislation, I remind you then Sir that it is not a single piece of legislation that will equip our legislative arsenal, it will be a whole set of pieces, all of which combine, puts Barbados in a good position going forward and puts Barbados in a position where we will have a credible response to acts of corruption.

Now, Mr. Speaker a lot of what we have to deal with will not just be statutory, it will have to be governance operates. I remember when we were last in Government, the Town Planning Department had a charter which said, we will grant all planning permission within six months. It was a guarantee by a state entity which said to citizens, in six months and no more you will have your planning permission. Now, that of course does not take into account things like environmental impact assessments, those are obviously planning applications of a whole different kind. However, when we approach governance in the way of offering commitments to citizens, then citizens will begin to understand that the offerings of the Government are theirs as of right and they do not have to pay anyone for it.

Another part of what we have done has been to put a whole set of new governance relationships in place dealing with how Government spends its money. I will leave it for the Minister in the Ministry of Finance to speak about it. Now, I will say to you Sir, if there is one thing this Administration has had as its mantra every single day, has been transparency, transparency, transparency.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when you come to Government, a lot of people come and say we feel we can do this, we feel we can do that, we want an opportunity to do this and

the other, something called unsolicited proposals, where everybody has an idea. It is Government's duty to listen to the ideas of its people, to see how they can work, but to do it in such a way that everybody has an equal opportunity. Hence, in instances where we have had proposals put to us, we have gone back out and said, thank you this is very kind of you, but we feel that as a Government we cannot only allow you to access this opportunity, we have to allow other people. In the area of housing, the Ministry has requested proposals in the media. Then again, I remember, being in the Public Accounts Committee, looking at the last Administration's record on housing, and looking at the number of contracts that were awarded for housing by the Cabinet, not even by the National Housing Corporation, to various businesses involved in construction in Barbados and not an Ad was ever found to have been published in the Bill. We have worked on the direct project and every single person was invited by public advertisement to participate. No deals were made. Put your proposal in and it will be considered. In relation to the new roll out of the trash bins was another public invitation. Every single element of what we have done, we have gone to the public and said to Barbadians, come and put in your proposal and we will consider it.

Sir, transparency is what helps to give confidence in what a Government does, and when people have confidence in what a Government does, then the specter of corruption does not so easily rare its head.

Mr. Speaker, we have to acknowledge that it will take time to rebuild the confidence of Barbadians in our structures. I have walked many streets in this country and I feel bad when people say, all you all are that same thing. I feel bad, because, there is a perception that as long as you are a politician you are dishonest, as long as you are a politician you in it only for what you can get. Sir, we do not often talk about the things that we have to do. Two of the people in this Chamber were at work dealing with constituencies and people's issues at 11 o' clock last night. No one talks about those kinds of sacrifices, they feel that you are Parliamentarian or that you are a Cabinet Minister and line your pockets. That is very far from the case, because I look around at my colleagues and I know almost to a man we are all worse off financially, because we have chosen to come and serve the people's interest, and we will leave Parliament being worse off financially. That has to be a badge of honour. Sir, in another place, I used to change suits regularly.

Asides:

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL: Sir, in another profession I used to feel I was well dressed, now I have to start trotting back out the respected blue blazer, because the suits looking a little bit worn. Sir, when people look at me and you and others of us and feel that we are in this somehow

to get rich. I do not know how they get there, because it is only one way to get rich as a politician and that is to be dishonest. Plain and simple. When I look to my left, I look to my right, I look behind me and I look in front of me, and from all that I have seen in my colleagues, is that they represent a breed of politician who want to have nothing to do with that old jaded perception of who we are. However, we accept the burden, we accept that that is how people see us, but all that we ask is that at the end of our tenure look again to see what we are driving, what we are wearing, where we living, how we are living, whether we have given our best and taken little or nothing from the people we serve.

Mr. Speaker, as I said and perhaps I have laboured too long with those introductory remarks, today represents a change because we finally will have on our law books a piece of legislation that is able to deal with the issue of corruption. Let me remind the Chamber that an act of corruption had a maximum fine of \$2,400 if a person was charged with corruption under law as it is today. If tried in the Magistrate's Court, the maximum fine would have been \$240 and a term of imprisonment of up to four months. Sir, this is not a deterrent. Ten years before World War II when the planters and merchants passed this Act, there were no contracts for tens of millions of dollars or hundreds of millions of dollars.

Yes, the relative value of money would have meant of course that the dollar figures in those would have been different. The relative importance and value might be closer but we have kept anachronistic fines on our law books for almost a hundred years, and not just in this area but in others. However, the time has come for us to grapple with this issue and to deal with it frontally. Therefore, our new piece of legislation will have far higher fines than currently existing. I can share the level of the fines that we are looking at. We are looking at fines on summary convictions in the Magistrate Court of \$500, 000 or imprisonment for 10 years; or both.

On conviction in the High Court, there are fines of up to \$1.5 million or imprisonment for 15 years; or both. We are looking seriously at the level of penalties and to make sure that the potential penalties that can be imposed on an individual found guilty of corruption are a true deterrent. Let me say, Mr. Speaker, and you know it only too well that nobody in this Chamber decides what fine will be imposed on a person when they get before the law courts. I have often spoken about the doctrine of the separation of powers. It is for the judge to determine. Equally, constitutionally we cannot say that a person found guilty of an act of corruption must be fined \$1.5 million. It removes the discretion of the judge.

It would mean that Parliament would be supplanting the role of the judiciary and it is therefore

unconstitutionally. Am I right, Mr. Speaker? This is Constitutional Law 201. However, what we are providing here is a wider range of fines that are available for the judge to impose or a greater range of imprisonment terms for a judge to impose. Hence, a judge can impose anything up to \$1.5 million in fines or anything up to 15 years in imprisonment. Sir, those are true deterrents when you consider what corruption can take place today. Also, I want to say, Sir, that part of the challenge that we recognise is the powers that are available on an investigation.

Sir, our overseas consultant said to us, "One of the difficulties that you will have is really how to get a proper investigation done." In an investigation you have to be able to demand of individuals documents; records. I mentioned earlier that we took the opportunity to improve on the Bill that we had before. Sir, there is a part which is specifically called Investigations. Nothing like this is anywhere else in the OECS and as I said, we drew a lot from the Grenadian legislation but we understood that we had to go further. Therefore, there is a part which is headed Investigations. This part, Sir, serves to give the investigating authority special tools to get documentary evidence so that it can be analysed, gone through, sifted through and poured over to see how money moves, where it moves to and how does it eventually get to where it needs to get to.

There is also the opportunity for cooperating with entities outside of Barbados. Mr. Speaker, I talk about the suite again. I talk things to dovetail because in the Act setting up the anti-corruption agency, this agency which will be investigating corruption has the powers to work with entities outside of Barbados. It something that we now make easy, Sir. Mr. Speaker, in this Bill it also considers a variety of things which serve to protect the reputation of people. It is very easy to go and say X did this, Y did that or Z "tek" money, et cetera. However, such conduct has to be discouraged if it is made in bad faith and for the first time, Sir, we have a clause which bears some consideration; Clause 20.

It states as follows:

"A person who knowingly makes a false allegation or maliciously provides false information related to an offence under Part II is guilty of an offence and is liable

a. on summary conviction, to a fine of \$50,000 or to imprisonment for 3 years or to both; and

b. on conviction on indictment, to a fine of \$150 000 or to imprisonment for 5 years or to both."

Sir, what we are trying to say is that if you want to come and tarnish somebody's name, provide false information and give malicious statements to authorities alleging acts of corruption, then you, Sir, are committing an

illegal act. We feel as a Parliament that we also need to protect the reputation of individuals where that reputation is worthy of protection. You cannot just run around and say, “X this. Y that. He tek money. She tek money.” No, Sir. We are not accepting that. Anybody who does it maliciously or does it knowingly false is guilty of a criminal offence. Mr. Speaker, I believe that in a modern Barbados we have a lot to be proud of.

For generations, we have always spoken about a level of public servant that has been envy of the Caribbean. We have always talked about structures of governance but the truth is that a system must always be retooled from time to time to make it workable and modern. Mr. Speaker, I am satisfied that in this Government we have tried to approach the issues of governance from many different angles and tried to improve them by measures that are reasonable and those that do not create an undue burden on the citizen. We need Barbadians to be confident about governance again. I do not think that everybody thinks that we are dishonest but because of a lot of things that have happened over the years, people do not have confidence in a lot of our leaders and it is not just the political class. They do not have a lot of confidence in the many decision-makers that exist all around Government because they do not see how Government works. Perhaps we need to begin to move in the direction of -- and I know that the Minister of Home Affairs is working on that and we have committed to the freedom of information legislation, because we need to be able to let people understand. I am not going to mash on his territory, but people have to feel that this Government is theirs and that what we do in their name is no big secret.

Mr. Speaker, I am trying to get house spots at Ginger Works and you might wonder why I mentioned it. Sir, because every day when my constituents call me and ask me about the house spots, I go into graphic details about what the Ministry of Housing is doing. Sir, it is not a house spot for the Ministry of Housing. It is a house spot for the people and the people deserve to know the processes that have to be gone through, they deserve to know the kinds of decisions that have to be made to benefit them because information is not something the belongs to the deciders. Information also belongs to the people who are affected by it and I tell them not just because they have a right to know, but because when they know, there is a better chance of them understanding that it is not as easy as saying: “Man, take a house spot there” or “Go and put one over there”. There are things that have to be gone through and those things, yes, accountability. They establish accountability, they know what they can expect, and they know transparency.

All of these things are a part of good governance and so, Sir, I am never afraid when people ask me questions about the Royal Barbados Police Force (R.B.P.F.). There are, of course, certain things that I would never disclose to

the public, but there also certain things that, equally, I feel we should say to the public. We would never disclose matters in relation to the details of an investigation or law enforcement, but the fact is that people need to have an understanding of how we serve them and the connection, Sir, to the issue of corruption is real because if they have a good understanding of how Government works, what are the processes, is it transparent, then, Mr. Speaker, people will have confidence in the system and then, when once it is transparent there will be little or no opportunity for individuals to abuse the power that they have.

Mr. Speaker, I commend this piece of legislation. It comes with an Explanatory Note which goes through the various clauses. I will highlight though that it incorporates the “United Nations Convention against Corruption”. Let me say that there have been some people who have been on the frontlines of the corruption issue. I know that they support the efforts, but I have had to take licks from them and I do not mind and I speak of Integrity Barbados, Sir. Integrity Barbados is a group of civic-minded individuals who have performed stellar service to Barbados and Barbadians as the watchdog of the people’s trust. We do not always agree on everything, but I have to say, Sir, that Integrity Barbados represents what a watchdog should be and they have pilloried us publicly for not having passed the Integrity in Public Life legislation. They have pilloried us for not having brought the anti-corruption legislation, but I know, Sir, that in every step of the way this is not about the criticising of Government this is really about telling the Government to get on with what it has to do. This particular Bill went out to Integrity Barbados for their comment and they responded by giving very clear comments on the Bill. It is not everything that they want that we would have been able to put into this Bill because some of the things that they have pointed out are for other pieces of legislation. Some of the things that they have queried have to do with drafting style and, of course, we have our own style of drafting. The important thing is that the legislation works.

We have also had consultations with The Bar Association of Barbados and The Bar Association of Barbados has also very kindly made critical comments of the Bill and in every place that it was possible to do so, we have taken those comments into account, both of Integrity Barbados and of the Bar Association of Barbados. I want to thank them, Sir, for taking the time out to stand and look this over on the behalf of the people of Barbados. There only interest has been in improving the legislation and they gave that kind of service to the people of Barbados graciously.

One of the things that Integrity Barbados was concerned about was us adopting the International Convention and I am happy to say, Sir, that this Bill will, when passed in both Chambers and assented to by Her

Excellency the Governor-General, will see the United Nations Convention Against Corruption having the force of law in Barbados. I say so mindful of the fact that many of the boxes that this convention has put there for us to fill in, almost, many of the areas that they have asked us to commit us, we have already done so. I have done a little checklist, Sir, and I believe the Honourable Chamber might find it useful if I pointed out a few of them.

The Convention, as I have mentioned before, requires that we establish a specific anti-corruption body and we have already done that. This Convention at Article VIII requires that we address the issue of conduct for public officials. That is just another word for integrity legislation and that, we have a history there and it is coming again.

Article IX of the Convention talks about public procurement and management of public finances. We have enacted a Public Finance Management Act 2019 and will shortly bring to Parliament a new Bill called the Public Procurement Bill. It is just about complete.

Article XI - Measures Relating to the Judiciary and Prosecution Services. We are ahead of them on that score because one of the earliest acts of this Government in securing transparency and how we do things was the establishment of a Judicial Appointment Committee to take the appoint of judges out of the bald area where the Prime Minister has that power of appointment. We have also extended the age of retirement for the Director of Public Prosecutions (D.P.P.) and the Auditor General so we have served to give those offices greater protection.

Article IV - Measures to Prevent Money Laundering. Mr. Speaker, we have already passed a number of pieces of legislation. The Proceeds and Instrumentalities of Crime Act, 2019. In 2011, the last Administration passed the Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism Prevention of Control Act. Since we have become the Government we have passed a series of amendments to the Companies Act to disclose beneficial ownership of companies which is key in fighting money laundering. We made that amendment in the last few months.

Article XV of the Convention is that we must provide for the Bribery of Public Officials and we have that in Clause IV of our Prevention of Corruption Bill.

Article XVI -- Bribery of Foreign Officials. Again the Convention is saying that we must put legislative restrictions in place so as to eliminate the bribery of foreign public officials and that is provided for in Clause V of this Bill.

Article XVIII -- Trading in Influence is provided for in Clause 7 of this Bill. Article XXI -- Bribery in the Private Sector.

It happens, Sir. We focus so much on Bribery in the Public Sector that we forget that a lot of that stuff happens in the private sector too. Nobody wants to talk about it but it is there. The Convention requires us to deal with it and we have addressed it in Clause 11 of this Bill. Article 23, Laundering of Proceeds of Crime must be addressed. As I said, we have already passed a number of pieces of legislation dealing with money laundering, and on and on and on and on.

While it is true, Sir, that we have come to this dance a little late in terms of making the United Nations Convention the Law of Barbados, I can say to this Chamber proudly that most of the things that are required by the Convention we have already taken solid steps towards achieving, many of them are already on the ground in our laws, so I have no difficulty in saying to the world really that Barbados adopts as part of its law the United Nations Convention on Corruption. At this point it is the most thorough, the most comprehensive global treaty that deals with the issue of corruption, and it is commended very, very highly by the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Mr. Speaker, there is work to be done. We are passing the law today. It will go to the Senate very shortly and I expect that they would pass it, but when once this is finished we have to embrace the other pieces of legislation that are going to be required to complete the suite and then that is when the hard work begins, Mr. Speaker, because while we are investigating acts of corruption for the past, it is incumbent on us as a Parliament to make sure that we root out opportunities for corruption going forward. Yes, people will always find a way to do it but when it happens we will have the tools to be able to deal with it both in investigating it and in punishing it.

Most importantly, Sir, and I will end on this point, in 2019 we passed a piece of legislation called the Proceeds and Instrumentalities of Crime Act and that piece of legislation is what will allow us to be able to force individuals who are guilty of acts of corruption to disgorge the profits, the disgorge the assets and to disgorge the money that they get from the corruption. Sir, it is not just a case of well you served three years in prison and you pay a fine, the Proceeds and Instrumentalities of Crime Act, a vital part of this particular suite, is what will allow us to confiscate from you the cars, the big houses, the money in the bank account overseas or the money in the bank account here, or the jewellery, whatever it is. Whatever ill-gotten gains you got from acts of corruption we now have a statutory basis for confiscating it from you and making sure that you are deprived of the benefits of your ill-conceived and dishonest actions.

Mr. Speaker, I commend this Bill to the Chamber. It has been a while in coming but today marks the beginning of a new approach and I ask that Barbadians first of all join us in this fight. If you see it, be man enough to come forward and say it happened, be man enough and come forward and say I support law enforcement in dealing with this issue, but most of all be decent enough to say not me, I am not paying you for anything. Anything that is here provided by the Government of Barbados is provided for all of its people as of right. You pay taxes, you do not have to pay bribes. You do not ever have to pay bribes not to get a permit for nothing in this land so let us begin with that reset of our mind.

On our side we commit to making sure that governance works better than it has in the past. We have completely changed how we deal with liquor licences so that it is quick. People want to know if the Government is responsive. We are changing how we are dealing with vending so that that is responsive. All Government agencies, the Immigration Department, the Town Planning Department, the Government Electrical Engineering Department, that have to interface with people that have traditionally been in the scope or in the discussion when we talk about acts of corruptions, permit for ZRs, all of these things, are things that are yours as of right so we are going to do our part and we ask Barbadians to reset because that is not who we are.

I am obliged to you, and I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

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

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

Bishop the Hon J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Sitting here and listening to the Honourable Attorney General and Member for St. Joseph making his presentation not for the first time, I sensed that I seem to be hearing a spokesperson for a Government that is marking time on very critically and urgent issues, the address of which is essential to the well-being of our country, the integrity of our institutions and the democracy that we are growing. Mr. Speaker, having railed against the last Administration for its tardiness in addressing the broad issue of corruption and integrity in public life in Barbados, having made serious allegation of wrongdoing, serious and significant charges, against Members of the last Administration, how do you explain that in three-and-a-half year into the term we are still talking about these things, the future tense. How else, Mr. Speaker, can we explain a Government that avows it is serious about integrity in public life legislation allowing that Bill to pass this House to go to the Other Place and not ensuring that it has the numbers present for the passage of that Bill? How else do

you explain that, Mr. Speaker? It is alright to stand and say it was stopped in the Other Place, it failed in the Other Place? There were objectors to some aspects of the way the Bill presented itself in the Other Place, that is alright and that is in place that is normal. Why would a Government with the numbers available to itself to ensure the passing of Integrity of Public Life legislation in the Other Place not have those numbers present? There is nobody on earth who can convince me, and I said it when we debated it here before it went to the Senate and I repeat it, there is nobody who can convince me that this Government was interested in seriously having the Integrity in Public Life legislation fully passed through the Parliament of Barbados.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Joseph.

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL: Sir, the Honourable Member is misleading the Chamber and it really is, I suppose, expected but he really needs to reflect on the composition of the Senate, Sir. He needs to remember that the Senate has 21 Members: two appointed by the Opposition, seven by Her Excellency, and the other 12 appointed by the Government, one of whom is the President of the Senate and who does not have an original vote. There is no way that 11 Members could result in a two-thirds majority in the Chamber, Sir.

Asides.

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL: There is no way, Sir, and his two Senators opposed the Bill, so to suggest to the public of Barbados that a Government can guarantee itself the support of the requisite number of Independent Senators and Opposition Senators is an absurdity. He really ought to stop misleading the House.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Continue, Honourable Member.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member coming out of St. Joseph can call it an absurdity as often as he wishes and speak as loudly as he wishes, but I know the greater absurdity is this: You need to ensure that a Bill passes in the other House, having passed this House. You need to ensure that you can get a two-thirds majority down there. Therefore, you need the maximum vote available to you from your Members, and you do not ensure that they are present, Mr. Speaker? Do you think that is a Government serious about having that Bill pass the Other Place? If you recognise that the configuration of the Other Place is such that to get the two-thirds majority you need some support from either Independent Senators or Opposition Senators, and you do

not yourself make sure that your Members are present and to vote? Mr. Speaker, wherein lies the absurdity?

Asides.

Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: I am not here to exercise control over adult, reasoned, educated and informed people who are making a serious contribution to debate in this country. We are not part of a culture that silences people. There are those on that side who are not free to speak, Mr. Speaker. If we want to get into that, we can get into that. I have never said to anyone in the Other Place, having been appointed to any degree by my instrumentality that they have to agree with what I say. In fact, I told them the opposite and that we are big people, here to debate in the interest of Barbados and if you differ from me on a view, say so. We have never reached a point of collusion on any matter with reference to public debate, but others on that side cannot speak freely. Not a single one of them can get up and dare to differ from that which is printed on the choir sheet. If you want us to go down that road today, we can go down that road.

Do you want to tell me that a Government that is serious about having legislation passed in the Other Place, knowing that it requires a two-thirds majority up there and knowing the configuration, does not ensure that its Members are present? You cannot be serious. I think therein is where the absurdity lies, and I am not going to accuse anybody of being absurd but I think in that is where the absurdity lies. You are marking time because you created a certain expectation in this country that this Government would change the nature of things and the culture of things in Barbados, and you are getting ready to face the people again and to ask of them their favour, and you have nothing hardly to show in three-and-a-half years. You come here again and you take an additional step in marking time. You cannot be serious.

I heard nothing said by the Honourable Attorney General in his presentation that suggested to me that he is of the view. Maybe this is another absurdity on my part. I heard nothing to suggest that he is to any degree of the view that what we have in Barbados is a culture of corruption, systemic corruption. We cannot bring instruments here and talk glibly about stipulations that would address the ad hoc situation here and the intermittent issue there. Mr. Speaker, you work in the law courts of Barbados. You are also a man of the people. Your focus has been on sociological development of this country. You have taught that. You understand what obtains around us. You are now in the practice of politics and have been for quite a while. You understand what faces us. This is not the occasional excursion into corruption by a few. In Barbados today we are facing down a serious situation of corruption. It is systemic, it is part of the culture that operates in the higher echelons of life in Barbados. It is endemic, Mr.

Speaker. We cannot come here and glibly sing some song that we have done this and we will do this and this will address this situation.

What this Parliament needs to acknowledge, what the public of Barbados seems to perceive -- and the Honourable Attorney General spoke to the issue of perception to a large degree -- and what this Parliament needs to understand is that the average man perceives that there are high levels of corruption as part of the culture and way of life in Barbados. It is not just related to persons operating in the political sphere. It is not that politicians are seen only in that negative light. People believe that what we have is a network, a swirl of corruption, a cesspool of corrupt practices in Barbados. This Parliament, having excited the anticipation and expectations of people, needs to address that and stop marking time. That is a reality. If you want to call it an absurdity, do so, but that is a reality. Mr. Speaker, you know it perhaps.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church East may or may not know it. Certainly, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West does not know it. The quite Honourable Member for St. John does not know it. Even my honourable friend out of St. George North does not know it. These two honourable colleagues who sit behind me very quietly may not know it. All of these people to whom I have referred have just arrived, including the Honourable Member for St. George North; they have just arrived. They have now come into the vortex, the milieu of what happens around politics and political practice in Barbados. There are those who have been here for a long time, and there is no way they cannot know. If I can know, so can they. What we have to face down in Barbados is a culture of corruption that is endemic and that eats at the innards of this country, and if Parliament does not vigorously and quickly address it and stop marking time, the people of Barbados will lose this country. That can be cited as an absurdity if they wish. To me, that is a reality.

Certain elements of the banking sector, Mr. Speaker. Certain elements of those who are in the business of developing, the developers, the valuers, Mr. Speaker. We can go on. The construction magnates. Some in the political circles and some in official circles. It is a network, a cesspool of corruption obtaining. The Honourable Attorney General is quite right, so many people are afraid to speak, so many people are afraid to say anything, even among those who occupy these precincts and who without a doubt the practitioners of corruption in this country, the naughty hands that live in the dark, behind the scenes, that live in the backs of the people of Barbados that use the system for their corrupt narrow benefit interest. We know it, they get up here and sound good and talk good, but it is there, when the other parties in office, we against that issues, when we come it is all hunky-dory, we are

doing our best, we are investigating and we are bringing legislation, and we address that at three and a half years, and now you have to face the people who voted for us. The basis is the fact that we promise to address these things and we fail to address them and all kinds of excuses to which we make recourse. We could not get a team from here and could not get a team from there and COVID shut this down and COVID shut that down and this Bill came here and it was defeated in the other place, all kinds of excuses. When the country dies, when the country is being raped, when the average Barbadian out there constitutes a populace that fall prey and victim to these people's greed and dirtiness. That is where we are. You know the network, Mr. Speaker, you get information, perhaps even more than I do, check it out. Those who are in banking, property development, construction, real estate and valuations, you know the fraternity of corruption, the cesspool of evil doers that exist out there. In all that they can do what they want to harm me. Others have travelled this way before. They can prey on my family, that is the reality

When I came here, I came here in the interest of serving my God and serving my people, whatever sacrifice or pain and suffering along the way comes to me with my calling. I can square that and face that down. If I come here and I join a band of merry men and simply going through the motions, wasting everybody's time including my own and wasting your time Sir.

This is an exercise of hypocrisy. If we do not recognise the magnitude of the problem, acknowledge it, square with it, confront it, and treat it frontally. This is nothing more than exercising hypocrisy. Eventually, some legislation will go on the statute books. Eventually we will get there, and if we can manage to survive this term and get another term politically and become the Administration for now. If we can manage to do that, then this can put on a backburner for a while. Mr. Speaker, they are those who are new to this place and who will not sense that. I have been around long enough to know the signs, to be able to read the signs and to see what is happening. I pray to God that those who are new will be awoken to this reality and make their moments in this place count.

It is an exercise, a cosmetic process paid to raise the picture, construct a different public relations platform, determine what the narrative is going to be, sell it to the public through our friends, in the media and otherwise. That is what we do. Then we make recourse to our beds at night and sleep comfortably, when the country is raped.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member of St. Joseph raised the issue of perception with respect to how politicians are viewed. It is a reality that he cited. Mr. Speaker, do you know that there is a perception of corruption among the most recent highly controversial and

questionable action of the Government with respect to the fail attempt to acquire vaccines for the people of Barbados?

Mr. Speaker, in St. Michael Central, have you not heard this? Is this not the perception on the ground, that is, corruption attaching to that failed attempt to acquire vaccines for the people of Barbados? How is it that the Government can get into arrangements to acquire vaccine through an intermediary company, when it is known that the international pharmaceutical company does not so supply vaccines? How is it that a responsible can find the intermediary agency, allegedly to pursue the acquisition of vaccines in the interest of their well-being of the people of Barbados, while the same Government should be aware that the international supply company does not so distribute the vaccines? When people come face to face with a question like that, they wonder what form of corruption confronts us at the time. Why does this Government that wants to demonstrate such soundness, prudence, and transparency in the process of procurement? Why does this Government select a company that has no track record in acquiring health related or medical supplies? As far as I am aware it does not. When people hear things like that, you get what essentially a construction company operating under some radical designation to be the main instrument through which you seek to acquire vaccines from an international company that does not so supply and the company you select has no track record in this area. The Attorney General made a very loud sounding a vowel of his, he was loud when he said that this Government now having observed what happened with the past Administration is very careful as to its process of selection of those who supply with services or products.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know what was the mechanism used for identifying and selecting a company with no track record in this area to acquire these vaccines for Barbados.

When the average fellow out there in St. Michael West realises that this company does not have a track record and he becomes aware that he is not being informed or advised as to what is the selection criteria and the selection process to which this company was chosen to undertake this in the interest of Barbadians allegedly, well he is bound to come to the conclusion that perhaps there is some form of corruption. The perception is obvious. Perception is strong. Perception is real. Mr. Speaker, you can perhaps give me the precise figures but my understanding is that these vaccines should be available at a very affordable cost for a country like ours at US\$3 or US\$4.

However, when you hear on the street and the average man on the street is hearing, I am saying that when he hears the Barbados Government strapped for cash in strained economic circumstances in 2021 and struggling to keep people surviving on the barest minimum in many

instances, as you well know in your area and mine, that the Government is willing to pay US\$23 and US\$24 is there any wonder that there is a perception of corruption? I am agreeing with the Honourable Member for St. Joseph. A lot of the time, there is a perception of corruption. The reality of corruption has to be dealt with, Mr. Speaker. The perception of corruption also has to be dealt with and it cannot be dealt with by simply trying whether it be the lips of the substantive Prime Minister or the acting Prime Minister.

It cannot be achieved by simply trying to castigate an Opposition Member who simply raises questions that people outside are raising anyhow and questions which become obvious to anybody. The Government castigating any leader of any party anywhere in this country who raises it and dismisses it as a red herring. Mr. Speaker, can you easily dismiss such as red herring if the actual cost should be approximate \$US5 and you or paying US\$23 or US\$24 in these times? If it is a red herring, it is a very big red herring. People are not amused by these things. Mr. Speaker, why would the Minister of Health not know of these arrangements?

Let me put that otherwise. Why would the Minister of Health not be advised of, informed or be party to the discussion on these arrangements? Yet you can have correspondence under the hand of the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health but the poor, hardworking Minister doing his best to help to drive and lead the process on the response to the COVID-19 threat and its impact on Barbados does not know. He does not know because he has not been told because nobody wants to place added stress on his already burdened shoulders, so he must be left to treat to the other things related to the COVID-19 fight.

However, when it comes to the acquisition of vaccines our main tool in our arsenal or response is that you spare him that knowledge but a functionary under his leadership can write officially corresponding on behalf of the Barbados Government. I would imagine that if the Minister of Health does not know, then the Cabinet does not know. The Minister of Health sits in the Cabinet of Barbados and it cannot be that any discussion pertaining to this went down at Cabinet level, and the Minister was deaf while that happened or asked to leave the room to protect his well-being because the discussion would be too stressful for his hearing. Therefore, I would imagine that the Cabinet did not know. If I am wrong, I should be corrected and soon. Now, if the Cabinet did not know, then where exactly did the discussion take place? In whose mind and company were these decisions made? Was the Prime Minister off on a frolic of her own? Of course, Mr. Speaker, Members of the Cabinet would have to square with that. If they knew, they should say that they knew and they were in agreement that the Minister of Health should not be told to spare him added burden on his already

weighty shoulders. Mr. Speaker, when things like these go down the perception is birthed in the bosom and minds of people that there is corruption.

As a Parliament and a group of lawmakers, they have to treat to the reality as well as the perception of corruption. Mr. Speaker, we have stop marking time. We have to deal with what we perceive to be those intermittent episodes when people make excursions into corrupt practices in Barbados. We recognize that we are confronted with a culture that it is systemic and endemic, and that the Parliament's responsibility here is to make a substantive difference to what obtains and quickly so in the interest of Barbados. Those things said by myself thus far might not be well received. It may be uncomfortable and awkward. It might be quite off the mark. If I am quite off the mark, I simply have to be told I am quite off the mark and I would tell the rest of Barbados, "Listen, I was quite off the mark and so are some of you."

However, in the absence of anything to suggest that we are off the mark, we have to believe that what we perceive could actually be the reality. This is in a context, Mr. Speaker, because you cannot give the whole hog to one man. Mr. Speaker, you cannot give the whole hog to one man. It does not matter who he is. It does not matter what hue of skin he wears. It does not matter what initials represent his name. You cannot give the whole hog to one man. \$24 million at Valerie. Those words sound familiar, Mr. Speaker? It is \$24 million for the Valerie Project at Brittons Hill. Words sound familiar to you, Mr. Speaker? You have been around long enough.

\$24 million to one man at Valerie. \$28 million to the same man at the Grotto, Mr. Speaker, and this is not a voice that is sounding forth in celebratory note. This is a voice that is sounding forth in great lament and condemnation that you can give to one man \$24 million. You then come back and give to same man \$28 million. You cannot give to the same man \$54 million for Berth 5 at the Bridgetown Port. Those words sound familiar yet, Mr. Speaker? You heard those. I heard those. I agreed with those words, so did you and so did all of us. Then another \$50 million in equipment at the same Port, all one man, same initials, same hue; skin, same one man, is being railed against as an action which is undesirable for this country. I agreed with that and then you put him in pole position for another \$200 million for Berth 6; same man. Mr. Speaker, are you doing the maths. I have never heard of you as a mathematician, but \$24 million, \$28 million, \$54 million, \$50 million and \$200 million. Those are real millions there so I have lost count. You cannot do this. One man? To add insult to injury you allowed him all the trams and trolleys that transport tourists from the ships to the terminal in The Port; the same man. You cannot give all of this to one man and you do all of this while struggling taxi men cannot even make \$100 a day and that is pre-COVID-19 so you

know what is happening now. You gave all of this to one man and it was utterly and bitterly condemned and justly so. Then you allowed him one or two acres for a cement operation just outside the precincts of the same Port; the same man. When these things happen there is the perception of corruption. That was the message then. We perceived there must be corruption if you are doing all of this in the interest of one man, there must be corruption. That is what we were shouting from the rooftops and the platforms and then you gave him all of the acreage up at Coverley that was owned by National Housing Corporation (N.H.C.) to build 11 000 houses and to earn \$100 000 on each house; the same man. This same man, by the way, is the vaccine man; the same man. You gave him five acres up there for him to collection in excess of \$100 000 per month in rent; the same man. On top of that, \$2 300 lots at Bushy Park. Mr. Speaker, one man. This Government in Opposition, railed, and justly so against that; condemned that and told the people of Barbados we need to have a change in Government in this country for things like this, but that was then.

Mr. Speaker, I heard recently of some potential prospective development relative to renewable energies around the Bushy Park area. I am waiting, Mr. Speaker, to see if this renewable energy project which is proposed and which is substantial and it supposed to be near Bushy Park, is anyway connected with this one man. I hope not. I am waiting to see and waiting to hear. I am waiting to see as you are, Mr. Speaker, what becomes of the efforts to establish a marijuana industry in Barbados and who will be the substantial beneficiaries of that particular facilitation by legislation passed in this Parliament. I am waiting to see, waiting to hear and waiting to know.

There is an Airport Private Lounge facility, Mr. Speaker, the same man. Airport Lounge operation that accommodates private business travel, jets and so forth; the same man, the same man, the same man, the same man.

Then, Mr. Speaker, there was the facilitating of the Ross University staff and Ross University student population in those unoccupied houses up at Coverley, facilitating that, an operation that somehow moved from Dominica here to Barbados in questionable circumstances; the same man.

Asides.

Bishop the Hon J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Yes, you have your opinion, I have mine. You have your information, I have mine. The same man benefits substantially from that. The country may benefit from their presence and their spending, but substantially the same man. Can you give all of this to one man? I mean you railed against it and then you come and you facilitate the more and you say there cannot be a perception of corruption? Then you insured the

demolition of the Liquidation Centre to make way for The Hyatt Hotel; the same man, the same man, the same man. You know this, you hear this and understandably you have to be quiet but you hear this, you know this and then you have to repair to your beds at St. Michael North West and you have to repair to your bed in St. John and you have to repair to your bed in Christ Church East Central and Christ Church East and St. Lucy knowing this, that we condemned this type of thing, one man, but now we facilitate him even further and in the context of all of that we stand to talk about anti-corruption legislation and how serious we are and how we are going to prosecute this person and prosecute that person, just give us time. One man continues to build bigger and bigger barns on the backs of the people of Barbados.

What about the upscale elements of the Hope Project. I am not talking about the low end aspects of the Hope Projects, I am talking about the upscale aspects, the more sophisticated aspects, the more productive and financially so aspects of the Hope Projects. Is it the same man and now an attempted Vaccine Project using the same man and, Mr. Speaker, do you see the situation here? I understand the situation, you know. There is no risk at all involved for this company Radical Investments. Government guarantees you a price if, according to the reports, you can acquire these vaccines we will guarantee you this price. There is no risk involved in this venture, once we get it the Government will pay and the Minister of Health does not know because this is the Ministry of Finance thing so, perhaps, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South Central knows or Ambassador, His Excellency Dr. Clyde Mascoll or one of the many other advisors and consultants surrounding the Ministry of Finance. Maybe they know, but the Minister of Health does not know because this is too much for him to hear. He cannot carry this in his bosom. He is already overloaded. A guaranteed sale price for a no-risk venture. That is what it is. The public perception is that these decisions often, often, Mr. Speaker, you know it and I have heard it. The Honourable Member for St. Joseph alluded to it. The perception is that politicians are corrupt and often the perception is that these decisions have to do with one or two things, either personal financial advancement to some people including politicians or significant financial contributions to the political party that facilitates it. That is the perception, Mr. Speaker, so when people hear these things you cannot blame them if they come to the conclusion, even if they are in error in so arriving at that conclusion, you cannot blame them when they come to the conclusion that there is corruption here, some politician is benefitting or some party is benefitting. You could imagine that. You are making USD12 and USD13 million on a project to try to acquire some vaccines for poor Barbadian people who are in the need.

I support the view, Mr. Speaker, beyond this legislation that we need to introduce some very important other legislation because some of these pieces do not significantly stand-alone without support legislation. You cannot have meaningful anticorruption legislation unless, as the Honourable Attorney General acknowledged, you have robust whistle-blowing legislation. We promised these things. They will come.

Clause 8.(1) of this Bill speaks of Bribery in relation to contracts and tenders. A person who offers an advantage to a person exercising public functions as an inducement to or reward for or otherwise on account of his giving assistance or using his real or supposed influence in the promotion, procuring or execution of any contract with a public authority for the supply of any goods, services or works; or any subcontract under a contract referred to; or the payment of the price or other consideration stipulated or otherwise provided for in any contract or subcontract referred to, is guilty of an offence. Likewise, a person exercising public functions who solicits or accepts an advantage as an inducement or reward, et cetera is guilty of an offence. These persons, whether you are attempt to bribe somebody or somebody facilitates you on the basis of having received a bribe from you, are captured here in Section 8 or Clause 8 or whatever is the preferred language under bribery in relation to contract and tenders.

Mr. Speaker, we need to have legislation that provides for a Contractor General in Barbados. This is not first time I am sounding my voice on that. There is a lot of corruption around, and historically so, the business of award of contracts in Barbados. You need to provide for a Contractor General. Now, there are those who would argue that the award of contracts should fall to some committee, commission mechanism which is outside of the political class. I do not support that. The people elected these Honourable persons to come here as their representatives and to make decisions on their behalf and they are charged with that fiduciary responsibility, so I do not support that it has to be taken away from the purview of Government itself or the political component of Government itself. I believe it should remain the purview of elected officials but we can improve the system by having a Contractor General. That is a strong institution. That is more than just a single office. That is a strong and important institution.

We need a Contractor General to help us review and to monitor and to investigate the award of public contracts. From time immemorial in Barbados over all Administrations there has been speculation around contracts in Barbados and how some people get these contracts whether it is one man or many men, how they have arrived at being beneficiaries of these contracts.

We need a Contractor General to ensure compliance with agreed terms, Mr. Speaker. A lot of inefficiencies and

cost overruns attaching to contracts have added to the burdens of the cost on taxpayers' pockets in Barbados, where economies with constrained circumstances with respect to revenue earnings both domestically and in foreign external circumstances or circles and we cannot afford to be losing the financial wherewithal of this country, small constrained economy by the millions of dollars lost to inefficiencies and cost overruns because the process of contracting and monitoring and investigating how these contracts are fulfilled, pursued, and that which is a product of these efforts. If it is not properly monitored the inefficiencies cost us. Then, of course, there is the issue of impropriety and irregularity.

We need to protect the procurement system. The Honourable Member for St. Joseph mentioned that. It is about procurement. That whole vaccine thing is about procurement. We need to protect the integrity of the procurement system and process. We need a Contractor General with the authority, the capacity and the power to take punitive action against those who trespassed or breached that which is provided for in the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to just make reference to a few documents here. These are some of the issues that constitute the culture in which we operate. This is a recommendation from the 1979 Cox Commission Report which has to do with the involvement of parliamentarians and political personalities and officials in the business of contracts. Members of the Houses of Parliament should not be permitted to participate in contracts with the Government. That has an obviousness you would think, and I do not know that that happens. If it happens that information has not reached me yet. If any honourable man or woman on the Other Side is aware that Members of this Parliament or any Parliament has been participating in contracts with the Government, then I would not mind being enlightened as to that. Mr. Speaker, I do not fear that Members of Parliament are made beneficiaries in participating in such contracts but what about their families, what about their relatives, that is part of the culture of corruption. You do not do it yourself but a cousin across the road, an in-law up the hill, your relatives, your family, that is part of the culture of corruption that obtains down here among us.

The 2020 Report of the Auditor General to this Parliament, Mr. Speaker, speaks with reference to the Poverty Eradication Fund and in the context of things we may think that these are small numbers that we are dealing with here. The Auditor General says under Doubtful disbursements from the Fund - we are talking corruption - notwithstanding the limitation in determining the appropriateness for disbursements from the Poverty Eradication Fund there were disbursements which seemed not to readily fit the description of alleviation of poverty. These included disbursement for mortgage arrears. I am

sure they did not help to pay the mortgage of my Honourable Member from St. Michael East even when he was in charge of the Poverty Alleviation Eradication Fund. These included disbursements for mortgage arrears. for a marriage seminar and sponsorships of shows. The criterion used to prove these disbursements was not provided. A previous Coordinator of the Fund was of the opinion that assistance for mortgages was definitely not part of this. I am just citing for you what happens. It happens at the lower levels, it happens at the higher levels, and there is strong evidence of a culture of corruption that we have to deal with, Mr. Speaker. It is not just the spasmodic, every-now-and-then instance of corruption by some misguided official. It is a culture. It may be small monies in some instances. Sometimes it gets rather big. This is from the....

Hon. Miss C.Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Thomas.

Hon. Miss C.Y. FORDE: On a Point of Order, Sir. I would just like to give one second of clarification. The Honourable Member, yes, is referring to the Auditor General's Report but that report we had indicated in our request for it to run from 2016 until 2020 just to ensure that we had covered and had not been pigeonholing anybody in respect of it. Therefore, whatever the Honourable Member is reading happened during the last Administration, and that is registered there. The records will show that, Sir.

Bishop the Hon. J.J.S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I am not charging this Administration with anything. The point I am making is with respect to that matter. I am not charging this Administration or this Minister with anything. The point I am making is that what we are facing down is a culture of corruption that is endemic in the system in Barbados and it involves high levels of funding, and it involves lower volumes of financing as well. It runs a whole gamut and range. It is not the big ones, the one man who benefits to the extent of multi-millions of dollars. It is also smaller fellows down the line who benefit from the sponsorship of a show or a support of a marriage seminar. Smaller things. Mr. Speaker, this one is not so small and this is from the Auditor General's Report of 2020. Mr. Speaker, this has to do with the tender process. The average Barbadian is not concerned about these things.

Mr. Speaker, listen very carefully. Of the \$1.49 billion, not million. Billion with a "b". Of the \$1.49 billion in goods and services which the Barbados Water Authority (BWA) sought to acquire, it was observed that approximately 90 per cent of these arrangements did not go out to public tender. I am talking about the procurement process, Mr. Speaker. In small ways it is breached. In major ways it is breached. I am not pointing to anybody or

any administration. I am pointing to a system and a culture that operates in Barbados, and I am saying, repeatedly so, that the Parliament of Barbados above all else has a responsibility for addressing this in meaningful ways. Mr. Speaker, \$1.49 billion, 90 per cent of which did not fall subject to proper tendering process. This was in breach of the BWA's procurement rules and financial management and audit financial rules, which had been adopted by the Authority. These require tender process for the acquisition of goods and services above \$200 000. Mr. Speaker, that is part of the reality. Do you know what is \$1.4 billion?

Asides.

Bishop the Hon. J.J.S. ATHERLEY: Payment for consultancy services. The same 2020 Auditor General's Report. It was observed that the equivalent of BDS\$5.5 million was paid to an overseas firm in respect of an invoice for previous expenses, fees, reimbursable expenses and commissions from a Smart meter project for Barbados. The audit sought to clarify the nature of the services outlined and to verify whether they were actually performed. Mr. Speaker, however, in discussion with management of the BWA and the previous Chairman, there was no confirmation that any service was performed but \$5.5 million was paid. Here is the comment of the Auditor General, and it supports what I am trying to say:

"This is a very serious matter which needs to be investigated by relevant legal authorities."

Mr. Speaker, it points to possible corruption at all levels; the highest level, the middle levels, the lower levels, in Barbados. The Honourable Member for St. Joseph referred to the fact that the UN Convention on Corruption is attached to this legislation and becomes part of the law in Barbados. I read from Article 9 of that Convention:

"Each state party shall, in accordance with the fundamental principles of its legal system, take the necessary steps to establish appropriate systems of procurement."

I am saying one of those is the appointment of a Contractor General.

"The setting up of an institution, a system of procurement based on transparency, competition and objective criteria in decision-making that are effective, inter alia, in preventing corruption."

It is part of the Convention that we seek to incorporate into the law of Barbados. I am not talking anything that nobody knows. That is Article 9 of the Convention, Mr. Speaker. We need a Contractor General. We need to ensure the integrity of the procurement system. We need campaign finance laws in Barbados, Mr. Speaker.

Some of these bits of legislation fall short of the intended goal unless they are part of that suite of legislation which we are being promised in this country.

Mr. Speaker, the absence of campaign financing and election financing reforms will keep the door open for corruption in Barbados. Those with sinister motives, those driven by a sense of greed to get more and more, those who seem to think that the hog is just for them or that the cake is to be provided for them alone, will always find that because parties in politics in Barbados and the system of election in Barbados are significantly financed by private interest funding, the door remains open to corruption in Barbados in the absence of electoral financing reform and party financing reforms. We need to close that door. The Honourable Member for St. Joseph alluded to the fact that those around him, those he has observed as part of this present corps of politicians and ministers are not those who are given to corruption of this sort, but the same cannot be said for shadows out there, white or black -- if there is anything such as a black shadow -- who lurk behind the door looking for a way in. We need to close that door, especially so that those who have now come to this level of political practice and Government in Barbados, Ministers who are young in their portfolios, who are seeking to make an honest contribution to this country, who work hard, who go to sleep late, who carry the burden of understanding the financial milieu in which this country finds itself and helps the Prime Minister to wade her way through that, Members like the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central, people who come here with honest and honourable intentions to serve, should not be made to be part of a system that is subjected to potential corruption because the doors remain open in the absence of electoral financing.

There are those who contribute to elections in Barbados and to party organisations in Barbados, and they do it sincerely, not looking for any pushback or kickback. They do not do it in an effort to corrupt any politician but then there are those. Mr. Speaker, you know that and I know that. That is their *modus operandi*. They want to buy politicians, they want to buy political parties, they want to buy governments. We cannot continue to keep the door open to corruption of the political process. Campaign financing is expensive but it should not be viewed simply as an expense. Mr. Speaker, I see it positively as an investment in the democratic process in Barbados, it is not just a cost. It is like paying down on your house, it is not just a cost, it is not just an expense, it is an investment and we are investing. When the tax payers and the public purse of this country supports the political process at the electoral level and when parties are properly financed, not in the way they are now and the extent to which there are now, but when parties in this mix are properly funded and financed Mr. Speaker I am trying to be kind to some people in here, but if they persist with their pettiness

and petulance, I will deal with them accordingly, with your leave of course, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not give leave for that.

Bishop J. J. S. ATHERLEY: I am speaking

Mr. SPEAKER: Metaphorically?

Bishop J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: Okay.

Bishop J. J. S. ATHERLEY: I am speaking in the interest of those who are new to this business. I do not mind the Honourable Member for St. James Central, he will be here for a while and then he will be gone, just like myself. However, there are some who have just arrived for their term, they are green, they are new and the demands and the pressure would be many and much. We do not want the system to expose them to the corrupt and greed and evil machinations of people out there who do not have the best interest of Barbados at heart. They do not know about building a democracy, they are about building a bank accounts and they see the opportunity of supporting a politician, they see the opportunity of funding a party as their ticket to get through the door. I am speaking in the interest of Honourable Members like this Honourable gentleman from Christ Church East who is new here and the Honourable gentleman from St. John and the Honourable lady from St. George North, who have just come. This will not represent a challenge to me, it will represent a challenge to those who are behind us. We need to close the door on the corruption. Invest electoral practice in Barbados and save the system and the country and save our democracy. Help to keep power in the hands of the people as it ought to be especially when we shift to a republic. Help to keep power in the hands of the people and take the power out of the economically affluent class who feel that they can pick up a phone and call the Prime Minister or call a Minister and call the shocks and who would brag to their friends in greed and their brothers in the sinister practices, look man, I can call him anytime, watch what I am going to tell him now. All kinds of nonsense happening in Barbados and they are people out there who are arguing about who is easier to buy than whom. It is a culture, it is a system and any effort on anti-corruption legislation must take cognisance of that because corruption has the potential to our democracy of the richness that we have been trying to in build in what take away from the whole precept of representative practice and democracy. It has the capacity to undermine the legitimacy of our institutions, the integrity of all, including our judicial institutions Mr. Speaker.

I used to be of the view that whereas we had issues in Barbados with corruption, that when it came to judicial

practice that that was not the case, all being awoken in relatively recent terms to a new reality that the threat of corruption is being face down, not only by our other institutions, but by our judicial institutions as well and the practice of law enforcement in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I will read to you and us an Article 11 from the UN Convention. "Bearing in mind the Independence of the Judiciary and its crucial role in combating corruption, each State Party shall, in accordance with the fundamental principles of its legal system and without prejudice to judicial independence, take measures to strengthen integrity and to prevent opportunities for corruption among members of the judiciary. Such measures may include rules with respect to the conduct of members of the judiciary." Now, it is important and it is underscored and underlined in the UN Convention that we are attaching to this and making it part of Barbados law, because the reality is that those who are purveyors of corrupt practices, those who are insistent and wending their economic way through this world by recourse to corruption, understand the value of getting numbers of Judiciary within their power as well. We do not want to have to face that down here in Barbados. This business of corruption is pervasive and nasty and the legislation that comes to confront it must be equally robust and all-embracing and it cannot be simply an exercise in marking time and in cosmetics.

Corruption has a capacity to derail, turn back, erode all of the gains that we have made in socioeconomic and political independence here in Barbados to tarnish our mechanism of governance. It has that potential. Corruption is part of which contributes to the persistent inequities that exists in the Barbados economy. It is because of corruption that to a large extent those who are subject to an existence of poverty remain, because those who have seek to get more, corruption facilitates that for them. We need to break that cycle in Barbados.

I believe we are running behind the game. I think the Honourable Attorney General said we are a little bit late out of the gates, we are running behind the game. Corruption now takes place at an escalated level all around the World and even here in this region. There is the element of transnational organised crime. You read page 26 of the same UN document, it is a concern. It is significantly placed high position in the preamble, the concern about the links between corruption and other forms of crime are organised crime, economic crime, including money laundering. Corruption is no longer a local matter but a transnational phenomenon that affects all societies and economies making International Corporations to prevent and control it essential. When we join this to our law, we have to understand what we are in, what making sport with two or three people cross the road, they are coming up to confront a transnational giant called organised crime and corruption that manifest itself in behaviour such as money

laundering practices. The drug and politics relationship that is emerging across many countries, and my fear is that it has already taken a bit of a route here in Barbados. I am not saying that now because I sit or stand here. I have been saying that since 2007.

There is an emerging link between people who are known to be in the front of the drug trade in Barbados, involved in the illegal trafficking of arms and those who are close to the political process or are in the bosom of the practice of politics in Barbados. I do not know the extent to which there is authenticity attaching to the story but I was reading about international money laundering activities taking place, transnationally so, that has touched Barbados' banking system, its economy and society. We do not hear anything said to us about that. We do not expect to hear the details and all the specifics about what is happening with respect to investigations but we certainly need to be told, "Look, this is one of the challenges that we face; international money launderers using the offshore business and the financial sector in Barbados."

Corrupt practices being purveyed by many with the potential to derail our reputation and economy. You do not hear a lot about that. We do not expect to know what law enforcement necessarily is doing to investigate person A or person B but I have not heard anything mentioned about that here in Barbados. Recently, I heard stories of persons who admitted to being part of a trafficking scheme with respect to guns coming into Barbados. We have a problem with guns in Barbados, do you know? They are illegal guns and we have acknowledged that. I heard about that, arrests being made in the United States, people being charged, admitting to wrong and speaking of links to Barbados.

I have not heard anything about that here. When you do not hear these things, people believe that there is

corruption involved and those who are linked to these things here are the untouchables among us. People of Barbados do not want hear from Parliament that they have elected that there are those out there who are untouchable. If you can go and grab the boy down in Richmond when he breaches the law in some minor way or take away the young lady up in Park Road, Savannah Road or Station Hill that goes into a shop and shoplifts some deodorant, et cetera, then you have to deal with the large looming shadows behind these corrupt practices in Barbados.

If you are not going to do that, then you need to close the doors, go home and call it a day. I heard about some ship-related story of drugs emanating from Barbados. Mr. Speaker, these things are true? Do you know because we do not know? If they are, they have implications for all of us. It is serious stress. Mr. Speaker, I have to mention this. I have a fear as to what is happening with respect to the Public Service

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and the public sector. The business of introducing this new approach to putting people at high levels in the Public Service and public sector on contracts, I do not think the country is comfortable with it.

Do you know this article speaks to that type of convention that we are making a part of Barbados law? It is Article 7, Mr. Speaker. It reads as follows:

“Each State party shall, where appropriate, and in accordance with the fundamental principles of its legal system endeavour to adopt, maintain and strengthen systems for the recruitment, hiring, retention, promotion and retirement of civil servants and where appropriate other non-elected public officials.”

I do not like this business of putting people on contract at these high levels in the Civil Service. I would be honest with you; full disclosure.

Years ago, I remember asking the then Prime Minister, the late Owen Arthur, when we were having a chat and I was concerned as to some levels of performance among people operating at the level of Permanent Secretary in the Public Service. I asked him then if he ever gave any consideration to having these people put on contracts and does it obtain anywhere. He did not express any favourable disposition to going in that direction. One can lament sometimes that the process of governing can be frustrated by persons in these positions for various reasons whether it is lack of sufficient quality of competence or political bias.

These things can happen. It is reality but the other side of that reality is that when you take these people out of the conventional Public Service framework and put them on contracts, then you make them in my view more subject to whims and fancies of the Government of the day. We can do it at agriculture, education or wherever we want but the question still has to be faced. Do we then make these people more subject to political pressure? Do we then make them more the subjects of the political wishes, will, fancies and whims of the Government of the day? We can render such servants subject to political influence, pressure and victimization. This article also speaks to politicization of law enforcement agencies.

Now, I would hope that we in Barbados are not drifting to that place where the political pressure on law enforcement officials is such that they cannot function in a way that speaks to the interest of Barbadians. There are things that have taken place under this Administration, the previous Administration and the more previous Administration with respect to law enforcement in this country. All I am saying here, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about corruption we are talking about a culture. We are not

simply talking about individual acts here and there. We are talking about a system. We are talking about a culture. This is what we are trying to face down and that therefore is what we should address by way of legislation.

We cannot play politics with the police force. It does not matter whether we are “B”, “D”, “P” or otherwise. We cannot play politics with the police force. It is a very entrenched and ugly practice, Mr. Speaker. Anybody who would want to stand up here and tell me it does not happen in Barbados is not being necessarily friendly with the truth. We pressurize people in the media. There are people in the media who become victims. The climate that seems to obtain now is a climate of fear. Fear may be too strong a word. I do not know but there is a climate of trepidation out there among media practitioners that you cannot report fully and truly, and that you dare not ask certain questions and address certain subjects.

If you do, the connections with your media boss will be activated such that you end up on the wrong end and out of a job as has happened. It has happened many times in Barbados. It has happened in recent years. They are those who are fearful now. I had a call from one of them even this morning. There are those who are frighten now. This pressurisation of people who are charged with an honest responsibility to report, this is an ugly part of what makes for a strong entrenched culture of corruption. The media, Mr. Speaker, is one of the defending planks of our democracy. It is also one of the building structures of that democracy.

You want to pressurise people? Make them lose their jobs? Leave the media all together, worst yet, leave the country all together? That is the reality in Barbados. These articles also speak to that and the whole process of reporting in a broader frame. These are what contribute, Mr. Speaker, these are dynamic factors that contribute to the establishment and entrenchment of a culture of corruption. A construct and a platform upon which corruption thrives without fear. The business of statutory corporations not reporting on their operations, not subjecting themselves to proper audits in good time. We, for good reasons, moved a lot of the operations of Central Government into statutory enterprises to facilitate work to get the job done in better ways to manage the processes properly. We took that away from Central Government. In so going and with good intentions, Mr. Speaker, we helped also to create further potential for corruption and when we do not establish systems and reporting responsibilities and insist upon them in legislation such that they must do what is mandated of them in the interest of the Barbadians people, then corruption thrives. Then you hear about the Barbados Water Authority (B.W.A.), the Barbados Transport Board and you hear about this and you hear about that. Mr. Speaker, that is the milia in which we operate so I make a call for us to make sure that we have

the proper environment in which media personnel can operate that we desist from any ugly practices of pressurising or interfering with law enforcement and policing in Barbados. The business of media, though, I must say, if I am going to be fully honest, we have some intellectually dishonest people who have the privilege of writing in our daily journals from time to time and sometimes they do not have a clue as to what they are talking about. They must meet an obligation of submitting a weekly article and then they free themselves of all kinds of garbage and the unfortunately thing is that they are allegedly intellectuals occupying intellectual spaces and our young people are exposed to their influences, and they are writing foolishness and talking nonsense about 'Bees' and 'Dees' and 'Jays' and 'As' and Speakers and Clerks-at-the-Table and all kinds of nonsense. Show the both sides to the story. We have to live with them or deal with them, but where the media is pursuing and honesty role of reporting and giving a critical evaluation of what is going down, this practice of silencing them, getting the rid of them does not help our democratic practice and it helps to entrench the business of corruption. This Parliament has a huge mandate to correct some of these things. When we were in Opposition we railed against these things and pointed fingers at people you cannot now be found to be falling short of the mandate laid at your doorstep.

I thank you, Sir.

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

Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to make a very brief intervention in this matter. I listened carefully to the Honourable Member, Sir, and he reminded me of the days, I think it was in fourth form at my Alma Mater where there was written on the wooden panelling around the blackboard, the seven fundamental Ps of life: "prior preparation and planning prevents particularly poor performance" and it came startlingly home as I listened to the Honourable Member, who, I believe, has struck a number of number of very important chords. Thematically, I must confess, Sir, that I do agree to some extent with that which he has said and I do give him the credit of having struck a number of very important chords on this matter of corruption. I do however, Sir, also feel that he, unfortunately, did himself an injustice and caused himself to lose his way very early in the stage of the presentation. There is no doubt that one should begin by recognising the learned Attorney General of Barbados for having brought an Act which will repeal the Prevention of Corruption Act in Barbados. That Act is, I believe, the Attorney General has pointed us to already, is nearly 100 years old and the fact of the matter is that one does not have to be in This Place. One only has to be a Barbadian to feel of sense of concern if not shame that harkened all the way back, in fact, I think it became most

acute when the former Prime Minister of this country who was an Honourable Member for St. Michael South, I believe, suggested that the Prevention of Corruption Act, and that would have been in 2018 or so, was something that we could still be proud about because it still functioned as the law of Barbados or some trivial type of explanation like that he offered. I think it was a slap in the face to the country then and it is a slap in the face to the country until this day that Barbados has had to treat notwithstanding all of our collective concerns about the issue of corruption. We have had to treat to that matter with a piece of legislation that at Magistrate's Court level would see a maximum fine of \$240 being applied or at the High Court level of \$2 400 odd, therefore, I felt a sense of shame then to hear a leader of my land speak in those terms and I feel a sense of joy now to see an Attorney General of Barbados come with substantive reform to the legislative arrangements in the country.

Mr. Speaker, I think that equally, one has as a point of departure to recognise the worth that has been done by Integrity Barbados. I want to say, Sir, not only because I know some of the people who are involved in Integrity Barbados, but I want to say that it is a good, wholesome and desirable thing to have people from the private sector of this country, people from neighbourhoods in which we all live, people who we interact with on a day by day basis in the workplace, we but up on them in the supermarkets, we see them at out places of recreation, we jump alongside them on Kadooment Day, that they took time out to work together to offer the country and, Sir, offer, by extension, the Government in particular, their views, a menu of ideas which are expected to help shape the way forward with respect to removing the scourge of corruption from Barbados. They are Barbadians, right thinking all, who feel that this matter has been around for too long and that it needs to be confronted and wrestled to the ground.

I want from This Place at the very beginning of this intervention to recognise and to thank them for the work that they have done. I believe, Sir, that their expectations are entirely legitimate. I have heard them, I have read that which they have submitted, I too -- and this is where I agree with the Honourable Member - I have no difficulty whatsoever in saying that there are people in Barbados who fear the rise of a culture of corruption. We have seen it happen in other parts of the Caribbean and when you see it, Sir, and when you smell it and when you recognise it, you feel that which you have seen -- and I am not going to name any particular country in this region because it is not for me to disparage any CARICOM Member State or anywhere else in the world, for that matter, but when you have seen it and read the horror stories in the news, when you follow what can happen, Sir, when you follow the media, you recognise that this matter of corruption raising its head is something that is a grave cause of concern and for all the reasons that the Honourable Member outlined I

agree, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I think perhaps, and I made a note of it somewhere, that he may actually contradicted himself to some extent because he said that future acts of corruption do not represent a challenge to him, it presented a challenge to members who were new and green. I believe I understood what he was saying but the fact of the matter, beyond the Honourable Members in here, is that future acts of corruption impact on the developmental trajectory of this country. The future acts of corruption which we must all fight against impact on the integrity of our system of governance and in a young democracy that is something that every right-thinking Barbadian, and I unapologetic in putting it that way, must be deeply concerned about.

It is all well and good for Honourable Members speaking across the Well of the House in a very traditional combative way - and we have all seen this as part of the evolution of partisan political exercise in the Westminster styled democracy that we practise... We understand that the fingers will point. I feel that were I the Leader of the Opposition I would have wanted to rein myself in a little bit because in many ways the Leader of the Opposition of a country especially one with the constitutional arrangements that we have is that sole officer who is most heavily charged with being the principal watchdog.

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that there is such a thing - and if he wants to talk about younger members then I want to remind younger members that there is in fact a thing because they have never seen it in this House - called Parliamentary Question Time where the Opposition, howsoever slender it may be, can raise questions of concern. If these things are legitimate matters of concern in the mind of the Opposition Member, howsoever small the Opposition membership maybe, nothing stops you from raising a Parliamentary Question, and there is according to the Rules of the House as I understand it a duty under ministerial ranks to respond and to do so in a timely and appropriate manner, Mr. Speaker, Sir, so I do not know that it is in the best interest of this debate if we are going to hear that the Honourable Member read in some fora of international money laundering touching the banking sector of Barbados. Mr. Speaker, even to throw that out there without more knowing as he must know the implications for the ministry responsible for international business in this country, knowing as he must know the implications for the stability of the financial sector in this country and not having raised this matter before the House so that the Minister responsible for international business or the Minister responsible for finance would be charged with a duty to reply to his Parliamentary Question is to admit, Mr. Speaker, Sir, negligence of the highest order on his part and then to add insult to injury to go toward trafficking of guns and say that this again is a matter that has come to his attention or that he read about somewhere, never naming where then, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to believe the Honourable Member

when he said he read these things but I also feel that I have a duty to say to the Honourable Member in case he does to know or has forgotten that he too has a duty in this matter by way of parliamentary questions not just to sit down or stand up and make these comments as though we were outside a shop door throwing back a white rum but the reality is to treat to these matters with the significance and seriousness that they in my judgement warrant because if we are going to have the conversation about corruption, Mr. Speaker, Sir, let us be very clear about it, this Administration is three years old and it cannot be expected even by almost strident of critics to have been able to rectify all of the wrongs that confronted this country within the space of 36 months.

Asides.

Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS: I am not even getting to COVID-19 because I hear too often about the ash-fall and all of the other things but I think the people of Barbados know what happened. They live alongside me and they understand what happened. In three short years, Mr. Speaker, Sir, let us understand where we have gone. This debate is about an anticorruption Bill. Sir, there was no party in Government before for the last 100 years that was prepared to bring a piece of legislation of this nature to the Floor of the Parliament of Barbados, so I do not expect that we will be without criticism nor I do not genuinely expect that there will be anyone who would say that we do not deserve to be criticised because that is the nature of life. Mr. Speaker, Sir, let us be reasonable in the process. Let us not judge these few mortal men and women by the standards of gods. We have gone where none others have gone in the space of the last century by bringing this Bill here. Let us debate the Bill on its merit.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, beyond this Bill I think the Attorney General pointed the House to the fact that we had a previous piece of legislation that we brought a few months ago which creates the specific agency that is long necessary in Barbados, which is the Anticorruption Agency. Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is charged with the responsibility of treating, on a day-by-day, week-by-week and month-by-month basis, to the investigation of corruption issues in the country. Again, we have gone where none others not only in Barbados but in the Eastern Caribbean outside of Jamaica have gone in history, so there is nothing, I think, for us to be lectured about in this regard. These are things that we have done to demonstrate the commitment of the Government towards this struggle.

The Honourable Member made reference to a document, I cannot remember the name of it so I do not want to do him an injustice, not the Cox thing, it may have been a United Nations or some international agency document which reflected some concerns about state parties endeavouring to create appropriate systems for

recruitment of public officials. I have no difficulty if that is something the United Nations put forward as a postulation, fine, but why are we in Barbados treating ourselves as though we are the scum of the earth. The mighty United States of America contracts in its top brass in every department and they are supposed to be God's blessing to democracy if you hear them talk. We have a system of Government about which we can be proud, and our Permanent Secretaries and back down are permanent appointees, but, Mr. Speaker, Sir, do not say that because of the fact that in an effort to expedite business, in an effort to make sure there is better delivery to our citizens, that if you contract a few that this is now a sign of corruption or tendency in the direction of corruption. That Sir, leaves me far, far, far from being persuaded as to the substance of the argument because if that is the case then the same people who are leading the worldwide corruption fight, which is the United States of America, are the most guilty because if that is what we are premising the argument on, they bring in their whole top brass by way of contract.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this Government has also brought within the last three years an Integrity in Public Life Bill. It is not the fault of anyone in this Lower House that it was defeated upstairs in the Senate, the point is we brought it and if you are going to impute improper motives to the Government, as I believe was done by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, then, Mr. Speaker, Sir, let us be faithful to fact, I beg no more than faithfulness to the facts. Mr. Speaker, not only did we bring it and it was defeated outside of this House but Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Joseph has indicated that he is bringing it again so if there is a suggestion that we were not serious about it then why would we be bringing it the second time, and why it was defeated.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am not going to get into who was present and who was absent, because I genuinely believe that you come to a point in your Parliamentary life when you can separate the chafe from the grain, and the minutiae and the mundane, from the substance. The fact of the matter is that there was an issue and that issue in the Senate was that they felt that the Judiciary should be captured in that legislation. Sir, as far as I am concerned, there was no argument with that. I stood here just now and listened to the Honourable Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition saying that the Judiciary must not be treated as though they were beyond corruption. Fine. But Mr. Speaker, Sir, let us be faithful to fact; that is where there was more work to be done on the Bill, and if and when it comes back with that work having been satisfactorily done, then I would hope that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition would find it possible to recognise the Government for the commitment that it has made for trying to advance these matters.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, again I heard the Honourable Leader of the Opposition speak and it as though the

Honourable Member has forgotten that there was a Public Finance Management Act passed in this Parliament by this Administration. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have not or ever been either fortunate or unfortunate enough to have had ministerial responsibility for the Ministry in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, but Mr. Speaker, Sir, I do know that that piece of legislation speaks to statutory entities and their duty to report in good time. I marvelled at a Honourable Leader of the Opposition standing before me a few minutes ago and indicating that that is an issue that needs to be treated to in Barbados, when this Administration recognised it, campaigned against it, and brought the necessary remedial tool by way of an Act Parliament to have the matter fixed.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the same thing goes with respect to the Public Procurement Act. Now, that Act has not come but let me say (because I have said I agree with the Honourable Leader of the Opposition thematically and on a number of chords the Honourable Member has struck) one of them is the matter of public procurement). I did however have the privilege of being a Minister with responsibility for this country's international trade and I know beyond any shadow of a doubt that transparency in public procurement is an issue, not only in Barbados but across the developing world, and if we are going to be faithful by what we are trying to achieve by way of this struggle against corruption, then we have to build in the transparency at all levels; let us do away a little bit with the finger pointing, and perhaps the easiest way to do away with the finger pointing is to come to the understanding very clearly that there is corruption in the public sector, everybody would agree on that; and there is corruption in the private sector, and perhaps those people who feel so holier than thou need to look a little bit at the private sector within which they operate and speak truth to and among themselves. Mr. Speaker, Sir, if we go back, for example, to the prevention of corruption by way of public procurement processes, why is it that when I in the private sector tender for a contract, I am notified that I did not get the contract but nobody notifies me as to why I did not get the contract? Nobody tell me that my contract has failed because of X, Y or Z, of that it has failed because of my not meeting whatever requirement that was expected. And that is accepted here in Barbados. It is accepted right across the Eastern Caribbean, to the best of my knowledge. I have not checked the relevant legislation in more recent times of many countries.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is not acceptable in Europe because in Europe if you go into the competitive procurement process, the whole thing is about facilitating economic development and this is how we keep down the small black man in Barbados, and if this discussion has to be about corruption, then let it also has to be about a discussion in the way in which practices in the private sector are so structured, corruptively so, to undermine the

development of certain categories of worker and business persons in the very private sector. And if I have competed but cannot get the contract, and as a small fledgling enterprise I am not told where and why I have failed, because nobody is under any duty to give me reasons, as exists in other parts of the world, then Mr. Speaker, Sir, I cannot ever reach the stage that some of the same people who the Honourable Leader of the Opposition gets in here and calls 'white shadows', et cetera, et cetera, have been able to reach because of the fact that they may or may not have the arrangements in place or the association in place from which they would have benefitted. But for me as a Minister with responsibility for Commerce and Development of Business in Barbados I have to say to all who care to hear -- and even if they do not care to hear I am still going to say it -- that we have to start removing the obstacles to people who are at the smaller levels and lower rounds of the commercial sector, so that they can be more competitive.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, when the Public Procurement Act, that is something that I robustly will want to speak to, and if it is not there I am going to robustly speak against the substance of the Bill and the absence of that developmental tool because Sir, there is a duty, in my view, to know why. Therefore, if we can get past the finger pointing then will understand what this is really about; it is not really about any one 'white man' or 'white shadow' because those of us who have been around long and cared to think about these things will know that in the 1980s there was an Honourable Member for St. Michael East sitting in this Honourable House and who used the term 'white shadow' but that Honourable Member did not mean the same 'white shadow' that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition meant.

Asides.

Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS: Yes, he was referring to a different 'white shadow'. That particular 'white shadow' was supposed to have had horns; that that he was horned, but that he had horns, people called him a cow. And before that 'white shadow' there was another one; and before him there was another, and on and on it went and the issue developmentally cannot be about individualistic finger pointing there has to be at which intelligent people sitting in a Parliament must be prepared to confront the developmental issues of the country and speak to them as they are.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, what are those developmental issues? The developmental issues, in my humble submission, is that Barbados has to confront the consolidation of wealth, wheresoever it exists and howsoever it exists and treat to that problem by way of building out new opportunities for people across sectors. We are speaking effectively to a perpetuation of

consolidation of wealth, consolidation of opportunities, consolidation of access, consolidation of finance -- all of those things in the hands of a small pocket. And you can pick the individuals in the pocket and call them 'white shadows'. In my view, that is true but it is also my view, Sir, (and if I were the Honourable Leader of the Opposition sitting there, as a would-be Prime Minister, I would say that the challenge to the country is larger; that the challenge to the country therefore must be that we now break down these arrangements that allow for wealth to be consolidated in small pockets; that we democratize the economic system in this country; that we democratize opportunity; that we democratize access to capital, and that takes us to a whole new panacea of issues that people conveniently sweep under the rug because they like to point their finger at a political group and say that they are corrupt.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, is the banking sector not corrupt if the banking sector not structures itself and its business in such a way that it financially rakes the under-privileged in the land of their birth? Nobody wants to speak to that, but it is happening right now in Broad Street. Right now at the Automatic Teller Machine around the corner, next to the supermarket they call Massy. Is the corporate culture in Barbados not corrupt if you are facilitating these things but you are only prepared to speak to the 'low-flying' birds -- which is you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Thomas; the Honourable Members who sit across from me? Mr. Speaker, Sir, because it is easy to say that. I also feel Mr. Speaker Sir, that we have to be prepared to go beyond the emotive rhetoric about the cesspools and the naughty hands behind the scenes and so on, and let us be faithful to fact. I do not know of any administration in the history of Barbados where the first order of business of the Cabinet was to declare their assets. I do not know of any but I know it happened with this particular administration, and when I went into Cabinet every member of the Cabinet who went in with me declared their assets.

Asides.

Hon. K.D. SYMMONDS: That is an indisputable fact in Barbados. Sir, the Honourable Member can talk about the naughty hands behind the scene and the cesspool and so on, but the Honourable Member must be faithful to fact. If we are going to speak about an administration that has tried to confront corruption, let me very frank. I do not know any country on planet Earth where they have announced to the world, "We have cured all corruption." None exists. I am yet to see that particular administration. I am yet to see that state. I know it is a target that we all hope to reach, and I know that I am going to be hard-pressed if I ask the question, "Where else in the Caribbean has there been a Cabinet that declared all of their assets?" Sir, if I start in the south and work my way north, outside of Barbados, I would pause now, tell me where else. Tell me where.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that we have to have a beginning with a philosophical position and, whether you like the Government or do not like the Government, like the leader of the Government or do not like the leader of the Government, got personal issues with the people in the Government or none, the fact of the matter is that the philosophical position does not change. The philosophical position is that corruption rapes an economy, and people like those in Integrity Barbados were sufficiently concerned about it to help shape views to move the country's mindset against this. This Government, unlike every one previously -- and I would have to say I have been around for 20 years so I can say every one that I know about and have been a part of -- this is the first time there has been a positive response of this nature with a view to having legislative reform.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, let me speak as a Member of Parliament. One of the headaches I have in my constituency is that I have houses, I have people who are residents of St. James Central whose houses got humbugged, licked down in some cases, badly damaged in others in Hurricane Elsa, but in Elsa they are still trying to get repairs. However, it takes cash to care and the cash is a hard thing to come by. Mr. Speaker. The National Housing Corporation did not just find itself in this set of circumstances. Mr. Speaker, the National Housing Corporation was around for a long time and, happily, I too have been around a little long and I know of a period between 2013 and 2015 when the Public Accounts Committee held meetings in which these matters relating to the NHC were delved into. It came to public knowledge, and the Accountant General actually informed the Ministry of Finance that the NHC was indebted to the Government back then in the sum of \$95 million, Sir. This is part of the evidence of this House that an investigation was commissioned by the Ministry of Finance when that was drawn to their attention, and an arrangement was put in place without parliamentary approval for \$2.4 million to be moved every month to the National Housing Corporation without Parliament knowing, to the point where they did not know whether they had received a loan or a grant. That too is the evidence of this House. The sum of money rose and rose, Sir, to the point where just before Election it was \$197 million of indebtedness by the National Housing Corporation to the Central Bank of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, three years later a hurricane passes through Barbados. My constituents who had nothing to do with that have been humbugged. Your constituents as well, Mr. Speaker, and the National Housing Corporation is not in a position to respond with alacrity because of the challenges of the financial circumstance born out of mismanagement of the people's money. Sir, that is why I anchor everything I say and do on a philosophical position. I hear the Honourable Member talking about "we used to rail about this and we used to rail about that". I rail about

the same things. I felt then, as I do now, that at that time and at this time the consolidation of wealth is a bad thing. I do not have any difficulty in saying that. It is now in the record of the House. I felt then, as I do now, that at that time and at this time and all times consolidation of wealth is a bad and undesirable thing.

That is why, as Minister responsible for business, I try my best to create opportunities to broaden the base of participation in whatever way I can in this country. I had a meeting up to yesterday, a parliamentary subcommittee meeting on vendors on the National Vending Bill, with the same Honourable Member, and I made the point to them: This about broadening the base of opportunity. There may be occasions when that fails to happen but that is across a whole Government, and Government has to take stock of these things. Mr. Speaker, Sir, let us not attribute to this Administration broad-based wrongdoing without any evidence. I have difficulty when an Honourable Member who must know better forgets that there was a Housing Credit Fund which, for one time and one time only in its existence, declared a dividend. Out of a clear, blue sky one morning a dividend was created and \$25 million was supposed to be made available by way of this dividend, for the first time in history, and all \$25 million took up and went to one private sector developer.

Mr. Speaker, those were concrete facts rooted in evidence which, yes, we railed against. If the Honourable Member or anybody else feels that they have a puff, a whiff of evidence to suggest that those types of activities still go on in Barbados, then they must say so, they should say so, and I invite them to say so. Mr. Speaker, I do not know that it is satisfactory just to make these kinds of glib comments about circumstances without any sort of evidentiary basis. Every administration will from time to time have to explain challenging circumstances, Sir. The Honourable Member spent a lot of time treating to a set of circumstances that I have read and heard about, and I figure that at some point he will bring whatever evidence he has to bring to support the suggestions which he has been making about those circumstances. However, there is a difference between this Administration and the ones that preceded us. This particular Bill recognises certain key principles, and I want to go there.

Let us recognise that this Bill has accepted that he who receiveth the bribe, whether he is in the public sector or in the private sector, is as guilty as the person who offers the bribe. Therefore, it is seeking to capture both the man who took some money and the man who paid some money. If the Honourable Member wants to have a debate about the pith and substance of the Bill, and I wish he did, I myself would want to make a suggestion on that point. My suggestion would be that the Bill probably could go further and that we should as a country look in short order to taking it further. I do not want to hold it up by any

committee today because I know you would heard, “Nothing happened, you did not get on with it, it never came,” so let the Bill be passed, but there is a philosophical principle which I still hold on to, Mr. Speaker, and I will say it in Cabinet or out of Cabinet. Sir, that philosophical principle is that a private person who offers a bribe and is found to have so offered should be disqualified from being able to access public contracts in the same way that a public official who has accepted a bribe is supposed to be disqualified from being able to hold public office. I think that that is where we have been too timid, because Mr. Speaker Sir, it is all well and good for a man to send a brown envelop at someone or to make a promise for someone and he gets away scotch free, while the person who may have fell on hard times and felt too weak or vulnerable to say no, accept the gift and then he must never hold public office again. I have no brief, I make no apology for the man who is taking the bribe. He is dead wrong, ‘Go along star, the umpire has said you are out’.

However, equally, the man who offered the bribe, who paid out the money, he too should be deprived from access to public contracts. That is how it happens in Europe, so I do not just say these things without having prepared and read. Part of the Economic Partnership Agreement with which we are locked into with Europe, says that about their contractual arrangements, but not so in Barbados. The Honourable Member speaks about a white shadow, I am not speaking to a whole corporate community, because that is the developmental difference in thought, that is cannot be about targeting one man, or when that man is dead and gone or get too old you target his successor. It has to be the way in which we take along the whole developmental thrust of the country and in this particular case, the developmental thrust of the private sector of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker Sir, the Honourable Member speaks about the Contractor General. It is part of the Manifesto of the Barbados Labour Party, it has been part of the Manifesto of the Barbados Labour Party that we have a Contractor General in Barbados, I think for the last three or so Manifestos. Hence, I do not need to be persuaded as to the merit of it. Sir, perhaps, again, the Honourable Member may just need to be a little patient, because everything cannot happen in three years. It really cannot. I do not know that you come at mid-term and you find fault with something that has not happened even though you know it is to happen, because it has not happen yet. Mr. Speaker, there will always we be certain things that will happen in the latter part of a term. That is the nature of life. The Honourable Member could not get vex with me because I do not have any gray hair. I will get it if I live long enough, it will come. If do not gets gray it will drop out, but it drops out because of the stress invoked by Members like the Honourable Member, who makes life a little bit too difficult sometimes. If you want to have a debate on the

substance of where we are and the differences, because this legislation as I said, has taken us to a new era of governance. You may not like everything about it, but accept that it has done what was necessary by way raising the bar,

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has two more minutes.

Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS: In those two minutes Sir I want to talk to you a little bit about penalties. Do you know for a conviction on indictment, where a man who is indicted now for taking a bribe stands to face a penalty of \$1.5 million? Now, I do not know about Mr. Speaker Sir, because though I thought I had done relatively well at the Bar, I know that you are in the stellar company of those who have done the best at the Bar.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, be careful what you say.

Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS: Sir, I do not want to tell your tales out of school Sir. However, for me and I suspect for most of us in this House and for most of us who have passed through the House, a penalty of \$1.5 million is a massive deterrent. The legislation as created, is a deterrent for people in public life, whether you are a Politician, Judge, Permanent Secretary, or whoever. That is why I feel that equally there must be a similar weight to being brought to bear on the private sector, because, do not fool yourself, they are people from the private sector who may feel tempted to say, Mr. X come into politics from a humble background, I wonder if I can persuade him, because I see he has a Ministry now, I wonder I can persuade him that he can drive a BMW tomorrow when he was only driving a Suzuki yesterday. Mr. Speaker, it can happen, do not tell me not. I have seen in my 20 years, a man that come in here in a Suzuki driving a BMW, if you please Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Asides:

Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS: I do not want to get into the registration number. Mr. Speaker, I have seen some who could not pay their rent and where they lived, also driving luxury car or owning big house. This legislation speaks to evidence of unexplained property, obtaining and accretion of property which you cannot provide satisfactory account for.

These are the substantive things in the Bill that have carried us to a place where we never went before. I do not ask anyone in Barbados to treat this Bill as though it is perfection, because I have never seen a perfect piece of legislation and I do not know any such thing exists, and I have practice law in Barbados for 24 years. Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that compared to what we had

yesterday, this takes us long way down the road. That in the end of the day is all you can ask of a government, that it responds to the cry of the public, it hears the demands of its electorate and that it has something objective to offer, so that when I next go into King's Village in my constituency and I but up on Peter, who tell me since you all can get through good, but let, but let me tell you, I am sorry for you, I am not voting unless I see a Prevention of Corruption Act because you all does take up for one another. I can now look Peter in the eye and say, promise made, promise kept. I am obliged to you.

SUSPENSION

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of Government Business.

Hon. Miss. S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I beg to move the suspension of the House until 3.00 p.m.

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

The question that the House be suspended until 3.00 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. Speaker suspended the Sitting accordingly.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

(RECOMMITTED)

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Mr. Speaker, I beg to give notice of the Debt Settlement (Arrears) Bill, 2021.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

(RECOMMITTED)

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the following Bill be read a first time: Debt Settlement (Arrears) Bill, 2021

Hon. C. E. JORDAN: I beg to second that.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR THE SPEAKER

(RECOMMITTED)

Mr. SPEAKER: The letter reads as follows:

"Ref No.0075/10

October 12, 2021

His Honour

Speaker of The Honourable

The House of Assembly

Parliament of Barbados

c/o Worthing Corporate Centre

Worthing

Christ Church

Dear Mr. Speaker,

Section 14(1) of the Constitution Amendment Act provides for the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition to no later than the 15th October 2021 nominate a person to be elected as President of Barbados.

I have the honour to inform you that Her Excellency Dame Sandra Mason, G.C.M.G., DA, QC, Governor-General, has assented to the proposal to be nominated as President and Head of State of Barbados by myself, as Prime Minister, and by the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Joseph Atherley.

I therefore officially advise of you, Mr. Speaker, of the joint nomination of Her Excellency Dame Sandra Mason, G.C.M.G., DA, QC, Governor-General, by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition of Barbados in accordance with Section 14 (1) and (2) of the Constitution Amendment Act 2021.

Signed: Mia Amor Mottley, QC, MP, Prime Minister; Bishop Joseph Atherley, JP, MP, Leader of the Opposition

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

(RESUMED)

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, it is fairly obvious that in a debate of this nature where corruption is centre stage that it would be extremely difficult for any Member of the Government to oppose any measure for the

prevention of corruption. Corruption itself is a threat to democracy in countries where it is rampant. It destroys economies in many countries and destabilizes Governments. It is true that sometimes when we speak of corruption, we think of what transpires in certain countries in Africa.

In some African countries it is a way of life. It is very sophisticated in certain European countries and even in the European Parliament where there was big investigation, and almost all the Members of Parliament resigned over a corruption scandal. It is very important, Mr. Speaker, however minor corruption in a country like Barbados is that we nip it in the bud. In this connection, I cannot do otherwise but to support the legislation which is before this House. However, Mr. Speaker, one must look at what informed this legislation and the urgency of it at this particular point in time. You may recall, as a Member of Parliament yourself, in the last General Election where the mismanagement of the Government and the alleged corruption by Government officers was the talk of the day.

I believe that the allegations of corruption in the last Administration and the mismanagement of the Government contributed in no small part to the fact that the BLP was able to win all 30 seats in Parliament. It was not so much a support 100 percent for the policies of the BLP but the members of the electorate voted in a manner which showed their anger, for want of a better word, for the mismanagement and the alleged corruption. Mr. Speaker, if you may recall I remember being very much involved in certain constituencies. I remember the Member for St. Michael North West being very concerned that he was not getting the support of a number of persons not only in the constituency but a number of Members of Parliament were not there to support him.

I remember that I was able to give him a bit of comfort because I told him at the time that the Minister of Finance was the victim of the allegations of mismanagement and alleged corruption. What he was getting in St. Michael North West was not what the Member for St. James South or the Member for St. James Central was getting because the Member for St. James Central had to be out there every night trying to encourage people to vote for the BLP, whereas you had in each constituency every night people attacking the policies of the DLP and the Minister of Finance.

While there were allegations, they were very strong allegations supported by the leader of the BLP. I do not want to document in my brief submission because I do not plan to speak too long in this debate on this particular matter. However, we hammered the DLP. We hammered the Government at the time because of the mismanagement and the alleged corruption at that particular point in time. As a result, Mr. Speaker, the people of Barbados listened to

us and the BLP Government was able to come home not just the winners but the people of Barbados in no uncertain terms demonstrated their anger and disgust for the policies of the DLP.

We as a Government, the Attorney General in his presentation, did make a point that the people have to feel that this Government is theirs. That is one of the comments that he made in this debate. We also said that the people do not have any confidence in our leaders if they do not carry out the type of promises that they made during the last General Elections. The question of allegation of corruption, the question of corruption is serious and the question of condonation of corruption is also serious. Mr. Speaker, I, for the life of me was a little flabbergasted when you could come two years after, having attacked the Minister of Finance, having attacked the policies of the Democratic Labour Party (D.L.P.), having attacked the mismanagement of the Democratic Labour Party (D.L.P.), when you could come and make that same Minister of Finance an advisor in the Barbados Labour Party (B.L.P.) and as part of an investment's council within the Barbados Labour Party (B.L.P.). Mr. Speaker, that speaks to condonation. That speaks to a condonation of the same policies that you attacked during the election campaign and I say that because as the Attorney General said in his presentation the people do not have confidence in our leaders. People have to feel that this Government is theirs. There are a number of persons who were out there immediately after the General Elections after we won asking: "What are you going to do?" We had to tell them that the legislative framework was not such that we could go right away and make the type of charges and bring the type of complaints to the Courts which would make them satisfied and that is why, Mr. Speaker, we are here.

I listened to the Honourable Member for St. James Central in his presentation and I agree with him. It is good that we are able to come to this Honourable House and satisfy a promise that we have made the promise to bring the necessary legislation to Parliament so that we would be able to prosecute those persons who could not have been prosecuted under the previous legislation, but Mr. Speaker, you have to ask yourself whether or not we have succeeded in this particular exercise. I do not think that any of us here in this Honourable House would want to be a part or a party to a Government that would condone corruption, Mr. Speaker. If as it stands, Mr. Speaker, we recognise on the political platform that we have made some mistakes with respect to the condemnation of the former Minister of Finance and then we decided that he would be brought into the fold, well then, nothing less than an apology to the people of Barbados has to be the order of the day. If, in our opinion, that former Minister of Finance was wrongly accused or wrongly alleged to be a part of the mismanagement of the alleged corruption in the last Administration and we now realised and we now recognise

that we were wrong. Before we did anything to rehabilitate that particular individual, we should make an apology to the people of Barbados in the same way that we went on the political platforms and make that accusation against that particular individual because it is unfair. It is unfair to that particular individual, the type of allegations and I recall, as I said, when we went on the political platform when I told the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, you do not have to worry. Every night every single Honourable Member of Parliament -- at that time you hardly heard the Prime Minister's name being mentioned apart from the fact that he was always silent, but the former Minister of Finance his name was mentioned and within two years of the Barbados Labour Party (B.L.P.) coming to Government he was a part of an advisory council within the same Government that had condemned him. I am not condemning the former Minister of Finance. I sat, like all of us, I know that some of us, sometimes we tend to think that we should keep our mouths shut when the political leader or the Prime Minister is making certain pronouncements. I am not one of those and the sad part of it is that we now have a group of new Members of Parliament who tend to believe that they should keep their mouths shut at all times and it is dangerous because one of the things that was mooted on a political platform during that period, we are all in this together. Mr. Speaker, I am not a part of being in anything together which has anything to do with the condonation of corruption so if the former Minister of Finance in the last Administration, if that Minister has been wrongly accused, and we cannot repeat it often enough, I think we have a duty to the public of Barbados because everything that we said on the political platform was on social media, it was in The Press, it was all over the place and as I said, I do not want to be a part of an Administration that will condone corruption and if we are not condoning the corruption well then the only decent thing to do would be to make an apology to that individual and if we cannot make an apology to that individual well then anything else that happens in terms of corruption and any policies we have going forward it means that we would, to a certain extent, in the eyes of the public condoning corruption. As I said earlier, a lot of people out there did not realise that the legislative framework is not such that we could have gone ahead almost immediately and bring charges against anybody. The former Honourable Member for St. James South was not even pilloried on the political platform, yet his conviction in the United States of America (U.S.A.) showed a pattern of behaviour. Mr. Speaker, this whole question of condonation is what concerns me because, as a Honourable Member of this Government, as a member of this Barbados Labour Party (B.L.P.), as one who worked hard and when I say worked hard, I mean real hard to ensure, not just that the Barbados Labour Party (B.L.P.) won, but to ensure that the Barbados Labour Party (B.L.P.) won all of the seats because I do not think that they deserve a single seat because of the way how they have governed during the five years before the

Barbados Labour Party (B.L.P.) took over on 24th May, 2018

Mr. Speaker, you have to look at the pattern. If we are bringing legislation with respect to corruption, the people out there have to be satisfied. They used the words 'in the trenches' but you have to be serious about what you are doing. In legal jargon, you have to show, as the Honourable Member for St. James North would say, that you have the moral authority. You cannot say you have the moral authority when the same people you are condemning you are coming back to put them to give advice, to advise who, and to make sure that you put them in a position whereby they could advise other people with whom Government is dealing.

Mr. Speaker, that is only one matter. Mr. Speaker, and I do not want to call any names but I think that everybody knows what I am talking about. I was somewhat shocked in the Ministry of Housing and Lands when I realised that there is a project at Coverley - I am not going past Coverley because everybody know what I am talking about and who I am talking about -- which was practically given to one man, a man whose is more or less...

Mr. Speaker, as I always tell people I went to school bare foot, I walked to school bare foot, and when I went to Combermere School I had one pair of shoe and I had to share a shirt with my brother who was in third form so I could feel comfortable going back to those days so I do not have anything to worry about and that is why sometimes I find it difficult that certain people find it difficult to take a stand. Mr. Speaker, the thing about most of us in here is that we are paying mortgages, we do not live in Sandy Lane and those highfalutin areas, and it is a pity that notwithstanding where we come from sometimes we like to make sure that certain people enjoy a certain lifestyle. We tend to like to kneel to people who have been accustomed to a certain standard of living. I was shocked, Mr. Speaker, that people from the same background as the former Minister of Housing and Lands and the former Government in the last Administration could actually give away... I do not think that people realise exactly what happened with the Coverley project. It is not just the houses. Mr. Speaker, even though we negotiated a little token to get a little piece more, the entire acreage at Coverley was given away by the last Administration. To make matters worse, when you go up to Coverley, forget the houses, you will see all of the businesses that are there. The land was given to one man as a 99-year lease. A lot of us in business are struggling to pay our rents, and that man got a 99-year lease at \$100 a year, I am glad that the Minister of Housing, Lands and Maintenance reminded me.

Mr. Speaker, I am not blaming that individual because if you find yourself in an environment where your negotiators are weak and you are a businessman well you

have to do what you have to do and if I could get a 99-year lease paying \$100 a year I would take it any day, but when you are in a position whereby having seen what has transpired...

Mr. Speaker, I cried when I went to the Ministry of Housing, Lands and Maintenance and I saw those agreements. I remember sitting with the Chairman of the National Housing Corporation, who has since been fired, who shared my views. I could not believe what I was seeing. I cried because that contract told me that people like me who went to school bare foot, my children should remain barefoot and my children should only be able to go to school bare foot for the rest of their lives. Mr. Speaker, I told myself that there is no way under the sun that I would involve Government in any negotiations with an individual like that. It is not that I have anything against him but he has gotten his share. Sometimes you hear somebody say that a person is covered for life, but that man was not covered for life, Mr. Speaker, that man has been covered for the life of his children, his children's children, his children's children's children, that man has been covered for about 500 years and yet we have the time to still be in bed with a gentleman like that especially when I listen to the leader of my political party on political platforms itemising all of the things that were given to this particular individual saying it cannot happen here, that is what was said, and you are in bed with a person like that. As I said I do not blame the gentleman. If the allegations of corruption, not that visited him, that caused him to get those contracts correct, well then, Mr. Speaker, the public out there, not the Honourable Member for St. Andrew... We are talking of condemnation of corruption. Condemnation of corruption is not covered in this Bill, but condemnation of corruption is the same thing as corruption and we should stay clear from these individuals, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I do not want to be part of any Government... I know how hard it is to work hard for what you have, to pay a mortgage, to have difficulty sending your child to university and then on the completion of that hoping that you do not come down with cancer or some major illness whereby I would have to go and run to my parliamentary representative for a little loan for some health reason. I know all of this. I know how it is like that. Mr. Speaker, we have got to be very careful about this condemnation of corruption.

The Attorney General, my good friend and he will always be my good friend - spoke to the various negotiations that he had prior to bringing this legislation to Government. Mr. Speaker, before I speak to that, there is this one other aspect of this matter, the question of condemnation... The question of COVID-19 is one that we have not experienced anything like this. There is no precedent for us with respect to how to handle certain

matters although it has always been my view that when you are dealing with the law you leave the legal matters to the lawyers and when you are dealing with medicine you leave the medical problems to the doctors and you do the advising. It seems as if all the tables are turned but I think that everybody in Barbados knows the situation with respect to the problem with respect to the sourcing of vaccines in this country. I do not think that it is a matter which should be brushed aside just like that to say that there is no issue. It is a big issue. The question of the procurement of the vaccines is a big issue. It is massive. I do not believe that the Government is to blame in any way but I think it is a responsibility of the Government to prove that they are not to blame for the fiasco that has taken place. For us to just brush it aside and for a Government to just brush it aside, that creates a certain amount of suspicion and question of condemnation of corruption. It is also a matter which one has got to deal with. As I said, I do not want to be any part of any Government that condones corruption. My background is one that does not support that type of thing.

I remember as a little boy when cricket was more less like a religion, you played cricket next door and sometimes you might have got a little break in you ran home to get a little snack to go back, and when you got home sometimes you were hoping that the old lady was not around but she told you, "Kerrie (assuming that was my name), you have to go. I want a breadfruit." Your breadfruit tree might have been a mile away but you knew there was another tree belonging to the Duguids because they owned almost everything next door. You went into the Duguids' tree and brought a breadfruit, and the old lady said, "You have come back here very quickly." When she realised what you had done, it would be licks in your tail.

Asides.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: It was licks in your tail. That was how I was brought up, so I find it extremely difficult to be part of any Government that condones corruption. Mr. Speaker, this is why in dealing with a matter of this nature, this Bill, I know the Attorney General made certain excuses with respect to the delays. COVID was also one. COVID was not one when I was removed from the Ministry of Housing, and no houses have been built since I left the Ministry of Housing, but COVID is now used as an excuse for everything. I was in the Ministry of Housing and there were even certain housing programmes that were placed on my desk which I had to bring to Cabinet and did not know anything about them. I knew absolutely nothing about them, but COVID was used because during that period because, for some strange reason, no funds were made available to build any houses. I found it very strange because the Honourable Member, the present Minister of Housing, is a magician.

The day after he took over he did not only get rid of my Chairman and all of the other people in the Ministry, but he stated that would build 500 houses in one year. I am still waiting for those 500 houses in one year, and we are now into the second year and no houses have been built. Mr. Speaker, this is serious legislation and the Attorney General blamed COVID and everything else. I am not saying that he is wrong because I know that when you are dealing with this type of legislation, obviously you have to have the benefit of the best advice. The good thing about it is that during the Election we knew exactly what we were about, and when you are dealing with legislation there is a purpose behind the legislation. If you want to target all of the drug lords in orange Hill, you frame the legislation in such a way that all of those drug lords are targeted. It has nothing to do with bringing in anybody from overseas or anything like that. Do you understand?

This legislation, when you look at Chapter 144, there was another Prevention of Corruption Bill which I think was in 2012. When you compare this legislation with that one, I would not like to say there is very little difference but it does not capture the types of things we spoke about on the political platform. We spoke on the political platform to a number of issues, and it is fairly obvious that this does not only deal with issues with respect to the Corruption Bill but to other things which we had to take into consideration. There was the question of campaign financing, the question of registration of political parties, which borders on corruption. I believe that if we had legislation pertaining to registration of political parties and campaign contributions and things like that, the former Minister -- although the present Honourable Member for St. James South would not like to hear me say that -- would probably still be the Member for St. James South. I believe so and I strongly believe that.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has two more minutes.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: I strongly believe that he would be, and all I am saying is.... The Attorney General did mention the type of legislation that we are trying to bring, and I would have hoped that he would not have mentioned the Republic Bill. I have been in this House for a long, long time, maybe too long, and there are certain courtesies that you extend to the Back Bench, that you extend to the Opposition and you extend to your colleagues in Cabinet. I do not know if it is a first because of the fact that we have all the seats, including the one for St. Michael West -- because he is still a Member of the Barbados Labour Party -- but you can bring legislation, serious legislation like this. I cannot blame him. I may have to blame the Leader of the House, but this is legislation. You solicited comments from Integrity Barbados, from the Bar Association, but yet when you come to the legislation you totally ignore colleagues, apart from a few little pleasantries.

I will tell you this: I had heard about the integrity group but I could not believe it when I read. You are dealing with 75 pages of legislation in this anti-corruption Bill and then you are dealing with recommendations from the integrity group; I mean solid recommendations. Fifteen pages, solid recommendations, plus recommendations from the Bar Association. Nothing of substance in terms of those recommendations. You lay the Bill last week, and I was a little shocked that you wanted to debate it last week because you had debated the Republic Bill the week before. I mean when I first heard about the Republic Bill and certain things with respect to the republican status, I could not even believe it. I do not want to chastise the Leader of the Opposition because there are certain things which the Leader of the Opposition can agree to which I cannot believe.

You are making recommendations before a Bill gets to Parliament, so it is like a thief gets away with something and decides "I can get away with anything and I am coming again with something else." That was exactly what happened. You 'tief' last week or week before, so you are coming back and 'tiefing' again.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you know you are using some unparliamentary language and you are a veteran Sir, you are a Member of integrity.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Yes, I agree with that, but 'thief' is like the word 'dawg'.

Mr. SPEAKER: You notice you did not say dog, you said 'dawg'. Please do not draw the parallel.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: In this case I mean 'tief'.

Mr. SPEAKER: You mean 'tief'?

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Yes.

Mr. SPEAKER: Well, do not pronounce it as thief then.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Okay. You may have done things last week and you got away with it. I can even condone, although condone is not in my vocabulary, what has happened, but I fear, and this is where you are to blame Mr. Speaker, because you are there to protect the backbench. You are there to protect the Members of the Opposition and you cannot bring such an important Bill and expect that it be debated almost immediately with 75 pages, 28 pages of recommendations, an important Bill. This is three years after election. Mr. Speaker, my objection is just to make sure not I am not condemning what has taken place, but seeing you have gotten away with it in one case, I would just hope that any other similar

legislation like this would at least give us the opportunity, we on the backbench.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please wind up.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: We on the backbench would be able to at least be able to have some sort of time to peruse and debate this Bill in that same way that the Government, the Attorney General and Members of Cabinet would be able having had about six months or so to deal with it.

Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding everything else, I support notwithstanding the fact that it falls real short and I would urge all Members to read the comments from integrity Barbados. I would have liked in this presentation to have read them. It is a pity that the Attorney General will not nay time to go through them almost verbatim, because this is very important legislation. Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central. Honourable Member could you turn of your mic please.

Hon. R. R. STRAUGHN: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. I join the debate at a very interesting time because this matter of corruption as has been stated before has significant consequences, not just for the public financing, but in the context of a small democracy seeking to find its way in a challenging global environment, that every opportunity the good governance of the country is an opportunity to serve that I will fully support. I listened very carefully to the presentation of the Leader of the Opposition and as the Member for St. James Central clearly indicated and anybody who was listening, one would think that this Government has not done what it can do administratively so far to be able to deal with those issues that we were confronted with at day one and we sought to be able to address. I will go a little further into some of those details Sir, because I think it is important for us to understand that whilst we are debating the legislation here with respect to the prevention of corruption, the financial implication of corruption is certainly real. I say to all those who either were alleged or know where the money is, that right now, Barbados is going through a very challenging set of circumstances in part, brought on by COVID, in part brought on by the previous mismanagement of the previous administration and those two things combined to put us in a situation..... Let me just remind the Chamber and certainly the Honourable Leader of the Opposition that this Government is still paying arrears that were left by the last Government, in part perhaps because of the mismanagement and the corruption to which we are speaking to. Additionally, let me remind the country through you Sir, whereas I listened very carefully to the Leader of the Opposition speaking about the number of

contracts that were given out in the last administration and how the perception of it being going to one person, some very strong cogent arguments that I do not think anyone in Barbados that is of reasonable mind would deny. However, coming to office, this Government set about from an administratively perspective, and I know that the Leader of the Opposition would not want to necessarily give credit in this particular aspect, but we engaged the services of White Oak, not just for the debt restructuring, but for the renegotiations of a number of contracts that were entered into on behalf of the people of Barbados by the previous administration, and some of those contracts were completely null and void, because of this Government's work to ensure that the tax payers were not taken advantage of. Hence, whilst we did not have the legislation at the time to deal with the prevention of corruption then, I support this measure here, but I want to say to the people of Barbados that for the last three and a half years we have been dealing with some of those egregious contracts in a very serious way to ensure that the public services are not compromised, the management of the fiscal affairs of this country are not compromise and that we can chart a path that will not see the tax payer taken advantage of. Now, what is clear, and I just want to say for the benefit of the public and certainly for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, that we have as a Government recognised that in the procurement process and obviously there will be an opportunity to speak to some of that going forward, but whilst we have not yet concluded the work with respect to the new legislation as it relates to procurement, we would ensure that for critical infrastructure and projects to Government particularly with respect to some state owned enterprises, that we would establish a college of negotiators to ensure that the principles of good governance would apply and nobody will be taken advantage of with respect to the execution of these contracts. We do not do that because we just felt like bringing people in to necessarily oversee the evaluation committees of the various organisations. I heard the Leader of the Opposition indirectly made some reference to no formal process effectively determining procurement practices. However, there is the Tenders Committee, depending on the nature of the any procurement there is a special Tenders Committee that will review it. Yet, we feel that notwithstanding those specific aspects of the procurement that where there are complicated procurement measures to be undertaken, the additional support to ensure that financially, the Government and the people of Barbados are not taken for a ride.

I believe, Sir, that having done that, we have been able to put together over the course of the last three years a framework that we believe once fully ventilated and understood which I will endeavour to so do at the earliest possible opportunity, these are the kinds of reforms for lack of a better term that we have actually put in place to safeguard the interest of taxpayers. Having said that, Sir,

there is a saying in Barbados, “See wuh yuh cud do fuh muh.” All of us as Members of Parliament hear that week in, week out. There is perhaps in certain parts of the society acceptance that so long as you can “see wuh yuh cud do fuh muh”, Sir, that that is acceptable.

Regrettably, this can extend from the simple thing of helping somebody to fill an application out and give them the appropriate information in terms of where opportunities may or may not exist. This can cascade far and wide in the context of “see wuh yuh cud do fuh muh”. The truth is that as part of the conversation with respect to how we move forward as a society that wants to be well governed, we all have to accept that “see wuh yuh cud do fuh muh” may no longer be acceptable in the context of a prevention of corruption regime. At the end of the day, Sir, what has to be good for the goose has to be good for the gander. It is a conversation that in every nook and cranny of this country if we want Barbados to be freer of influence and corrupt practices, and to ensure that there is a level of equity with respect to the distribution of public goods and public services, we must be committed to be able to do so.

I have every confidence that what we have been able to do and I know that the Attorney General has indicated the other pieces of legislation that will be brought to bear to build out. A singular piece of legislation does not solve the problem but the reality is I believe this goes a long way to helping to change the conversation about not just how Government procurement is undertaken but certainly the kinds of standards that we will accept within the Public Service, State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and the private sector to ensure that we are all comfortable with the way that the country is being run.

The truth is, Sir, many a day things happen in Ministries, departments and agencies of Government that none of us in here are aware of; on a daily basis. The extent to which whether you are a junior officer, middle manager in Government, senior public servant, a Member of Parliament or a Minister the reality is that we all must be accountable for the actions that we take every day in order to ensure that the public interest is served. When the Auditor General publishes his reports and I have met with the Auditor General on several occasions to discuss with him how the Ministry of Finance is going to execute reforms to help minimize some of these challenges.

Regrettably, we were to establish the internal audit function of Government by September, 2021. However, now our aim is to have that done in time for the next financial year. The reason that we have had to make those adjustments, Sir, and I make no apologies about it is because everything that we have been able to execute so far has been significantly hampered because of COVID-19. However, given that we are seeing a significant uptake with respect to vaccines in the country at the moment, we are

now in the process of reshaping the budget. As the public can clearly see, the management of the pandemic has taken a slightly different shape and by extension, we are also reshaping budget to be able to help continue the reforms that we were already committed to doing.

I say so, Sir, very clear in mind that even the establishment of an Internal Audit Department will not solve the problem because if people are intent, as the Honourable Member for St. Andrew eloquently said, on “tiefing”, then I am confident that this piece of legislation properly implemented in the agency supported that we will catch them and they will be dealt with. Let me say, Sir, on that particular score that it is regrettable that we have had to come to this place to not just pass the legislation but this process costs a lot of money. The skillsets and resources that now have to be dedicated to looking after these things, costs money. I am saying to Barbadians that we have to clean up our act because I would rather be spending money, helping to develop other aspects of the public policy for Barbados than to be spending money on trying to figure who is doing what, when, where and how.

This is the reality that we are faced with. We have to spend the money and therefore I say to the Leader of the Opposition, he has already seen monies in the budget. Therefore, as the years go by, then you would anticipate that as the resources are made available there, investigations take time as you well know. With time, there is costs and then obviously the impact with respect to the results, the public would be able to see for themselves within that space. However, it takes time and money. You do not just start investigating today and magically you have a case; a case that is winnable.

Sir, you know whether a case is a winnable or not. The reality is Barbadians can feel better tonight not just knowing that there is a piece of legislation but I would like to think that Barbadians will feel a sense of confidence that this Government under extraordinary circumstances are still very much committed to solving these longstanding problems. I can say, Sir, that there is not anybody in this country that can call my name ‘in nutten’. I know that for a fact. If they do, they are telling lies. I know some very good lawyers, Sir, that I can engage, including you, Sir. I am being very serious, Sir. Barbados can rest assured when the night comes that certainly this Ministry of Finance is not in any way aiding and abetting in any nefarious activities.

What the Member of St. James Central indicated in his presentation of actions and being undertaken without parliamentary approval and let me make it clear that the consolidation of wealth is a problem in of itself. It is a global problem and is something that has to be dealt with certainly at a global level. Certainly in Barbados it is a problem. However, consolidation of wealth and “tiefing”

are two completely different things. The extent to whatever arrangement was taking place between the then Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Housing, I do not know what that was but whatever it was, it certainly may have contributed to the consolidation of wealth somewhere. Therefore, it ought to be investigated fully. As I said, Sir, those are details in terms of where money goes and to whom is now the case that would have to be built.

I cannot speculate on it but those details obviously would have to be ironed out in terms of what exactly transpired with respect to that. Sir, this Government has in the context even of this COVID-19 environment laid contracts in this Parliament. We will continue to do so, Sir. The reality of the situation is that whilst we would provide as much information as is humanly possible, I know that there are a number of people out there, Sir, that still believe that somehow or the other, we in here have to be thieving something. I have heard people address that to me directly and no matter how I try to convince them otherwise, that the information comes to the Parliament, the thing is past, people believe that somehow or the other, we are in here doing something that we should not be doing. I do not know how we will get over that in the same way that we have vaccine hesitancy, Sir, there are people who will choose to believe something that otherwise is not necessarily the case. All I can say to Barbadians through you, is that this Bill is just but one of the anchors of the legislative framework that would allow us to be able to deal with aspects of corruption. I know there are other pieces of legislation which the Attorney General would have indicated early which would be important and the truth is this. I feel that Barbadians, if you know that you have participated or witnessed corruption, you should come forward. The framework would be set up in order to so do, but the truth is, Sir, everybody wants to whizzy-whizzy in the corner and talk about it but when the time comes to stand up and put your hand upon the Bible or the Quran or whatever you choose to swear on, people simply are suddenly afraid of coming forward and really performing their civic duty. This Government will put all of the systems in place, Sir. We will make all of the resources available to be able to fight corruption, but at the end of the day, it is the people, the people who are out there every day interacting certainly with members of the public service, interacting with members of the private sector, it is people who have to stand up and say that I am going to be a responsible citizen. I will not participate in anything that damages, not just the reputation of Barbados, but certainly damages the goodwill that we believe, Sir, the public wants us to be able to demonstrate. The truth is, Sir, this will continue to be a priority for the Government as is everything else a priority for the Government and I certainly wish that we had these powers vested at the beginning because by now, Sir, we would have been able to have made some headway with respect to this and I know that Barbadians are frustrated, perhaps with the process and

I hope that Barbadians take the opportunity -- and I say it now -- in looking at the new Constitution to deal with some of the issues with the judicial system, because as you know, justice delayed is justice denied. Two much of this, the anxiety that people are feeling about corruption, deals with, not just the length of time it takes to investigate, which I accept, Sir, is frustrating, but equally, when a case actually reaches the threshold where it can go to Court, it is now, how long does it take for people to feel that justice. I know that with the trial for the former Honourable Member for St. James South a lot of people were watching, not just the efficiency, for lack of a better term, Sir, I do not know if that is used in a legal sense, but people were seemingly impressed with the short space of time within which the case was brought and heard. Of course, Sir, we all know a lot would have gone on in the background which I have no idea what may have occurred, but I am saying to Barbadians that this now gives us a framework to be able to do some of that. I hope that with some of the reform which I am sure, you too would be happy to lead, is to ensure then that once a credible case is brought for anybody that it can get through the Court system in a reasonable time so that people can see and feel that whatever justice is to be meted out that the justice is served.

I support this Bill, Sir. It is a step in the right direction. I can give the assurance to Barbadians that the Ministry of Finance and the Government has been working to not just address the issues with some of the contractual arrangements that the Leader of the Opposition raised because I felt that it was important, Sir, that whilst he spoke as he did, that I reminded the country that those contracts were addressed administratively by us, one by one by one, therefore, whilst listening to him a specific impression would be conveyed, but I give the country the assurance that we have gone through the process and we continue to press and make sure that where things need to be tidied up that they are tidied up. Here is the reality, Sir, all of this takes time to do these things when the Government really should be focussed on doing other things and it begs the question, and I am being very serious, this Government has been doing a lot of cleaning up and this cleaning process, as you know, Sir, I had a very quick conversation with the Clerk-at-the-Table at lunchtime and he indicated to me that the work at Parliament, whilst it is progressing nicely, that obviously the more you touch the more you realise that there are things the wood ants and the termites have the whole place eaten up, therefore, would require some more resources to be able to resolve. All I am saying to Barbadians is that the more you dig into these issues, obviously you start to unearth different things, therefore, we want to make sure that we can follow the threads wherever they lead and wherever they lead, Sir, then we must come to the relevant conclusion that we need to come to with that respect, but it takes time, it takes resources and this Government is fully committed to allowing this process to go through and I ask

Barbadians that whilst this may seem to be long in coming the reality is that this journey has been interrupted significantly with what we have had to deal with. All I ask, Sir, is to give this the opportunity to start to see some progress so that any discussion with respect to corruption and how we are addressing, I think, is certainly sincere from our perspective. We will put the resources as required to be able to address it and let the process be independently done such that people can feel a sense of confidence again that the country is being run well. From a financial perspective, Sir, we have no difficulty with this.

I will end on just one comment, Sir. When we passed the Public Finance Management Act in 2019 we put some specific provisions in there, Sir, that requires now, State-owned Enterprises not just to report and to give account for their mandate but certainly, Sir, we made provisions for all Boards to receive corporate governance training and I am happy to report that the Ministry of Finance has designated the Ministry of Labour to do the training and they have engaged the services of a company to be able to provide that training for all Board member across the spectrum and, I believe, we are awaiting a proposal for what we will do with the school Boards with respect to broadening that such that, again, it is nothing that is happening upfront, that these are the things that are being done to ensure that we improve the governance structure, whether it is the largest State-owned Enterprise or the smallest school board in the country. We hope that with this type of adoption, that we would be able to, not just people wanting to serve, but that people would want to serve understanding and be given the appropriate framework within which, Sir, they have to serve, but equally, Sir, State-owned Enterprise now are required, every two years to be able to report to the public through an annual meeting and I know that obviously COVID-19 has, given that we are in the second year now, the intent obviously would have been to have those meetings in person. We know that the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (Q.E.H.) has done theirs virtually. I speak subject to correction, I do not want to mislead the House, but I believe the Barbados Water Authority (B.W.A.) has had one, but you would notice that over the coming years that more and more of these entities will be coming to the public in some form or fashion to be able to articulate what their mandate happens to be and what it is that they would be providing to the public. Sir, that too is just an additional measure of accountability that the public would be given the opportunity to be able to engage, so rather than just call “Down to Brass Tacks” or whatever the show is on CBC to complain, I say through you, Sir, to the public that when these State-owned enterprises go to have their public meetings that they engage the State-owned enterprises themselves such that there is actually a mechanism for direct follow-up. Mr. Speaker, I know that people listen to “Down to Brass Tacks” and the call-in programmes and respond, but we want to ensure that there is a structured way within which the public can engage with State-owned

enterprises. We believe that this would be critical as part of the civic responsibility of citizens, and so in our quiet way, Sir, we have been working not just to sensitise certainly the persons who serve or who may be recommended to serve on the Boards of the State-owned enterprises, but equally we want to make sure that the public gets the opportunity to engage directly with these directors as well as senior managers of those institutions even though it is only once every two years as the requirement. Sir, I hope that as we move forward that the State-owned enterprises would see it as a matter of normalcy, if you like, Sir, to actively engage the public in a very serious way because I do know that from time to time depending on what is happening depending on the project they will but the reality is that I want persons to take confidence that we have put systems in place to alert anybody who wants to serve on a Board that they must be trained and given training within the context of corporate governance. We provided the resources to the Minister of Labour and Social Partnership Relations having been designated to carry that out and that too will help us to raise the accountability with respect to whether it is procurement or any of the other issues related to management of our State-owned enterprises.

Ultimately, Sir, what this would lead to is not just the reforms that we are doing internally to the Ministry of Finance, Economic Affairs and Investment and by extension the rest of Government but to the establishment of the internal audit department as well which I believe would help us over the long term to be able to focus the managers, the middle managers and the senior executives of State-owned enterprises but equally the Board of Directors to be able to lift the standards of corporate governance from top to bottom, and therefore with those things we believe that we would be able to improve the system.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke to the requirement for a Contractor General and I will speak to that more fulsomely at a later date but the reality of where we are is that there are steps to be taken by everybody. There are only so much resources available and time to do anything and therefore notwithstanding the COVID-19 situation is demanding a lot of our time, what people may perceive as the speed of Government is just a pivot and transition now that we have been able to achieve a level of vaccination that we can now start to think differently. Mr. Speaker, what the public would now see not just legislatively but a range of other issues is evidence of that pivot now to move away from the single issue of COVID-19, not that the Government ever lost its focus, to an acceleration of things that we have come to Parliament to work on, but COVID-19 obviously would have impacted the delivery of the timeline.

With those few words, Sir, I fully this Bill. Thank you very much.

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

Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wish to add to the contribution for this Bill and to lend my support from the inception.

We always learned that the journey of a thousand miles start with the first step and having learned of the history and what the then Cox Commission would have indicated since 1929, we know for how long this aspect of corruption creeping into the society and how the legislation should be framed to be able to abort such practices taking place in our society, we know the journey that it has taken.

Sir, I believe that the time spent on the preparation of this Bill, and the kind of dialogue and communication and contributions from others, was worth the while to be able to stamp the whole notion of corruption and wrongdoing out of the system. I must say, Sir, that having come to public life, I was not so young when I entered the political arena, my philosophy has always been to do the right thing always, to be honest and upright. You would know, Sir, that women have had a rough time in politics not only in Barbados but in the rest of the world. They give you partners that you never heard about, some of them never lived yet and they talk of all kinds of things to be able to develop negativities with your name, but that did not daunt my spirit because I felt that as an ordinary working-class woman that I would be able to make a contribution to the development of my country and to be as honest and upright as my parents now who would be rolling over in their graves more than 20 years ago, one going eight weeks after the other, if they have ever heard my name or the name of any of the children that they would have raised in any way negative. Sir, I am sure that they would roll over in their graves.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that as a proud people where Barbadians work hard toiling in the sugar industry and the other aspects of soil coming through from slavery that the people of Barbados generally, for all the generations that we know, would have worked honestly to be able to achieve what they were able to acquire. There was stark poverty, Mr. Speaker, in this country. You Mr. Speaker and most of the historians here among us and across the island and the world for that matter know it all because we have so many thousands of people in the diaspora who could speak of the poverty that they came through, but the moral values that they were taught not only at home but in the schools and the other religious institutions helped to put them to a level that despite whatever was negative that attracted their attention that they were able to stave it off knowing they have got to have self-respect, they have got to make their parents proud because if they ever heard their name being called in anything negative they would want to destroy them, and we know what transpired in those days.

Mr. Speaker, you are too young to know but we got some good licks for even stealing an apple off of somebody's tree because we did not ask. As simple as it appeared it was a very serious act.

Mr. Speaker, having come through the system and acknowledging that it is so unfortunate that because of a few perhaps politicians who appeared to be tainted or were tainted every individual in this country who seeks to come to the political forum to be able to offer a valuable contribution is pushed in some area of negativity, they come to get rich, come to thief, come to rob people, come to get largesse, all kinds of negative things that amaze me in my old age, and so I would have come to a lot of criticisms too and I had some of the highest people in the country as they would have said to be my partners some of them that I could not even spell their names furthermore but that is how this society is. We tear down. Especially if you have come from an impoverished environment everybody finds something negative to say. Thankfully my personality and the personality of many of these women in here as well has been so strong that despite what anybody says we have gone into this political arena not to promote ourselves to get rich or to die trying but to represent the interest of Barbadians and that is why we make the tremendous contributions and not only contributions, but we make a lot of sacrifices to be able to meet the needs of Barbadians in a way that is different from what I have seen in a very, very long time with this current Administration, Mr. Speaker. Therefore, I want to reiterate to the public of Barbados that honesty and uprightness is all that I am interested in, and I believe that is the same for all of my colleagues here in this distinguished Chamber, Sir. I abhor corruption, wrongdoing in any form or fashion or at any level in this society. I practise what I preach. I am not a pastor, a priest, a bishop or anybody at that level but I know that the simple tenets and the guidelines from the Holy Book have helped to pilot me through this particular career, making sure that I do not forget from whence I have come and that I do not breach what my parents and teachers and friends and guardians and mentors would have wanted me to do in the interest of serving the people of Barbados.

I am proud to be a Member of this great Barbados Labour Party since 1971, so you know how young I am, Sir. I supported whatever was given in the Covenant of Hope. The Honourable Opposition Leader would have signed it too, because I believe that was what he stood for and still stands for but sometimes when you are in opposition, you talk for opposition talk. I believe that all of the Honourable Members here would have been a part and will continue to be an integral part of what we have pledged to the people of Barbados, and this is one of the pledges. We have lived in a time where we have seen corruption not only in Barbados, but we witnessed what was happening in so many other parts of the world every

day. Even some members of parliament have to be brought to justice for receiving bribes and for doing all of these negative things that we know are wrong. I encourage all of my young colleagues in here, who are here for the first time or for whatever period, let us continue to uphold those good standards that our politicians of the past, our leaders of the past, our parents and guardians, collectively upheld in the church and in the communities because we are mentors and the eyes of the people of Barbados -- and the people of the rest of the world -- are upon us because the Internet takes everything across the entire hemisphere.

Mr. Speaker, I shall continue to condemn any form of corruption, whether it is by the poor or the rich, the old or the young, and I have a good connection with the constabulary and I will whisper to them what I see and know is wrong. It would be conscience that would kill me if I know of it and not say anything to persons whom I consider to be confidential and who would want to push towards making that process stymied in the exercise. Mr. Speaker, I would rather die with my dignity than have to be involved in anything that is connected with the word "corrupt". I would want to go with my dignity, and therefore I save for myself, run campaigns, I beg no-one for anything, I have Christmas hampers and other activities, I pull from my pocket because I am in a better position than when I was in the classroom when I would not have been able to purchase. If I cannot buy, I say I cannot buy but I do things incrementally and I am sure that you, Mr. Speaker, a man of character, will do the same; although the salary of an attorney-at-law may not be the same as a teacher, even in this distinguished position which I am in.

Sir, I know you are a man of integrity and I expect you to continue despite whatever is put before you to do something that may be illegal, because you too would have come from humble origins and you know that you have to protect your own integrity. I believe in integrity, morality, fair play, transparency and upholding of standards that must be continued and promoted across the entire span of this country. I endorse, strongly endorse, this Prevention of Corruption Bill, 2021. The Government's tenure has been short and it has been a very complex experience over the past three years. There is no other Government that I am aware of that has been faced with the challenges which this Government has faced. We had to go to the International Monetary Fund because the last Administration left everything in disarray. The university students could not pay to go there, the money was withdrawn and all kinds of things happened which I would not spend time on right now because already these things are known.

I know that the ashfall took a toll on us. I know that COVID is still taking a toll on us. I complain about the roads in St. Thomas. I complain about the wells that need cleaning. I complain about other projects but then when I look back in reality, although I can apologise to the people

of the parish and the constituency because they know we and what I am worth and what this Labour Party is worth. I know that the money which would have gone to help with so many other projects now has to be spent on COVID to be able to save lives and families and to bring this country to a level where tourism can be rekindled, people can go back out to work, people can have their houses fixed after Hurricane Elsa and the freak storm we had before that, and people can go about their lives in a different way again as they would have done before. I know that this Government faced it and we faced it and we are fixing it, Mr. Speaker, Sir, because we have a leader who understands and we have a team in this Labour Party that forms this Government and they work together in unity to be able to make that difference.

Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate my support for this Bill and the approach to sensitise the public of Barbados about it. People called for it, they saw things happening, they heard things, all of which were not true, but they said, "We need to come with this Prevention of Corruption Bill because we want the proof to show that our leaders have clean characters and that they look after our interests." People believe you can just go and push your hand in the Treasury and take out money and spend it for yourself. I call, on this Government as well publicly to let us get out there and speak to the public so that they can understand the role of a Member of Parliament, the role of a Minister, the things we do and cannot do. We cannot handle any money. It is the Permanent Secretary who helps us as we try to work with the policies and so on which we have established to be able to determine whether the budget can carry it or not, how it will be spent, what the accountability will be like, and what those agencies will have to give in terms of those persons who get contracts. That is not our role as Members of Parliament.

Sir, we work with it and we give approval because we understand when that Cabinet Paper comes, it goes to Cabinet, it is well discussed, everything is ventilated and then we determine that this is the right route to go. We determine that this team of persons or groups of individuals or entities will benefit from what we are doing. I believe that we must continue to do that. Mr. Speaker, I do not know if that continued in the last Administration, because there were so many problems and out of that so many people became so disenchanted and felt that they were just going out casting their vote and people were not doing what they should do in their interests. I do not want to be engaged in anything that is contrary to the Manifesto pledges because we believe that the pledges which give to the people, as long as we can fulfil them and account for the expenditure and everything else we do, I believe that we are on the correct path.

We have seen governments which have done it before and done it exceptionally well, so we will work on

the projects, we will deliver, we will document and we will share the information so that the public of Barbados wins back that confidence which it had but whom the last Administration caused to become so disenchanted that they really were glad to see them go. We must not ever make any mistake with what must happen but we must educate the people along with us to let them know that these are the things a Minister and a Member of Parliament can do, and these are the things we are not do. The public is not clear on that and it is my duty and the duty of all these Honourable Members and even the aspirants who will come into the political arena to be able to do that so that people might understand that a politician cannot be rich; so I bought a vehicle second-hand through the Credit Union, but people say, she bought that big truck, do you see how they go into the public and when they go in a job they take the Government money and buy a big truck. Mr. Speaker Sir, they will say the same thing about you, they will say the same thing about my colleague here from Christ Church East, and they will say the same thing about my colleague from St. Michael South. That is the kind of mentality that will develop because people are judging us by the actions of the last administration, and it is wrong. Mr. Speaker, today we must do the sensitisation and make people aware of what to expect and also to let them know about the laws of the Barbados and how the laws of Barbados will work for them.

Now, the historical cultural practice of our native land have always been to work hard, honestly, and diligently in order to achieve, so our fore parents will rent the little spot that belong to the plantation and if they were able to get for the ten cents per square foot, thank the Barbados Labour Party for the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act in the early 1980s and empowering poor people to build and those poor people will build from the back and come forward and they did not take a cent from anyone, they throw a meeting turn and they did what they had to do to be able to build and put a proper cover over the heads of their children and their family. However, over the years approaches have changed, especially with the cultural penetration. We see what is happening in the outside World and sometimes we want to also try it. We hear of the bribery that is going on in another country, we hear of the bug drug deals, we see the people in the in movies and in real life with the big gold teeth and big gold chains and the big fussy cars, and some of them have never done a day's work in anybody's place. They do not have a business of their own, but the kickbacks and the other aspects of raising money that is not theirs honestly and we have now got our young people in a tizzy, as my mother used to call it or in a conundrum if that will fit there, where they say to themselves, I just have to go and run a little task for the guy down the road and I am going to get \$2 000, or the fellow tell me if I come and I buy some firearms and I rent them out for \$1 000 a day I am going to make some big money. All of that is wrong doing, all of that is corruption. Who is

suffering? The poor people, the rich people and the same individuals and their families, therefore we have to do a lot more teaching, a lot more talking with so that people understand. It is not that you go to Parliament and you are high and mighty, because we have to go back out there to the people again, but in the mean time we have to educate them that what they are practicing is wrong, what they are doing is not in keeping with the laws, or those tenants that are so well enshrined in the Bible that you have to work and by the sweat of the brow you shall eat bread. All of that and we have lost a lot of those proverbs like, watch the fellow out there that fly, because you do not know whose wings he is flying with. All of that the seniors taught us and we have thrown our culture through the window to mind all kinds of madness from some other into national countries, some other countries in the international world where those people do not have the morals that we have because they were not steeped in the cultural norms and values that have brought us thus far for ordinary poor black people to be managing this Honourable Chamber when we know that before they were all the white people and others from London or England or the British people who did it. Now, we are here, we have to make sure that we reinforce those values so that Barbadians understand we can do this, it is right and if you do that it is wrong, but we cannot give a blind eye and the blind is what is causing a lot of people to continue to do what they are doing. Whereas, some would say I do not want to say anything to him because I want him to vote for me. Vote for me or not I shall tell you, you are doing madness, foolishness, ignorance, or whatever. Come here young man, I just saw you smoking, do you know that is illegal and those are the things we need to say and say come back I still love you but you are doing wrong and if the police picks you up your parents do not even have the money to give you bail. Those are the things that we need to do so that they understand what they are doing is wrong, it is corrupt or so or what you are doing is right. As leaders at this level in the various faith based institutions, in our schools and whatever the area of management is to transfers those skills to our youth and help to lift them up that they can understand that the Prevention of Corruption Bill makes sense and will help to guide them and their generation to come to be able to live quiet, peaceful, protective and safe lives as the times go on.

Now, Barbadians are still very concerned over the changes that have taken place. I spoke about the cultural penetration and the illegal practices across that hemisphere. We learned about drug deals, the kickbacks. 'I am going to get the contract for you but put in a \$2 000 for me'. I know that is small, Member for St. Philip West. I know that might sound small, because I am not on the road in the same way perhaps as men are, but I hear the whispers and so on and it really bothers me. There are bribes, there is thievery in our banks in Barbados as well. I have come across some because I am working with the seniors and I do not behave as though I am a civil servant, but I go out

there and I canvas and people call me and they complain from every step and every area in Barbados, including yours and every other in here including St. Michael West. They call and say that the old lady went to the bank and somebody took her cheque. That is thievery, robbery and unconscionable of those persons who are doing it.

We know of persons working in the banks and taking out money from people's accounts that are dormant and we have a lot of cases in the Court right now, where people are waiting and I want every last one of them found guilty to go and spend some time and come back and cut down some of the bush and trees like the prisoners used to do in the past, because they have some privileges that are different from anything I have ever known and our country going down and the taxpayers are reeling under the pressure because we feeding them. I am not talking about three square meals, I am not interested in that because they have to live, but we need to make sure that we can stamp out taking of people money from accounts and duping the seniors. They are new seniors that are being robbed not only by families and friends, but some of them are being robbed by lawyers, doctors, bishops and priest and pastors and strangers who go to work with them. Those are things that need to be pursued and that is why I am glad that there is a special unit in the Police Force that is pursuing those kinds of matters, because those old people have toyed day and night in the sun, rain, fields, and in Bridgetown selling and those old people need that care, guidance and protection. Mr. Speaker, this is the fact of which I speak because I have the information that I will share when I have to and I do.

Barbadians are extremely concerned about what is going on and the technology does not make it any easier, because every so often I get people who ask me these questions and people tell me if you press number one the person draws every cent out of it. They also send to tell you that you have won \$1 million, and you when you turn on your computer you have to send your account number that is when every cent is withdrawn. Foolish Bajans are getting duped by that also. I am sorry to say it, but do you know why? That is because you are gullible. By the sweat of thy brow shall thou eat bread, and that is what I believe unless somebody bequeath something to you then you can access it or you can work hard to raise the money to get it. Sir that is going on in a way that is not good at all.

In the past corruption used to be settled. People dig these little things and it was settled. Sometimes people gave a blind eye. They would whisper it, but not want to go anywhere say. This is true now, because people are afraid that if I say that I saw this person in this negative activity whatever they acquired, then they are fearful that the person will come back and there will be repercussions. Hence, we can understand that as well. However. Currently, their actions are so visible and practices are so

much in your face at higher levels as well, both in the public and private sector, and it should be stamped out.

There is absolutely no way that houses should have built through the Poverty Alleviation Project, six houses I understand, and you cannot even see shavings from the six houses. All kinds of monies were thrown into the Constituency Councils but no results. The summer camps had no results and we could go on and on. You know what, Mr. Speaker? We saw some people with some big, fussy cars and big bungalows that we knew that they had no mortgage. The evidence is there and I believe that in cases of that nature, this is why people turned and put all of us in this big pot to say, "All of dem politicians is thieves."

We do not even seem to want to defend ourselves to let people know that we came to public life with our character intact and we are going to leave with our character intact because we are going to follow the straight and narrow to make sure that Barbadians understand that you can come to serve but you do not have to dip your hand into the "kitty" to take out anything. It is the taxpayers' money that will be taken away and therefore projects that we would like to do to help those who are most vulnerable, the disabled, the aged, those living with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), those whose houses have been destroyed and the other categories.

We want to see them get back on their feet. We do not have that authority and I do not encourage or support anyone who seeks to want to be taking any bribes or to bring any such behaviour to me. I have only had it once, Mr. Speaker, and I condemned it. "If you can help me get X and Y, mistress, I would give you a \$5,000," the person said. I nearly went mad, Mr. Speaker, and I half mad already. You know, Mr. Speaker. For someone to come and tell me about \$5, 000 to assist them in getting something in a Ministry and getting the approval, Mr. Speaker, they chose the wrong girl.

I believe that my colleagues here will hold that straight and narrow also, and condemn that behavior. If it is a serious bribe, call the police and give a report because we will not stand for that kind of negative behaviour. For me, that is corruption and that is what would cause them to tell someone else," Go to the girl up by Vault Road, she will take it, help you and the little money would help her do something for her constituency." My constituents will be able to benefit but I am going to use the money I have worked for all of my life to make sure that they are comfortable in whatever way that I possibly can.

If people give donations of food, et cetera, that is okay. I want no money from anyone to run any campaign or other things. It is not my way of doing it. It has to be a close family friend who says, "I know that you are poor." They give me a little something and it goes into the

campaign, not to me. I fall within the range of what political campaign requests whenever we are to file what our expenditure has been because I believe in following the law and making sure that I follow the standards. Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate that the saying, 'to get rich overnight' is really true when we see the kind of inducements that people receive.

However, I want at the same time to indicate and lend my support to the Honourable Member for St. Joseph and the team with the consultation that had taken place, the kind of robust discussion and recommendations that came through from the entities whether they were individuals, groups, lawyers and other persons who sent in their recommendations. I want to publicly thank them because I would have been part of the Committee at that time and the kind of representation that they give, I believe that it shows Barbadians want to see us go on the straight and narrow path as we always did as a proud set of Barbadians who always upheld the laws.

I want to publicly commend them for the input and recommendations that they have put towards this Bill that we are discussing here today. Sir, we know that in any democracy freedom of expression and thought, as well as all other aspects of what people believe in, we need to show respect for them in that particular area. The Bill did not attract the support of the two-thirds majority in the other place, Sir, and we understand. We can manage there but we cannot tell if an Honourable Member from the other place falls ill or has a parent who is ill and could not attend that day or whatever, but it did not pass. However, I believe that a little tweaking of what transpired that we will be able having taken the information there, I pray, those Members will because we need this legislation to tackle some of those aspects of corruption that we are seeing unfolding in this country.

It is not one set of laws for the Mes??? and another set of laws for the Persians, it is the laws for every Barbadian. I commend those who have given us that kind of assistance and I pray that their actions will now make a difference whenever this legislation goes over to the other place, so that we can develop those practices for those allegations and comments about tainting politicians, and try to destroy their character. I hope that we can be able to treat to that and deal with those persons who are the perpetrators in respect of what we are discussing. Also, I want to refer to the ICBL saga that has put Barbados in such a negative position and Members of Parliament driving cars that they received as gifts as was talked about in the last Administration.

There were persons receiving contracts that could not even put a nail in a piece of wood. They did not understand how to measure anything but had these big contracts. Many of them were Attorneys-at-Law that

robbed poor people. One or two may be in prison or they may be out on bail. When it comes to a person at that level, what message are we sending to the young people? You know the law as an Attorney-at-Law. We know of an Attorney-at-Law who was accused and I have the document. Mr. Speaker, you might have the document too. An old man in the wheelchair was robbed. This is not what Barbadians stand for, especially people who are disabled.

You do not want to take advantage of a disabled person or differently abled person. All of those are things that we want erased from our history and let us see how we can embrace, uplift and do all the things we know are necessary to show that we are above board, and that integrity is the hallmark of everything that we do in this country. It happened for us before in the times of poverty. It can happen for us again but we all need to speak up and speak out, and sometimes discreetly because we do not want the repercussions as I said earlier. I can talk about the BWA where hundreds of thousands of dollars were paid out and the Auditor General Report spoke to that.

Persons said they would order parts from Miami, money paid upfront and not a washer, a joint, length of pipe or anything has come to the BWA before this institution called the BLP as a Government. Where are those persons? Were they brought to justice? All kind of confusion in the Transport Board selling gas at the Roebuck Street location at that time and \$40, 000 missing. Where is it now? No one knows. No one can give an account of it. We must be accountable for our actions wherever we are and wherever we go. Sir, I am going to come to a conclusion by indicating that a lot of these actions create that doubt in every one of us and the systems, private and public, that we have in Barbados.

It casts that negative light where people continue to condemn us saying that it is the politician that give them the guidance or it is the politician friend. You can have a friend and tell your friend, but your friend does not have to have it. However, if you are friend and I speak to you about something that is wrong doing or a wrong doing that you have committed, and you choose not to do it then you are no longer my friend. My friend was my mother and father and I can do without them because they are long dead. What about you a friend? At the end, the two of us are linked together, so once you do something wrong you are not "Cyntie" friend.

My name is going to get pulled into the scandal and then, everyone is going to be looking at me in a different light when I know poor, humble me only stands for what is correct and proper.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has two more minutes.

Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE: Yes, Sir. I am going to conclude.

As I said before, I came to life from humble origins, Mr. Speaker, and I intend to serve the people of Barbados not only St. Thomas. I intend to serve them and when I leave this institution, Sir, whether it be retirement or death, I expect my name and I expect the names of my colleagues here and I know most of them very well, to leave with their names and their integrity intact and, of course, the outstanding contribution that they have already started to make in this country, I want them to continue to build on it and I am talking now like an old auntie, Sir. I want them to build on that contribution so that when they are long gone and the same way that we are talking about the Cox's Commission -- I mean I believe that would have been Mencea Cox or whoever Cox it would have been or whichever of our pioneer in Barbados now and not just in the Barbados Labour Party (B.L.P.), but the contribution of all of those I believe that the same way that they have left and gone to the great beyond or are in their retirement with their character or their reputation intact, all of us can do that because at the end of the day, we are seen as the leaders. We are seen as the persons whom everybody looks up to for guidance, for support, for everything else and we have to live making sure that our integrity is intact and so the Barbados Labour Party (B.L.P.) stands for fairness, transparency, accountability, equity and everything else and we want to be able to have this continue to reflect across the length and breadth of Barbados. We want to see the negative elements dealt with through the legal system to make sure that they are examples that others would see, if you do it wrong you are going to be punished. I do not care whose child you are, whose relative you are, we do not care where you live in the heights, in the terraces, in the gullies or in the villages, we do not care because it would be the fairness that Barbadians have grown accustomed to that they would be able to see it continued and the fairness in the legal system being permeated across the length and breadth of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank you and I highly commend the Honourable Member for St. Joseph and the team with him in the legislative department where they are working and, of course, all other who would have given their contributions and recommendations, I want to highly commend them for the excellent work and I support the Prevention of Corruption Bill 2021 and I trust that this Government will continue to fulfil the pledges that it has made to the people of Barbados. Thank you, Sir.

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

Dr. S. E. BROWNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too want to lend my support to this Anti-Corruption Bill, but before I get to that I want to sincerely thank the

Honourable Member for St. Thomas who has succeeded in inspiring me today. It is interesting that she came into politics in 1971 at which time I was entering the world and I hope I can make my mark as much as she has.

Most of the contributions if not all of the contributions here this morning and this afternoon have been interesting food for thought, all of them I must add, but I as a newbie, as the Honourable Member for St. Michael West suggested, many of us are newbies in here. I too want to make my small contribution in that light. I would not be able to speak as fluently on the numbers, the millions of dollars that went missing as the Honourable Member for St. Michael West did or I might not be able to put my case as the Honourable Member for St. James Central did, but I will try to do my best.

I am heartened by the fact that the Honourable Member for St. Andrew is now walking in my shoes as a Backbencher, sometimes you have to walk to the walk to understand what Backbenchers here go through and I wish I had a little more time to have a look at the legislation, but I support it and I will have that time to do so, but as I begin, I had been shaking in my blue coloured wedge heel shoes for a little while now worried about the fact that again, I have to face the electorate for a second time, and more importantly the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West and perhaps to some extent, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West who is to my left right now. We three have been at the centre, more or less, of the Corruption in Public Life and the Integrity Legislation in terms of what we would have fought for during the campaign two year before, of 2018. We have suffered the brunt, our constituents have been made to suffer as a result of ...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, are you sure about that?

Dr. S. E. BROWNE: I am sure. I did not tell you up to when.

Mr. SPEAKER: No, but I did not hear you call St. Michael Central.

Dr. S. E. BROWNE: I apologise, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not understand that.

Dr. S. E. BROWNE: I apologise, Mr. Speaker, I was just pointing out the ones that, you know ...

Mr. SPEAKER: No, but you just randomly said three.

Dr. S. E. BROWNE: Not random at all, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: You said this purposely three, but there is St. Michael Central and there is also Christ Church South ...

Dr. S. E. BROWNE: But there are too many to mention, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: No, but you mentioned three so I am wondering if you randomly picked out three and left the remainder.

Dr. S. E. BROWNE: Okay. Let me explain myself. You know how obituaries when you do not mention somebody's name, the sum up is "too many to mention" I would use that excuse in here this evening so there are too many to mention, but ...

Asides.

Dr. S. E. BROWNE: "Too numerous to mention", thank you, Honourable Member. I do include you so my worry is having to face the electorate after getting on platform after platform speaking about the -- and I would use your terms -- "the alleged" corruption that enveloped our constituencies, all of us, but this bit of legislation makes me feel a little bit better. I think we can go forward now into the next election constitutionally due in 2023 feeling a little safer in defending our stance on corruption and the other Bill, Corruption and Integrity Legislation that we are soon to bring back to the Honourable House. As a Member of Parliament I had to deal with certain things. We have the most notable in my mind or one of the most notable is, for instance, the housing in Carpenter's Glade which is in Parish Land that the Honourable Member for Christ Church West is helping me with. Up to this week I had videos and photographs of one of the houses in there where water is literally coming through the walls and the plugs and yes, the warranty has been out, but these are things that we met as we came into the General Elections. We really cannot leave these people out to suffer, but water is coming through all of the plugs, the sidings of the walls which is wood, the steps have moved away from the buildings, the tiles have blown and these are issues I have to deal with daily because the residents of the area, quite rightly, are getting angry at it so this is part of it. While my opponent who says he is waiting to be called to the seat, waits to be called, these are things that I am already having to deal with. I have to answer or defend, but I cannot defend it, he has to defend the millions that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition mentioned that went into the Valarie and The Grotto and then the houses that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas mentioned. She said six, but I think it is eight of them that cannot be found although contractors were paid for them. I have to deal with things like that. The Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central used the phrase, what did he say: "See wuh you could do fuh muh." Many of them took that really

literally but they turned it around into seeing what the constituent could do for them and we, are a Party, are now seeing to turn that phrase around in the hopes of helping our constituents. It could not be a matter of see what you could do for me. As I mentioned very early on entering this Honourable House, the women of our constituencies, some of them, had to literally get on their knees to get what they wanted. When I first got into the House of Assembly a lady called me worried that she was being evicted from a National Housing Corporation (N.H.C.) unit and when I investigated she had owed \$11 000 in rent. Asked her about this, she mentioned two Members of Parliament that gave her the house so she never thought once that she would have to pay the rent. These are things that we have to deal with every day in the constituency. Women can now breathe a little easier. They know that when one of us is able to help them it does not come with strings attached or anything attached, for that matter, and that we sincerely want to do our part.

I have to deal with things like -- somebody brought it up earlier today -- with ZR permits that were given out and then people that really are well deserving were unable to get more ZR permits at the time when I came in because the allocation of numbers were already made. People who are not working, who have children and who are ready and willing to work were put on the backburner because of the previous Honourable Member for St. Philip North, at least under his guidance or Administration.

We have to deal with things like drugs and firearms entering the country. It cannot always be that what we consider the small man is made to pay for it. They had to come from somewhere. Some of these small men do not even have passports, some cannot read and write, it has to come from somewhere and it is about time we do the requisite investigations to get the people. Of course, there is a fear for your families and there is a fear of somebody shooting up your house and there is a fear that somebody - 'thief' your dog - I know I said 'thief' I forgot - steals your dog although we are now in a Republic and should be throwing off the Queen's English I would still be right on it. People have the fear about whistle-blowing that is the truth. Despite that, we have to be able to offer protection to the ones that are the whistle-blowers. I am not sure how this will be done in such a small jurisdiction as ours but we need to secure those people who are willing to speak. Too many times we see people being held of whichever colour hue of the skin and the ones with the lighter colour seems to come out the better for it while the ones that look like us most of us in here if not all of us right now get the end of the stick that is not so favourable and sit in prison waiting to be tried. Something seems a little curious about situations like that.

As the Honourable Member for St. Thomas said, she covered most of my speech, so she kind of stole my

thunder, it is not only politicians. People perceive that it is only the politician that is involved in this corruption business but it really is not only the politicians. I will start first by saying, I cannot always defend my profession, that doctors are involved in it. I have met patients within the last year that have been on lists for knee and hip replacements and with a sentence like if you pay me how much thousand dollars it is I could do it for you next week in the very hospital, that is a sure sign of corruption so it is also in my profession. You know Mr. Speaker, it is definitely in yours. I mean we have evidence of that. A lot of them are now coming up to keep me company in St. Philip North. I would like to say I welcome them but these kinds of things need to stop. It is obviously in Government institutions. You have people applying for jobs who well qualified, qualified up to the hilt, and somebody who has less or no qualifications come and sit in the job that they by right should have. I am not necessarily speaking about this Administration but this is over time where for political reasons for whatever, who you know and who your father is and your mother is and that that, people end up in round holes who are square pegs. These things need to be looked at and stopped basically. We have issues with that.

Mr. President, I always point to myself, the chairperson or soon to be I hope the chairperson or used to be the chairperson of the National Assistance Board where we have National Assistance Board workers, maybe not in this time but in the time of my grandfather before I even thought about coming into politics... My grandfather would have been over 95 years old practising his signature and he happened to tell us that the wedding would have come off soon so the Will was about to be written and all of that. No matter if they are high or low corruption is definitely out there. I met somebody this week that one of the workers was able to tell me, when I wanted to refer the patient, 'oh, he ain't got no money'. How do you know that he does not have any money? These things come from the lowest to the highest parts of Government. These are the kinds of things we need to look at.

Mr. Speaker, with the anticorruption laws and so on, we need to have teeth, and let me explain what I mean. For instance, I am on the Pharmacy Council that is responsible for pharmacies and pharmacy warehouses and seeing that people do not stop medications and drugs that they should not. Mr. Speaker, every once in a while we get reports about over-the-counter stories, regular shops stocking things that are only provided by prescription. We organised a raid. If you could find a policeman to go with you in trouble you raid the place and then what? By the next week they are back on the shelf because we have no real teeth, so it is okay to put these things in record but if you cannot do anything about it you are still in trouble

We have the Committee of Public Accounts of which I am a member and of which this Administration

would have chaired. The Honourable Prime Minister at the time, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, would have chaired the last Administration. I remember two Ministers were called to the Commission but I do not think we see them yet and they were proud to be in the newspapers saying they are not going anywhere. We need the teeth. We have excuses coming out where we bring members to give evidence, some flimsy excuses sometimes. We need the teeth. Although it is on paper yes we can do this, we can do that by law, nothing is ever done so at the same time when we bring these things the public needs to be reassured. The truth is that the proof of the pudding, in this case, has to be in the eating. It is all well and good for me to say when elections are called that yes we have passed these Bills, but then what? The truth is we need to make an example even if it is a matter of just coming to make account of what has happened to the moneys, what has happened to buildings that we cannot find, contractors that have taken money and done bad jobs. agree with the Honourable Leader of the Opposition when he spoke about that in terms of making sure contractors... You could form a business and call yourself a contractor with no idea what a measuring tape looks like or a block for that matter and get a job if you pay the right people or belong to the right party that is basically almost traditional in Barbados but these traditions need to come to an end but so these are the areas that I wanted to deal with, Sir.

Truth is, there is doubt within the public arena. People doubt politicians. People are saying all the parties are the same. What do we do to concrete the opposite thinking, that we can trust our politicians, your meaning to be right for us. I am planning to leave her as I came but I am planning to leave things that would make a mark in this society. I like the Honourable Member for St. Thomas want to leave as clean as I came that is the truth. Since I have been in here I do not want to pick out one Honourable Member that I could say otherwise. Everybody in here seems to be quite honest and I am proud of that but we need to rebuild the public trust.

Mr. Speaker, right now even with COVID-19, they are wrong, but people are questioning the methods of the Government and the COVID-19 Unit. You have seen it for yourself, Mr. Speaker. Videos are coming out that the food is not good and some fake news all over the place. Public trust needs to be regained and I think this is an important step into doing that. Individuals have to be called into account for this to make sense and for the integrity legislation to make sense. Without that we are just looking pretty.

Mr. Speaker, these are my few contributions that I wanted to make to the House this evening, and I am grateful for your attention. Thank you.

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

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is the second time in two weeks that this Parliament has had cause to debate legislation that has been extremely long overdue. The issue of corruption has previously not been treated with the seriousness that it deserves by any Parliament. It is a farce that legislators embodied with the trust of the people who elected them have previously ignored the fact that for ages now our country that we love so dearly needed up-to-date modern Prevention of Corruption legislation. Therefore, I applaud those responsible for bringing this piece of legislation here to this Parliament today.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, corruption has an indirect effect on a country's economic performance; it affects many factors, it affects economic growth, it affects the investment of a country, it affects the levels of taxations, it affects the composition and effectiveness of public expenditure, it creates inefficiencies in our governance structure, in our bureaucracy, it fuels wastages of resources, it undermines the efficiency of public expenditure, it undermines our social welfare system, it keeps people in poverty, and it creates a fora for the continuation of inequality in our society.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the reality is perhaps that those like myself who have been advocates for many years and preaching for modern-day Prevention of Corruption legislation, have not properly explained to the people how corruption adversely affects them. It is true that people like the British Philosopher Edmund Burke said that among a people generally corrupt liberty cannot exist, but we have to translate this into real terms. The reality of the situation is that as we speak today, Barbados' anti-corruption legislative thrust is based on a century-old Prevention of Corruption Act, Cap. 144/1929; it is based on a British Act of 1970.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, when this legislation that still informs the anti-corruption platform in Barbados was passed there was no thought of any computer, any social media; transnational crime was not present. I mean, there was an aftermath of a First World War but drugs transshipment, major trafficking in females... Mr. Speaker, Sir, [let us remember] that airplanes were now starting out. There was no firm tax policy, mandate or social welfare because the vast majority of people in anyway were there just to be carriers of wood. Certainly in Barbados they were there for the enrichment of the sugar plantation and for our colonial masters, England. Mr. Speaker, Sir, that is what we are based on.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, since 1981, four decades effectively, Parliaments of Barbados, managed by both

political administrations have failed to bring in this legislation. I think, as I said, it started in the 1981 Administration of the then Right Honourable "Tom" Adams who tried to bring it in, that is the Integrity legislation; it died with the dissolution of Parliament in 1986. From 1994, certainly Barbados Labour Party Government Manifestos have spoken about bringing Prevention of Corruption legislation and also Contractor General legislation. I know, Sir, the late Sir Richard Haynes, one-time Honourable Leader of the Opposition and Minister of Finance who of course would have formed his own political party he spoke about bringing anti-corruption legislation and Contractor General legislation, but, Sir, I do not know, there did not seem to be the political will by any previous Parliament and administration to bring it in. Sir, that was unfortunate. It reached a height of political folly under the last administration, the Democratic Labour Party administration and after all they rode on the back of "alleged corruption" of the last Barbados Labour Party Administration to get into office in 2008. One of the reasons they got into office was allegations being made against the last Barbados Labour Party Administration for corruption. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I myself realised that the Barbados Labour Party Government was going to lose the January 2008 election when three weeks before that election at a Christmas party persons looked at me -- we were in a group talking and drinking - and said: "We dun with wunna. Wunna t'ief enough, it is time to let the other side get some of the t'iefery too."

Sir, in that group there were some people who I thought were strong supporters of the Barbados Labour Party Government, including a former Barbados Labour Party Government candidate who, at that time kept their mouth shut, [seemingly] in agreement with what the person said. I knew then that the Barbados Labour Party Government had lost the election, that is the truth, it was just a question by how much. But having won that election on the basis, partly, certainly significantly in my opinion of allegations of perceived corruption against the Barbados Labour Party Government and promising to bring in Prevention of Corruption legislation within 100 days of coming into office, that party was in office for in excess of 10 years four months, the went over their stay and never brought in such legislation. In 2012, as one of the last Acts of Parliament they passed a Prevention of Corruption Bill which had as its final clause in the substantive Act that it will come into force on a date fixed by Proclamation but it was never proclaimed, Sir. Before that it came before Parliament in 2011 and was quickly rushed to a Select Committee with the clear intentions of never passing that Bill or certainly having passed it in Parliament never, quite frankly, bringing it into force.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, you see the reasons for that. When I got into Parliament after being humbly elected as the

Honourable Member for St. James North in February 2013 I asked a senior Government minister who used to act at one time as Prime Minister, but why do they not bring in the Prevention of Corruption legislation, [they] having placed so much emphasis on it in the 2008 election and having had it in their Manifesto? At least, Sir, I must say that that then Member spoke honestly and said: "Do you really think that we are going to bring in legislation that is going to lock up each other?" at least he was honest, because the then Honourable Prime Minister gave a lot of excuses that were untenable as to why they would not pass, or rather proclaim the Prevention of Corruption Act. For one he said there was an overlap between a draft Integrity in Public Life Bill (a draft Bill, not an Act) and the Prevention of Corruption Bill. He used that as an excuse in September, 2013 for not bringing into force that Act. He went on to say Sir, then in 2016, when the pressure was being kept on him that Barbados had anti-corruption legislation, Sir. That is what he said referring to the 1929 Act. It is not true to say that it is not on our statute books and that that Act was not good enough, but the maximum penalty under that Act was \$2 400 and the prosecution had to be done by the Director of Public Prosecutions, as you as a criminal lawyer of note are well aware. It had to be brought within six months of the act being committed, Sir. These kinds of crimes, corrupt practices, are in many instances not revealed within six months. It takes much longer in a lot of cases to gather evidence and to get witnesses to bring it, but that satisfied the then Prime Minister, who of course was a senior lawyer, having qualified the same time as I did. He knew better, Sir. I am not saying he ought to have known better. He knew that he was not speaking with honesty to the people of Barbados when he said that, Sir.

Then you had an Attorney General then under the last Administration=, chief legal advisor by the Constitution to the people and Government of Barbados, saying that people who were calling for prevention of corruption legislation were making silly noises, Sir. Those were the words he used, and he was referring to people like me, Sir, because from 2010 I was writing in the newspaper. Before I was a Member of Parliament I was writing guest columns sometimes. I have all of the articles right here in this pile. I looked back at them last night, Sir. I was calling for prevention of corruption legislation. Then when I got into Parliament, February 2013, I continued from the Floor of Parliament to talk about it. He said we were making silly noises and saying that it would have been too costly to bring into force such legislation because you would have needed a commission to monitor and investigate alleged corrupt practices. Sir, he said that his Ministry had better things to do with its money, it was not a priority, and that corruption was not a significant issue in Barbados. I do not know what Barbados he lived in, Sir. That is the truth.

Members of the last Administration, as I used to tell them, all of them were born in poverty, Sir, except one of them who now says he wants to come back and run. I do not know. He is the only one who was born with a gold spoon in his mouth. A former Member for St. Michael South Central, Sir. He is the only one with the gold spoon. All of the rest were born poor but then suddenly when they got into Parliament, as you know, Sir, they were big and were totally disconnected from the Barbados people. I do not know where he lived that he could have said corruption was not a significant issue in Barbados. Corruption is a big issue in this country. The fact of the matter is, yes, a lot of people turn a blind eye to it but it is big. Revenue collecting agencies, Sir. We know that the Inland Revenue, now the Barbados Revenue Authority, Immigration Department, Town and Country Planning Department, traditionally officers in those departments, along with Licensing Authority, were taking bribes, Sir. Men whom I know with four houses were working in those departments, and their outside women had houses too which they gave. You cannot justify that, Sir, on the salaries which they made as public servants.

Therefore, this Bill before Parliament today has a provision speaking about unexplained property, Sir. It mentions that if you have property which your level of resources and income show you should not have and you are a public official as defined by the Act, you have to account for it, Sir. You cannot show that your great aunt left it to you in a will, so how did you get it? This Bill speaks towards that, Sir. Sorry, this Bill speaks in fact to a person exercising public functions; that is what it speaks to, and that covers the whole ambit of people in the Public Service. Sir, this Bill also speaks towards bribery and penalises bribery by both the corrupter and the corruptee. That is important, Sir: Both the person who corrupted and the person corrupts them, both are dealt with and it relates both to the public and private sectors. Let us not fool ourselves. There is not only corruption and corrupt practices in the Public Service. There is in the private sector too, and this Bill speaks to this as well.

Sir, as the Honourable Member for St. James Central -- my neighbouring colleague in terms of constituencies -- said this is not a perfect Bill. You and I are lawyers, Sir. You know there will never be perfection in life period far less in a piece of legislation because circumstances change and you cannot take everything into account. It is not a perfect Bill but it is a start, after 100 years, 1929. We cannot be proud of that, Sir. The Barbados Labour Party's last Administration would have signed the United Nations Convention against Corruption on December 10, 2003, Sir; 18 years ago. That Convention was adopted by the United Nations on August 31, 2003. In other words, we signed it just over a month after it was adopted by the UN and, as you know full well, when you sign a document as a country at an international level -- a treaty or a convention -- you

have the authority and the obligation to pass it into domestic law. That is how our system operates. It does not automatically become law of the country, as it does in some countries such as the United States. You have to pass it in your internal legislative assembly for it to become law. For 18 years we have not passed that law, Sir, as we were obliged internationally to do because by that we have committed ourselves internationally to it.

This Bill incorporates as its Schedule that United Nations treaty finally, Sir. As I used to tell the last Administration, Barbados was one of the three countries in the world -- only three -- that had not passed that Convention into its domestic law after having signed it at the United Nations, Sir. That is shameful, yet we had top politicians, Prime Minister and Attorney General, in the last Administration telling us how we do not need this because corruption is insignificant, when every single day people are "teifing" in both Government and private sector. Sir, as I said, our duty is to translate to the public of Barbados how corruption affects countries in many cases. Corruption affects about ten per cent of the gross domestic product of countries. In Barbados, it is estimated that corruption and corrupt practices deprive the people of Barbados by about \$500 million a year, Sir. There was that study in the last decade. Five hundred million, because when a private corporation gave a Minister of Government a BMW costing \$400 000, this was laid as a Document of the House, Sir.

The now Prime Minister laid it and I remember that debate very well, because I spoke on it. When this private corporation gave a Minister of Government who is saying that he is running next election and I cannot believe my ears. Black BMW X5G from Transtech and like I said it was laid as a document of the House. He used to drive it into Parliament. In fact, when I mentioned it one time he said, nobody cannot stop him from driving the vehicle. However, it was licensed in the name of Transtech Inc.

Asides.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: I do not know where it is, but I know where it was at that time. Sir, when now his statutory boards of which he was Minister over would give these corporations money, you think that when they have to give him a \$400 000 vehicle, who you think is paying for that Sir? Sir, the tax payers, so the contract is inflated by \$400 000 plus. Ironically the Honourable Member for Christ Church East walks in now, I am he enjoying what he is hearing. When the contract is now inflated by \$400 000 plus the tax payers of Barbados is paying for that. That is how they gets on and then you get situations. This is what I think have the people of Barbados really vex, because these things come out in Public Accounts Committees. The Public Account Committee investigated Transport Board that had the then Member of Parliament for St. Philip North

of whom the now Member for St. Philip North just had an oversight and millions and millions of dollars gone through the eddoes there also. Tax payers and also paying for that because when now a company replaces machinery twice or in fact, three and four times in six months on buses, they are charging for that and they had cases before Public Accounts Committee where the same piece of equipment getting charge for four times and Transport Board paying them. Then you have National Housing, where the then Minister, the member for St. Lucy and also the same then member for St. Philip North refusing to go before the Public Accounts Committee which is constitutionally set up to investigate lack of prudent fiscal management, transparency and accountability. That is the kind of thing that we have to go through by under the last administration. Sir, you are hearing that some of these people want to come back to run. This is the issue that we are dealing with today that the public and citizens of Barbados have to pay more money in taxes through this corruption and bribery and inefficiencies in a system, social welfare suffers, waste of resources and people kept poor. The incoming Government now of the Barbados Labour Party faced with all it has to face, therefore does not have the money to repair roads in Ashton Hall, my constituency that I would love to get repaired. All of the roads are bad and I cannot get any repaired of thievery and corrupt practices under the last Government, Sir and then combined with a hurricane, ash fall and then COVID. This is the reality of the situation. Sir, as I said it is not a perfect Bill but it is a certain start. We had to move on. It is long overdue, we promise this legislation, we have been promising it since our manifestos of 1994 and 1999. It is true that it is part of a fleet of legislations which also needs to come to Parliament like the Integrity in Public Life Bill, I believe the Honourable Attorney General would have spoken earlier today when he presented this Bill on those that needs to come with that because that is part of the whole sweep. Whistleblower legislation to give protection to people now who will speak out against corruption and say that Minister X asked them for bribes and they paid Minister X money,..... the 10 per cent cut as one Minister told me that he used to ask where is the Ministers 10 per cent cut under the last administration. It is strange that the Honourable for People's Empowerment look back at me and laugh, she probably know that that is the Minister who she would have succeeded in that Ministry whom I am talking about. However, that is what we face and is being addressed today by this Bill. We need freedom of information legislation and we should not be frightened for it Sir. These are standard form legislation that other countries in the Caribbean have had for decades to allow the public access to information, so there is no secret and there is nothing to hide. It is tax payers' money that is paying for ministerial Government and it should not be any fear in allowing the public access to such information, contractor general legislation and I said to oversee distribution of contracts and awarding of public contracts is needed. Sir, I am not

calling for these things because I like standing up here talking, but because it is required and because it affects people like myself Sir. I am tired hearing that all politicians are the same, all of you all are in the same political class, and all of you all are friends. I am not in that Sir. Sir, if I wanted to continue making money I would have stopped in law, I would not have come into this Sir. Sir, right now I am of course near to the end of my elective political career than I am to the beginning. I am free to speak on these things. I believe that like Singapore, we need to have better terms and conditions of remunerations for Ministers and Members in Parliament. I will say that Sir, and the former member of St. George North, in fact up to his last speech hear in Parliament spoke about that. I believe in the Singapore model, whereas you pay your Ministers and your MPs properly and if you catch them taking bribe they spend the rest of their lives in jail because there is no excuse. The excuse of these former politicians of the last administration, a lot of them would tell you that they never saw money like this yet, I did not know that they had all of this money in the World. That is the truth, one of them told me that. As was said earlier, that particular Minister every six months used to be driving a new vehicle into Parliament yard. He used to be unashamed about it. However, if you pay them properly, Sir I am not giving that as an excuse because they are not paid properly. It is no excuse because you get into elective politics knowing what the money is and you should not be looking for anything on top, Sir.

One night before the election, Sir, some Honourable Members and I met with an official of a statutory board. The Public Accounts Committee spoke to it, so it is a record of Parliament. I think the Honourable Member for St. James Central spoke about it today. \$1.94 billion has gone through the eddoes. I think it may have been the Leader of the Opposition that spoke about it. We worked out with an official of the BWA and he felt free to speak to us because he was about to retire. We worked out that a particular individual had gotten between \$12 million and \$15 million in bribes, Sir, from the contracts. When I heard in an inebriated state that particular person one night said, "He aint care bout nuhbody, he got \$15 million stored away."

He was telling the truth again, Sir. At least he was honest. This is the kind of thing and all politician are unfortunately classified as that. I am not in that, Sir. I did not come into politics on that presumption. The Honourable Member for St. Thomas spoke about an attempt to bribe her. As Minister, I could speak towards two of those situations. I totally rejected them. I suspect that ultimately, Sir, there are people because I was very straight made false complaints against me to others. Of course, you all know of the situation where I intervened to stop the trafficking of women into this country which is a totally corrupt practice and deported the women, but got "cuss" blind, blue and center globally in a voice note.

However, I stand by my principles, Sir. My father would roll in his grave if he ever were to hear that I

was corrupt. He would say, "Well, son it is time to come and join me." The Lord would in all rights say, "Yes, I am going to have him join you now." Sir, that is not part of my DNA and will never be. The issue of the distribution and awarding of contracts to certain people, I try to be practical. At my age and stage of life, I cannot be anything else. The problem in our country is that there are few people with real wealth.

There are few people with real wealth. We have a duty as a Government to distribute this wealth on a more equitable basis. I think the Honourable Member for St. James Central spoke a bit about it today, Sir. It cannot be that you only have a handful of people in this country having wealth and could fund projects. Therefore, whoever in office got to go to these same people and give them contracts. It cannot be that. It has to stop, Sir. People of the colour of virtually everybody in this House got to get some of this wealth too. I caution politicians present and those aspiring to be politicians, and whatever political party you wish to run for to be careful on this situation.

We are now bringing in legislation that will capture. I want the whistleblower legislation that will empower people to come and give the evidence where they have it because one of the problems in this country, as was referred to earlier today, is that there are too many people frightened for the shadow that the body puts out when they walk. "Man my nephew gine get hurt. Man my granddaughter will get victimize", they say. We need to rid people of that belief, have them come forward and give the evidence of bribery and corrupt practices in this country, Sir. They tell me that I am a senior Member of Parliament in here. Sir, I have been everything; backbencher, Minister and Opposition Member of Parliament. I am cautioning everyone to not get themselves involved or to be tempted by people who will come and offer you bribes for contracts.

It is not worth it to damage your reputation and character influence by this, Sir. I am also going to caution that I notice a trend that people who were rejected totally by the electorate three and half years ago in a General Election, now seeking to find solace in the BLP. I do not know because the people rejected them out of hand, Sir. A lot of them could not show their face after the last election. When they walked around, they had their heads down in public. The Honourable Member for the City expresses his intention to retire from politics, a man of tremendous integrity.

He is an officer and a gentleman. Within two days of his announcing his intention to retire, his opponent handed in a membership application to the BLP. I see these things

and I wonder what kind of madness this is that is going on. Someone who had serious allegations of corruption against them, Sir. The Honourable Member for St. James Central here sitting in front of me was Minister over a statutory board that employed the individual and given a contract two months before the election to continue as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of that organisation. Sir, these kind of things....

Asides.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: Let me clarify, Sir. The Honourable Member for St. James Central was not Minister at that time. This happened under the previous DLP Administration. It is these kind of things whereby the general public feel that all politicians are the same. People can jump from one party to the next and it does not matter because they are all friends, and in the same political class. I am not part of that. I came into politics with one purpose only which is to try to help people. Alright? I try to help people with disabilities, old people and young people. Whenever I leave, Sir, I am leaving with my principles, integrity and character intact. There is no money and the \$15 million that that Minister boasted about cannot replace this destruction of his integrity, Sir. At least not in my opinion.

We need and I hope that the Ministry of Finance gives the resources to empower this piece of legislation because it is no sense in us passing it and we do not give the resources to pursue the investigation of corruption, Sir, and the prevention and prosecution of corrupt practices. We have to give the resources to relevant the authorities, Sir, so that it could be pursued. Sir, the majority of people in Barbados who think on these things believe that the time has long come for big-ups to get locked up like anybody else so that if somebody from Weston or the Bayland could get locked up for stealing two tins of sardines from a supermarket, somebody should get locked up for bribes of a half of a million dollars and they are correct, therefore, Sir, I am happy to see the extent of the penalties in this Bill, up to \$1.5 million or 10 years' imprisonment or both. That is the maximum penalty. The others are, I think, \$750 000, the previous Bill under the Democratic Labour Party (D.L.P.) the 2020 Bill that they refused to bring into law, Sir, had essentially penalties of a half of a million dollars or five years in jail so this is an improvement on that. There is also ...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you need to wind up please.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: Yes, Sir, I will. There is also a Clause, Section 18(1) which speaks to presumption of corruption so in other words, the burden of proof was shifted on to the accused to show that there was no corruption in this situation and these are provision in this

law that are honourable, that show good intention to the public, the United Nations (U.N.) Convention speaks towards a code of standard of conduct being put in place for correct, honourable and proper performance of public functions so I would urge that statutory corporations government departments have a code, a standard of conduct that all their officials are bound by and similarly how workplaces have been urged to put in sexual harassment code of conduct and other issues such as that. Proverbs 17 and versus 23 speaks about a wicked man takes a bribe secretly to pervert the ways of justice, Sir, and we have to have a new culture in this country against corruption and against corrupt practices. It cannot be that people feel that this is the way of life of Barbados because it destroys the country and I have realised that when I was at a law convention of the International Bar Association Convention about 20 years ago, I think it was in Singapore where a large part, a whole session of that conference was on anti-corruption and I then fully understood how corruption practices undermines the country and how it, in fact, lowers you levels in terms of international standing, Transparency International has written a lot about it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member?

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: Yes, Sir. This is my last sentence, Sir. I thank you.

We must be brought into being as politicians and lead the way in the anti-corruption drive in this country. I thank you, Sir, for your indulgence of me over the period of time.

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

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS: Mr. Speaker, I have been tasked with breaking the legislation down in a little bit more of a granular fashion so people can understand what it is that we are purporting to do and what provisions are actually there, who they affect, what is the extent, the ramifications and some thoughts behind it. I also, at the end of my address, intend to deal with some of the concerns specifically raised by the Honourable Member for St. Andrew and the Honourable Leader of the Opposition with respect to the contributions by the Integrity Group Barbados and the Barbados Bar Association as to what those actual concerns were; how they were dealt with, if they were dealt with and just to advise so that people do not think that there is any mischief. I will be full but be relatively brief.

Sir, allow me to start by saying, I actually think that this piece of legislation is a beautiful piece of legislation. Laws often are written so that lawyers can understand them and nobody else, so that sometimes when you read a piece of legislation that if you did not see the title to it you might

have no clue as to what it is actually addressing, that is not the case with this piece of legislation. This is one of the easier to read pieces of legislation that I have ever come across. My wife saw me, Sir, behind my computer smiling and asked me about what am I smiling and what is so interesting. I replied that this is such a fantastic piece of legislation.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, do not listen to the asides.

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS: Sir, I am saying that I could not have been more pleased had it been, but I am saying in this event, Sir, it was actually sheer thrill at reading a very comprehensive and easy to understand piece of legislation. Sir, if we go from the beginning, the objects and reasons are set out very, very simply at page 1, that the Bill would provide for the prevention, investigation and prosecution of acts of corruption and then we go from there. We go to the definition section which sets out what certain terms mean. We do not say “bribes”, we do not necessarily say inducement, but they do use inducement, but this is captured in “advantage” and “advantage” has an exceedingly wide definition, Sir, which includes any money or any gift, loan, free reward, bonus, commission, discount, you get the idea, any increase in status or honour or contract or employment, any entry into an academic institution or course, or any grant, any forbearance, any avoidance of a loss liability or penalty, any discharge, liquidation, payment, release of any loan, any residential hotel accommodation, any exercise, or any offer, you get the point, Sir. It is perhaps the widest possible definition of “advantage” and advantage is at the core of this. Do you gain an advantage or do you accept an advantage in order to do what you are supposed to do or normally what you are paid to do? Do you gain an advantage to not do what it is that you are actually paid to do? “Advantage” is the word that is used, Sir, instead of the word bribe and it is the widest possible definition of advantage, but that wide definition does not necessarily prejudice people because the Act itself deals majority on intent. Did you accept this with the intention of doing X, Y and Z. That becomes important, but I will get to that shortly, Sir. Income: money or money’s worth, derived from whatever source or acquired in Barbados or elsewhere, whether directly or indirectly. This is again another wide definition. It is not limiting us to tracing assets or looking for evidence in Barbados, but also overseas. It is not just looking at money, but it is looking at what money can buy. If it is not actually the proceeds of money it is looking at money’s worth. Instead of accepting \$1 000 did I take a free stay in a hotel, that sort of thing. Persons exercising public functions include public officers, members, Chief Executive Officers (C.E.Os.), Managers, Directors, employees of State-Owned Enterprises, et cetera, and I would not go through all of it,

Sir. Property mean assets or every kind whether situate in Barbados or elsewhere, whether real or personal, tangible and intangible and includes money and legal documents, instruments, et cetera, so the definitions are very, very, very wide, Sir. Often, soliciting or accepting an advantage. For the purpose of this Act, a person offers an advantage where he or any person acting on his behalf direct or directly gives, affords, holds out or agrees on a takes of promises to give or hold out any advantage to any other person. It is wide. It is wide. We deal, Sir, with bribery. Bribery is at paragraph 4: “A person who offers an advantage to a person exercising public functions as an inducement to or a reward, or otherwise on account of his performing or refraining from performing any act in his capacity as a person exercising public functions, his expediting, delaying, hindering or preventing the performance of an act, his assisting, favouring, hindering or delaying any person in a transaction of any business with a public authority, so once again, Sir, it is if I offer you something with the intention of you doing something along the lines. Barbados is a small society so in discussing this with someone - because I like to bounce this off of people -- I asked them what they understand by this and the person said: But if you as a politician, if you as somebody in a SOE, a state-owned enterprise, have a friend who owns a hotel and the friend offers you to stay for a weekend with your wife, does that now make me liable for examination, and I said no, people who are operating in good faith have nothing to fear. If we are friends and this is something that we do, then it is easily defensible, this is a friendship. I stayed at Colin’s beach house on a weekend, I have done it before I was in politics and I do it now and Colin take my...

Asides.

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS: Sir, I picked an easy name. Had I picked A I would have gone with Abrahams. Had I picked B I would have gone with Brathwaite so I just went with C with Colin.

Sir, the point is it is not simply that you have availed yourself of what might otherwise constitute an advantage under the Act, it is: Was this offered to you with the intention that you would do or not do something and did you accept it knowing that you were expected by virtue of accepting to do or not do something, so people need not worry. Mr. Speaker, we get free lunches. People offer you things. People would say: “Man, you look tired, you look tired Kerrie, you look strand out, Kerrie man come and stay at my place, Eddie, you look hungry, come and have lunch” but if nothing is falling behind that then it is okay so.

Sir, they also looked at bribery in relation to contracts and tenders, and that has a whole section all by itself, Sir. It says that a person who offers an advantage to a person exercising public functions as an inducement or

reward for otherwise on account of his giving assistance or using his real or supposed influence for the promotion, procuring or execution of any contract with a public authority or any subcontract under a contract, et cetera, once again at every turn it is the intention, what was intended, did you do this with the expectation of getting something else and did the person received also understand that to be the case. I go again, if you are doing it with clean hands, you have nothing to worry about.

Sir, one that I never even thought of is bribery in relation to options. Do I extend an inducement to you to participate in an option for the purpose of driving a price up or not participate in an auction, let us say that the Ministry of Transport, Works and Water Resources was supposed to go into an auction trying to bid for buses, if the Ministry of Transport, Works and Water Resources or the Transport Board start to bid for the buses and I am also bidding for the same bus, their pockets are deeper than mine and that drives the price up, so do I then slip a man \$1 000 and say buddy do not bid on this bus. These are all of the things contemplated by this so when people talk about this legislation actually not going far enough, this legislation actually covers what it is was supposed to cover. There are other things that have been raised by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition that stand to be covered in other legislation but insofar as what was contemplated by this legislation, it is exceedingly thorough.

Mr. Speaker, it also deals with corrupt transactions with agents, so it is not just the CEO, Chief executive Officer, or the Heads of statutory corporations. If I designate somebody to go and do something to participate in an evaluation or to participate in a bid and they do not do it or they do not do it as I directed them to, then they can also be liable as agents of myself and I the person offering the inducement can also be liable for dealing with an agent, somebody low down the line. Mr. Speaker, let us take that to the extreme. Sir, that would then cover persons like testing officers in the Barbados Licensing Authority. I am not speaking to a specific example but I am saying someone of that level as opposed to the Chief Licensing Officer so once the person is connected to a statutory corporation or is an official functionary then that person could also be liable for receiving an inducement and somebody who attempts to induce them can also be liable as if it was the principal of the corporation or the functionary itself.

Sir, they also deal with disclosure orders and I am glad to see it preserves the privilege so the normal privilege that one expects in relation to attorneys and clients is also preserved by this. It is a fundamental concept in our law that a man has a right to get legal advice and to get legal advice you have to be able to tell your lawyer everything. A lot of people fight and rail against this but this is necessary for the law to actually function because a man

has to be able to present his best defence to be able to defend himself. There is a presumption, Sir, of innocence until proving otherwise. Interestingly, in this same piece of legislation that presumption is overturned but for a specific reason.

Sir, there is the offence of tipping off. Sir, tipping off did not occur in any other anticorruption or any other legislation like that that we have, but tipping off is a real thing. One of the last cases that I did before I went fully into politics involved an overseas entity trying to proceed against somebody here and there was concern that the person had been tipped off and managed to destroy all of their records before the entity was able to execute an order against them. Sir, tipping off, the simple act of calling someone to say listen the Police is coming by you shortly is that you are not actively participating in a crime. We did not recognise it before. I guess the nearest thing they can catch me on would have been impeding an investigation or obstructing an investigation, but can I obstruct an investigation which has not actually yet started. Sir, this covers even that base so if anyone in the system alerts someone that these things are coming or that there are persons of interest and allows them to put themselves in a better position that had they not gotten that information, that person is also guilty of an offence. Sir, that is why I am telling you that it is very, very wide.

Sir, there is evidence of unexplained property. My learned friend from St. George North, I think, related to this. Nobody takes a bribe and puts it in their bank account. I mean you would be a very, very simple criminal to do that because that would be immediately traceable. If I make \$5 000 a month and I deposit \$1 million, come on, I would have a hard time explaining myself even to my mother who believes in her son. Mr. Speaker, you then look at what the person has that does not make sense. If I live in a chattel house, parked out front of which is a yacht on a trailer, then I might have to explain why do I have a yacht on a trailer in front of my chattel house. If I work in a job that makes me a certain salary, let us go with \$5 000 a month because it is a convenient figure to use, and I have all the time lived in this bungalow, all of a sudden nothing else has changed, I am still in the same job but I have an upstairs downstairs house and a set of apartments in my name, then I can be called upon to explain that. I started with the definition of the asset as money or money worth so you might not you might not be able to trace any payment to me, you may never be able to trace that anybody gave me \$100 000 but I may then have to be asked and to answer why I have assets that are not commensurate with my standard of life or my ability to earn. Quite frankly, Sir, if you bought it, you need to be able to say how you got it.

Sir, there is a presumption of corruption in certain cases. Our law as you well know, Sir, operates on the standard, and the most basic principle is being presumed

innocent until proven guilty. Everybody has heard that. People do not necessarily understand what it means but everybody knows you are innocent until proven guilty. A man should be able to say nothing in his own defence unless the Crown manages to establish his guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, which is the highest standard under our law. Beyond a reasonable doubt: This is as close to certainty as you can get without being 100 per cent certain. Unless the Crown is able to establish that against you or, after November 30, unless the State is able to establish that against you, then you are free to go. What this says now is that in certain circumstances where in any proceedings for an offence under Section 4 or Section 8(1) it is proved that the accused gave or accepted an advantage, the advantage shall be presumed to have been given or accepted as such inducement or reward as is alleged in any particulars of the offence, unless on a balance of probabilities the contrary is proved.

Let us go back to the hotel offer. If it comes out that something dodgy went on with a person and it is established that I took a hotel's stay from them, that I accepted to go to their villa for a weekend and fingers start to point in my direction, then the law is now going to assume that if I had an involvement in their transaction, it was done with improper motive. However, I go once again. If I have done nothing wrong, I should simply be able to prove that, so while normally the State has to prove that I am guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, the presumption has shifted to me, which is an unusual thing in law. In this instance, I do not have to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that I am innocent. I have to simply prove on a balance of probabilities. If I establish the merest possible defence that 51 per cent leans towards me, then I am gone clear. I do not have to get to 75 or 80 percent which is usually the standard for "beyond a reasonable doubt".

It is very hard where no money can be found to establish that corruption happened, so in some cases where all of the factors tie in, the court is prepared to accept the presumption of corruption but you have to discharge it on the merest burden. The lowest standard in the law is a balance of probabilities; that is the lowest standard you can get. Once I establish on a balance of probabilities that there was nothing untoward in this, then the case against me is dismissed. Although the burden of proof is on me, I do not have the same burden in proving my innocence that the State has in proving my guilt. Sir, based on Section 19 certain defences are not available. We hardly ever see this in the law. This is a recent addition to the law and I will read the Section so that people can understand it and probably understand where it came from, Sir:

"Where in any proceedings for an offence under any Section of Part 2 it is proved that the accused accepted an advantage, believing or suspecting or having grounds to believe or suspect that the advantage was given as an

inducement or reward or otherwise on account of his doing or refraining from doing any act... it shall not be a defence that the advantage is customary in any profession, trade, vocation or calling."

Sir, this was purported to be used as a defence in a recent case in the United States; that receiving donations was part and parcel of the culture of Barbados in doing business. Inducements were accepted as standard in certain instances, so it became necessary or out of an abundance of caution -- this, I believe was introduced as one of the Amendments that was referred to or suggested from the Bar or from Integrity Barbados -- this particular piece of legislation decided to actually say that certain things could not be used, whether here in Barbados or in proceedings arising out of this. Sir, in some instances if you are charged in the United States, for example, what you are being charged with has to be an offence where it was committed, so if you are being charged for mail fraud or something, the core offence had to be an offence in Barbados for them to be able to mount and sustain the charge against you in the United States. You are therefore saying that in Barbados everybody does it and nobody ever is charged for it. This now goes away with this particular Section in the legislation. As I said, Sir, it is very, very thorough.

Asides.

Hon. W.A. ABRAHAM: I was not calling any name, Sir, but people are probably familiar with the situation. Now corruption is very easy to allege. In law, they say rape is easy to allege so it has to be difficult to prove. That is a standard in law. Equally, corruption. I can say anything. I can say that the Honourable Member -- any Honourable Member -- just got into politics and bought a Land Rover. I can say that. I can say I saw the Honourable Member driving in the Land Rover with a drug dealer, and the inference is there. I can suggest now to the persons investigating that they may want to check him for this. Sir, because it is so easy to allege, it leaves itself open for mischief, so the deterrent for malicious people has to be something which they can understand and see the consequences of it as well. This actually sets out that it is an offence to make the malicious complaints and explains what happens to people who actually drift down that direction.

Sir, those are pretty much the Sections in the legislation which I wanted to point to specifically. Let me just end on the legislation itself by saying, "Read it." For those who are listening, read it. It is not written in tricky legal language, it is not that hard to digest, and it is very simply set out in a chronological and logical sense that makes it very easy to follow. It is also necessary for people to actually what is or is not now permitted. Persons have spoken in here today and said this is the way we do it: Cut a fellow a break, a little piece for me and a little piece for

you. Put yourself in the know so you now understand that what happened before is no longer to be tolerated and you know exactly where the lines are drawn and you know what you may have to establish if the finger is pointed at you.

Sir, having said that I want to go just very quickly to dealing specifically with the comments from Integrity Barbados and from the Barbados Bar Association. These were touched upon, these were raised, as I said, by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and by the Honourable Member for St. Andrew, and a number of people have actually been asking who weighed in on it. When this came up last week and previously, Sir, it was out there in the public that certain comments were not taken into consideration. I have this in front of me and I will get the original from the Attorney General's Office and make it a Document of the House, but every single suggestion that was raised by Integrity Group Barbados and the Bar Association -- every single one -- was considered. If it was capable of being incorporated, it was. If it was the subject of a subsequent piece of legislation, then it was noted to be addressed in that piece of legislation, but every single one was put out in full: the comment and the full response.

I am just going to give you an idea of some of them so you can understand what we took into consideration, Sir. The Integrity Group's initial general observation was that it was unable to ascertain the explicit dovetailing in the draft presented to them. The response was that it was necessary for pieces of legislation to cross-reference each other or be a part of a suite of legislation that addresses particular or related problems. The connection becomes more evident in the implementation of the legislation, so I do not need to specifically cross-reference the Anti-corruption Bill with the Proceeds of Crime legislation with tracing legislation or whatever. You do not need to do that. The comment in relation to the preamble in international law is that the previous Corruption Bill provided references to certain international laws and conventions which the Bill was trying to bring into force. This new does not and that was the comment raised. The response is that there are different means by which treaties can be incorporated into law. Sometimes in a draft Bill treaties are stated to have the force of law without them actually being annexed. Sometimes they are annexed without a statement, meaning that they have the force of law. In this instance, the drafter, I think it was Justice Sherman Moore, they simply took a different approach. That is the approach of incorporating the mandatory aspects of treaties without actually referring to them, so some aspects of the treaties are actually addressed and touched upon, but it is not necessarily to say that this section was a part of that treaty, but they have been incorporated. In light of the concerns and to signal that the convention is still being implemented are referenced to the two main conventions has been included in the Bill.

Sir, comment two, why were the definitions of acts of corruption or corruption removed. This question seemed to be based on a comparison of the instant Bill on the Prevention of Corruption Act, 2012 and the perceived differences between the two and the presumption on the 2012 Act formed the sole basis for the new Bill. That is not the case. The definitions were not removed. There was no absolute need for such definitions in the Bill. However, although that was the position of the drafter, because we are trying to actually just incorporate the comments will make the Bill as tight as possible, we still put a definition of corruption in Sir.

In relation to penalties. Penalties should be consistent and in one single place in the Bill. Now the issue of placement of penalties is a matter of drafting style and convention and the drafters here were satisfied with the placement and the position of the provisions. Sir, when we look at a piece of legislation, let us say the Offences Against the Person Act, they may in that Act have define what sexual assault is and following that, the part that deals with sexual assault they may put in what the penalty is summary or indictment. They shift onto something else like wounding and then at the end of discussing wounding they then put in what the penalties for wounding is, so you do not necessarily have to run through whole piece of legislation or at the end say here is a schedule of the offences and these are the penalties. It is a drafting style, once the penalties are in there that anybody looking at the piece of legislation can say, well I know that if I commit this offence I am liable for this on indictment or this summarily and there are certainly in there and it does not actually matter where you put them, but they are in.

Sir, this is the comment of the Integrity Group Barbados that the Integrity Group Barbados does not support the Bill in its current incarnation as it fails to provide for the corruption of public life through political money. Sir, in response, we know we have to take a position on this as a Government and this is a matter that needs to be addressed. However, this should form the basis of a separate comprehensive piece of legislation if we do go that route. It does not fall easily or naturally to be considered under this. Sir, they talked about the absence of an extra territorial effect and a provision inserted in the Bill to speak to this matter. I am not going to go through all, but the point is that every single comment that was raised was considered a response and explanation given and then the decision was made whether to include it in or not include it in. Hence, it is not that as was suggested that the Attorney General or drafters do not have time to read the legislation. Everything you want in a piece of legislation is not necessarily going to be in there, if we are dealing with a suite of legislation, then chances are by the time the Attorney General has put his entire suite before Parliament, all of the concerns that were raised would have been addressed in at least one of those pieces of legislation.

Therefore, I will just end on this. I would not say it is an anecdote because it is very true. The way we do business has changed. The way we do business as a Government has changed. What is expected from us by people has also changed. I have a particular constituent, I hope he is listening, who has said to me severely and variously, 'but, tell the people to do XYZ, you are the Minister, send the person down there for a job, when they turn up let them say the Minister send them, you are the Minister. You can sign this, you are the Minister. You can pardon this, you are the Minister.' But Mr. Speaker, that does not work anymore and the concept by Barbadians that Ministers are all powerful and do not answer to anybody, that needs to disappear, because I, Wilfred Abrahams am not going to jail for a fellow. Sir, if I go to jail, actually, do not let me go there, let me stick with initial statement that I am not going to jail for a fellow. The rules are there, the rules are getting tighter, the accountability is getting more certain and the penalties are getting absolute. Asides

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS: Let us just say Sir, if I go I do not like being by myself, I will make sure to carry at least one person with me.

Asides.

Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS: The simple point is that we need to actually understand the rules. Once everybody understand the rules and the rules are certain, then those who breach will have to answer for their breaches, but rules have to be certain, they have to be easy to be followed, easy to be understandable and applied with some degree of commonsense, because we also have to take some cognisance of the society in which we live and the culture under which we operate. I am comfortable having read this Bill Sir that it serves the purpose for which it has been drafted. As I said in the beginning, I think it is a beautiful piece of legislation, it is beautiful in its simplicity and it should be beautiful in its application. The political will to see this through is there and the political will to see that persons are investigated and prosecuted and that we stamp out corruption so that people can no longer say all you politicians are the same. That will is concrete, it is certain and it is absolute within the Barbados Labour Party and this Government. With those few words, I support the Bill and I thank you Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Christ Church South.

Mr. R. A. THORNE: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. There is a sense on which the pending passage of this legislation invites close scrutiny of or high ranking public officials and politicians in this country, and indeed I go a little further and say that it places the reputations of all politicians on trial. I do not see this debate as an occasion for sanctimony or any righteous

indignation against that pervasive public suspicion. Now they will see this as an occasion for triumphalism at the passage of this Bill. Anybody who does not understand what has happened to the image of politicians over the last 50 years I dear say really does not understand the country that he or she lives in, or they forfeit the right to an audience.

The first observation I make about this Bill is in its name. It is a name that 92 years later is preserved. Now, in 1929 the Act was called the Prevention of Corruption Act. I think I saw that at Section 24, "The Prevention of Corruption Act, Cap. 144 and the Prevention of Corruption Act, 2012(Act 2012-31) are repealed." The repeal section extends itself to the Prevention of Corruption Act which apparently made its way through this assembly and the other assembly and the also is called the Prevention of Corruption Act.

We come here today and as I said 92 years later, the name is preserved; the Prevention of Corruption Act.

This language strikes me curious. This is not to criticise the draftsman or he who pilots the Bill. I speak objectively and merely to make observations as to this Bill, its contents and purpose; the Prevention of Corruption Bill. I wish to invite you, Your Honour, to focus on the word "prevention". It is a curious word. It is why I made the opening statement that I made. The reputation of politicians is on trial and anyone who does not know that must revisit the thing that they do and the political pursuits that they make on a daily basis. I go back to the word "prevention". You do not have to say to a man every morning he wakes or to say to your population, "Today, there is an Act of Parliament called the Prevention of Murder Act."

In other words, you do not anticipate that your population or significant numbers of your population are going to commit murder. Therefore, you do not have to say them, "I am passing a law called the Prevention of Murder Act". What the Act is called, Your Honour, and you are well steeped in a criminal practice, is the Offences Against the Person Act, and it identifies murder as an offence in the unhappy event that murder takes place. There is a similar principle with the Sexual Offences Act. You do not have to say to the population, "By legislation that we are going to prevent you from committing the act of rape." The Act is simply called the Sexual Offences Act and if a person without the consent of another imposes himself on that unfortunate person, sexually he has committed the offence of rape and it is defined in the statute, and at common law.

I need not extend the point to the Theft Act. Burglary or robbery is under the Theft Act, so that none of that legislation speaks of prevention. It may be a delicate point but it is a point worth noting that this legislation departs from all of the other criminal legislation and speaks

to a preventative quality. Why is that so? Is there an anticipation that persons in public life would tend to corruption? It is not my duty to answer the question but I repeat that the reputations of politicians in this country, region and hemisphere have been on trial for a long time. Perhaps, those who draft this piece of legislation and who drafted the legislation in 1929 knew this. Why is that so? Now, we can say that there are two schools of thought.

We may say that persons come into public life with a predisposition to corruption. Let us agree to call that the Behaviouralist School; individual propensity or proclivity to wrong doing. These are persons who come with their own unique character deficits. Alternatively, there may be the Structural School. The recognition that the political pursuit when successful places persons who occupy high office. Not only does the pursuit place them in high office but in office that is powerful. Where there is power, there is often the temptation to abuse that power.

We depart from the Behaviouralist School and go to the Structuralist School, and that is why the legislation has tended over the last 92-plus years perhaps not only to have been drafted. I heard a Member talking about the shifting burden of proof. It is interesting. It is not only to have been drafted in the way that it is drafted but even the name anticipates legal and may I say moral infraction among the participants in this enterprise that the public expects to be a noble enterprise. I repeat those who are not aware of that forfeit their right to an audience. This is the reality and none of us involved in politics can seek exemption from the suspicion that we may have a predisposition to corrupt acts either because of an individual character deficit or as a result of the occupation of high office which is also powerful.

Why do we not accept that? I want to suggest to you, Your Honour, that the time has come to accept the reality of our image as politicians and not only the image, but the content that we bring to this noble profession. Whether it is about proclivity or power, we have a high social duty to meet the public and say to them, "We pass this legislation with the comfort that there will never be any infringement by any Member of this Government and Parliament, except unhappily the suspicion remains."

Mr. R. A. THORNE: On October 12, 2021 the suspicion remains. Therefore, I applaud those who have sought to broaden the legislation and to bring this legislation with haste so that the public shall no longer anticipate infraction and that the draftsman may no longer have to say, "I am going to prevent you."

However, so that we say and give a guarantee to our public that there will be probity in the public affairs of this country. Let us therefore, Your Honour, impress the public that we are not predisposed by character deficit to

corruption. Let us satisfy the public that we do not incline to the abuse of power. Permit me to do this, Sir. Among Christians, this is still very relevant. Luke 12:48 is the Bible verse that normally finds application in these circumstances. A lot of people quote it and do not know it is scriptural. I take toy, Your Honour, to the New International Version which speaks with more modern usage. I will be brief. I quote as follows:

"But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded. And from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."

What Luke 12:48 is doing is that it divides itself into three categories. It refers to three categories of persons. The first category I think speaks to minor offenders because it says: "He who does not know, but does things deserving of punishment will be beaten with few blows". Mr. R. A. THORNE: So the penalty is light, so let us apply that to what we called the petty criminal, the person who infringes and receives a light sentence, so even the Scriptures divides themselves as to the question of penalties.

There is a second category of persons, but permit me to come to that second category last.

The third category, I think, applies to us in public life:

"From the one who had been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."

Mr. R. A. THORNE: The operative word there is "entrusted". The word "trust" looms large. We occupy a calling at the heart of which is trust and every minute of every day we must satisfy the public that we are worthy of trust. Mr. Speaker, that is the standard that we must reach. That is the scriptural standard and that is the standard of anti-corruption legislation throughout this hemisphere. We must come with that trust, we must deserve that trust and I have heard my colleagues today saying that we must leave This Place when, finally we leave This Place, with that trust intact and with our reputations for integrity intact.

Mr. Speaker, I want to come back to the second category because the public holds politicians to a very high standard. As I have said before, even the legislation anticipates that there comes an occasion when we fall from that standard, but God help us, we must maintain that standard, but the standard should apply not only to politicians. Here is Luke speaking again at Luke 12 and verse 48. What is interesting about Luke for those who have not read the scriptures, Luke occupies about one-third of the New Testament, around 28 per cent of the New

Testament. The authorship of Luke in spite of the name is not settled. People believe that Luke wrote it and Luke is a physician, but that is not settled, but let us go to the main point. For that second category of persons it says:

“From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded.”

I was so reassured to hear not one, but two and perhaps three of my colleagues in here today referred to persons other than persons in public life, other than public officials and other than politicians. I was so reassured that what I intended to say may have not only support, but it may well be accepted by some of my colleagues:

“For everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded.”

Mr. Speaker, every month people in this country give a lot to utility companies. They demand it and they receive it, and there are times when they do not receive it and we all know what they do, an envelope comes with red marked “urgent” and many householders in this country tremble when that red envelope comes with the word “urgent” on it. You tremble and you hold it for a day and you hold it for two days and you hold it for three days and you are hoping against hope that you would be able to open that envelope that says “urgent” and that you would be able to meet the demand of the utility company.

Mr. R. A. THORNE: Mr. Speaker, it is not for me to reflect on the merits of what that utility company has done recently, but every rational human in this country understands that the timing is wrong, that you come to a country at this time that is economically on its knees, where people are suffering, where people are struggling and you produced a full page advertisement -- if anybody is uncomfortable, I am sorry. The people must have a voice in here -- with the seductive corporate language that you are seeking an adjustment. What adjustment? I began on the niceties and the delicacies and the subtleties of language and that is in keeping with those delicacies of language -- an adjustment -- and when you go to the fine-print your Honour the word increase appears for the first time. They are not seeking any adjustment. The people of Barbados understand that they are seeking an increase at a time like this. Can they hold the light of morality up against their actions or will we say that this is power abused at a time like this when this country and I repeat, Mr. Speaker, is on its knees? There are people who cannot pay any electricity bill tonight and they cannot pay it tomorrow morning and chances are they cannot pay it next week because food comes first for the three children who are running through the house and we have come to this country and they have come to this country ... Anybody who is afraid leave, I will not cease to say this. I will not cease to be a voice on the behalf of the people of this country, rich or poor. This must

be said. Let them prove that there is a light of morality guiding their action. Let them prove that they are exercising power justly.

I cannot reflect on the merit of their case, but I know that coming at a time like this is wrong so let those of us in public life pledge to this country that we shall be standard bearers for decency, honesty and courage in the conduct of our affairs because too many of us are afraid to confront overwhelming corporate power. Mr. Speaker, courage is not the absence of fear, courage is the conquest of fear, so those who are afraid to speak and to speak truth to power, tell them you have not abandoned fear, you are conquering fear. Just as we are held in this country as politicians and public officials to high standards, we have the moral right tonight - I sat here the whole day into the night to say this -- we have the moral right to say this to persons of large corporate power, we have that right to say it to them as well, therefore, if this Bill does anything to restore to this country public trust in public officials and in politicians, let that public trust extend to our corporate partners -- you hear the word, Sir, partners -- because there must be a partnership between Government and large corporations in this country.

Indeed, there are those who say that Government is itself a large corporation. It is one of the richest corporations if you want to say that, Sir. It raises millions on millions by taxation. It influences people's access to education, to health, to housing and to public amenities, so Government is indeed a large and powerful corporation but it is not the only one, and as far as I am aware Government's motive is never profit, Government's motive is to provide a society that is socially happy and Government's motive is to ensure that there is the rule of law. You do not speak about law unless you speak about justice, and Government's role is a preservation of justice in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to be able to say as part of a parliamentary Government that we have the cooperation of the private sector and to sway them morally and to say to them that at a time like this, this is not the time. I heard a debate in here a few weeks ago and the phrase was repeated: The time is never wrong or the time is never right to do the right thing” or something like that.

Asides.

Mr. R. A. THORNE: Thank you very much. It is never the wrong time to do the right thing. Mr. Speaker, I say this is the wrong time. For those with light, for those who generate light and for those who have power, this is the wrong time for them to do what they are intending to do to the rich and the poor in this country because not only does electricity drives the smallest bulbs in the smallest chattel houses, it drives the energy in large industries. This

is the wrong time and this is the right time for this legislation and let the passage of this legislation be a reminder of that partnership that the Government if you wish must have with the private sector if people in this country are to live happy lives.

Your Honour I support the legislation and I am happy to do so. I am obliged to you, Sir.

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

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to all of the Chamber for supporting this Bill. I am especially grateful to my colleague the Minister of Home Affairs who took the trouble to clear up what could potentially have been a divisive issue, in fact, a non-existent issue. When I thanked both the Bar Association and Integrity Barbados, and other Members of this Chamber did the same, it was because we recognised and respect the important role they play and the cooperative way in which we approach this legislation and other pieces of legislation, and I would not want it to go abroad that they took the trouble to research the issues and to make submissions and that those submissions were not given the intention or the importance of place that they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, we have looked at the issue of corruption. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition very generously took us back in history and reminded Barbados and this Chamber of the fact that of in excess of \$1 billion of expenditure only about 20 per cent went to public tender. The Honourable Member who just spoke reflected on the importance of preventing corruption.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot reach our hands into the past as much as we would like to do that and undo the wrongdoings and misdeeds of the previous Administration, but what we can do, Mr. Speaker, is to make sure as best as the law allows that we put a framework and systems in place that will discourage corruption and that will encourage people to operate with a strong degree of decency and financial probity.

This legislation, as the Honourable Member who just spoke points out, looks forward and I am confident that as we pool all of our efforts together in terms of a newer approach to governance, making our systems work and putting proper legislative instruments in place to help us to achieve the rooting out of corruption, that we will have today begun the important work of putting a strong and firm foundation in place for future generations of Barbadians.

Mr. Speaker, I am aware that other Honourable Members of the Chamber would have loved to have weighed in on this subject and I thank them for cooperating

with us. It has never been our intention, Mr. Speaker, to spend overly long a period in this Chamber. We have put a lot of effort into making sure that Honourable Members can join virtually and I am especially grateful that so many of them turned out today given the gravity of what we are debating, but we must be mindful of the fact that we are in a COVID-19 pandemic and therefore it would be unwise of us to send a wrong signal to Barbadians, and therefore I appreciate the cooperation that those Honourable Members have shown us.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Honourable Members for their support but the journey has now begun. We now have a long way to go in order to bring Barbados's reputation back to where it used to be. I beg to move therefore yet again that this Bill be read a second time.

Hon. J. A. KING: 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. D. D. MARSHALL, seconded by Hon. W. A. ABRAHAMS, the House resolved itself into Committee, Dr. S. E. BROWNE in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Madam CHAIRMAN: This House is in Committee.

Part I, Clauses 1 to 3 inclusive, was called and passed.

Part II, Clauses 4 to 13 inclusive, was called and passed.

Part III, Clauses 14 to 16 inclusive, was called and passed.

Part IV, Clauses 17 to 19 inclusive, was called and passed.

Part V, Clauses 20 to 24 inclusive, was called and passed.

The Schedule was called and passed as the Schedule to the Bill.

On the motion of Hon. D.D. MARSHALL, seconded by Hon. W.A. ABRAHAMS, 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. D.D. MARSHALL, seconded by Hon. W.A. ABRAHAMS, the Bill was read a

third time, passed and cited as the Prevention of Corruption Act, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Miss S.J.O. BRADHSAW: With that, Mr. Speaker, we have come to the end of today's Sitting. I beg to move the Adjournment of this Sitting until Wednesday, October 20, at 10 a.m. Mr. Speaker, I believe you have been already given notice of the Joint Sitting of both Houses of Parliament, and on that occasion we will meet with both Houses to deal with the issue related to the appointment of the President of Barbados.

Mr. SPEAKER: Before we adjourn for the 20th, I wish to inform this Honourable Chamber that the Sitting on October 20, 2021, will be at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre, which will then see the nomination for the President of the republic; for the election of the President of this fair land. That should be at ten o'clock in the forenoon.

The question that the Sitting be adjourned until the 20th Day of October, 2021, at 10 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and MR. SPEAKER suspended 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. Speech labels. Two speech labels are misspelt in the source: ‘Hon. K.D. SYMMPONDS’ (elsewhere SYMMONDS) and, in the motion to adjourn, ‘Hon. Miss S.J.O. BRADHSAW’ (elsewhere BRADSHAW). Printed as in the source.

Q3. Order No. 6, Mr. R. A. Thorne. Mr. Thorne’s opening sentence contains a gap marked by dots (‘invites close scrutiny of or high ranking public officials’), apparently words not caught. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Announcements, letter from the Prime Minister. The body of the Prime Minister’s letter on the joint nomination of the President is set in the source as procedural (italic) sentences rather than as a quoted letter. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Adjournment. The closing procedural sentence says that Mr. Speaker ‘suspended the Sitting accordingly’, although the question put was that the Sitting be adjourned until 20th October, 2021. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met in a hybrid meeting on Tuesday, 12th October, 2021 at 10.00 a.m. at the Worthing Corporate Centre, Christ Church, with Mr. Speaker in the Chair; prayers were taken by Rev. Father Mark Harewood. The Minutes of 5th October were confirmed on the motion of Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw, and Standing Orders were suspended for the rest of the Sitting.

The Attorney-General and Member for St. Joseph, Hon. D. D. Marshall, moved the second reading of the Prevention of Corruption Bill, 2021 (Order No. 6). He said the law still in force dated from 1929 and treated corruption as a misdemeanour, with a maximum fine of \$2 400, or \$240 and up to four months’ imprisonment in the Magistrate’s Court; the Bill provided for fines of \$500 000 or 10 years’ imprisonment on summary conviction and up to \$1.5 million or 15 years in the High Court. He regretted that the related integrity legislation had been defeated in

the Senate and said it would return with changes on judges, and described changes to liquor licensing, vending and other Government services.

The Leader of the Opposition, Bishop the Hon. J. J. S. Atherley, accused the Government of marking time, said it should have ensured its members were present when the earlier Bill needed a two-thirds majority in the Senate, and argued that the public perceived a culture of systemic corruption. He cited the 2020 Auditor General’s Report, including BDS\$5.5 million paid to an overseas firm in connection with a Barbados Water Authority smart meter project with no confirmation that services had been performed. Mr. Marshall raised a point of order that the Opposition’s two Senators had opposed the Bill, and Hon. Miss C. Y. Forde rose to clarify a point. Hon. K. D. Symmonds replied to Bishop Atherley and spoke of the penalty of \$1.5 million on indictment.

After a suspension until 3.00 p.m., Hon. R. R. Straughn gave notice of the Debt Settlement (Arrears) Bill, 2021, which was then read a first time. Mr. Speaker read a letter from the Prime Minister, Mia Amor Mottley, advising that under section 14 of the Constitution Amendment Act, 2021 she and the Leader of the Opposition had jointly nominated Her Excellency Dame Sandra Mason, Governor-General, to be elected President of Barbados.

The debate resumed. Mr. G. W. Payne supported the Bill, and was cautioned by the Speaker over the word ‘thief’; Mr. Straughn, Miss Forde, Dr. S. E. Browne, Mr. E. G. Hinkson, Hon. W. A. Abrahams and Mr. R. A. Thorne also spoke. Mr. Hinkson noted the presumption of corruption in clause 18(1), which shifts the burden of proof to the accused, and Mr. Abrahams explained that an offence turned on the intention with which an advantage was offered and accepted, and that bribery in contracts and tenders had a separate section; he also addressed concerns raised by Integrity Group Barbados and the Barbados Bar Association. In reply Mr. Marshall noted the Leader of the Opposition’s point that only about 20 per cent of more than \$1 billion of expenditure had gone to public tender. The Bill was read a second time and, in Committee with Dr. S. E. Browne in the Chair, Parts I to V (clauses 1 to 24) and the Schedule were passed; it was read a third time and passed as the Prevention of Corruption Act, 2021.

On the motion of Miss Bradshaw the House was adjourned until Wednesday, 20th October, 2021 at 10.00 a.m.; the Speaker announced that the Joint Sitting for the election of the President would be held at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre.



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