
THE SENATE DEBATES

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 1999 – 2003

THE SENATE

Wednesday, March 29, 2000

RESUMPTION

Mr. PRESIDENT: This sitting is resumed.

SENATOR G.E.N. BROME: Mr. President, I rise in support of the measures before the House today. I endorse this Bill. Mr. President, the question is are we any better off today than we were one year ago?

Asides.

SENATOR G.E.N. BROME: The question is obvious. As I have been going around the country, the progress I have been seeing, not only by the foreigners but also by the locals, I am overwhelmed. One year ago, when these proposals were brought there were questions about the future and what they hold for us. I think I am satisfied that we have done reasonably well. I am not going to say that I have an analytical ability to understand or to make forecast about anything but from my limited understanding, I know for the future of this country I must also make my contribution. Without making my contribution and to sit back and wait on Government to do everything for me, I know that I will be destined to fail.

I am happy that some Barbadians have listened to the directions and advice of the Prime Minister, Government bodies and other people concerned but at the same time I still believe that a greater effort must be made by the general public. We are aware of the fact that the persons who are at present involved in the construction area that they spend most of their money from day to day, from week to week. This trend can be disastrous. I do believe that people who have short term jobs should be advised how to save.

At present there is a great majority employed. These people by the middle of the following week, they have to borrow in order to survive. Today, we should not be about survival, we should be about security. A greater percentage of the locals should be advised how to invest, how to save, when to buy bonds and when to invest in real estate. It is a fact that Barbadians tend to be pretty independent but this trend has been disappearing over the last few years. We should suggest to the younger people the importance of working, organising themselves and putting something down for the rainy days. Not all rainy days are bad anyway but the greatest threat is flood in respect to rain. There will be a day coming that we will want some of what we would have earned in a real crisis and there is nothing there. There is no National Insurance we have been subscribing to, there is no retirement benefits, there is nothing.

We should encourage our young people to save. The message will not be got across via the newspapers or the radio. Why? To print those things in the newspaper they will not sell or no one will listen to the radio to such advice; television - no one will pay attention to it. A new approach to education must come about. Our people, the media and so on will focus their attention on what will sell and that is the negative.

At present, the Government is on course, it is strategic and it is progressive so there will be nothing to really criticise and people buy sensational news because it is interesting. What we are doing in Barbados today is making it livable and comfortable so there is no need for uneasiness.

I am very happy to be a Barbadian and I will be happy to hear more intelligent people speaking constructively. Very often lots of things have been said against Barbadians by Barbadians in Barbados and by the media and people forget that domestic affairs can also have an effect on international affairs. If these domestic interferences go outside of Barbados it limits those who cares. Over the last three years labour relations in Barbados

have been quite stable. Political activities have also been quite stable. I guess there are people out there who are against stability and instead of being in a position to make a contribution for improvement they will create areas of uneasiness. Again, the Government must be driven not by the negatives that have been said neither should they always comment on what has been said. The Government, as long as it is doing what is right, just has to move on and continue to take advice, continue to listen and continue to fulfill the needs of the people. You are well aware of the fact that introduction of social transformation has been a plus for all Barbadians. Social transformation, if you look at it from a holistic point of view, you will discover that it encompasses quite a few Ministries.

The Ministry of Social Transformation must be respected and admired not only by all Barbadians or people in the region but also internationally. I think that the Prime Minister in his wisdom has seen it necessary to create this Ministry. There are people out there in our communities who, over the years, did not expect that they would have lived so long, they did not expect that they would have come to the stage or point that they are today and they are without certain basic needs. We as Barbadians, living in a civilised community should not sit back and laugh or criticise our people that are without.

We work from day to day to help make a contribution to those most in need.

11.15 a.m.

Wednesday, March 29, 2000

SENATOR G.E.N. BROME: We work from day to day to help make a contribution to those most in need.

I am grateful to the Government for all they have done for those needed people in Barbados and I will encourage them to put a little more emphasis on a few areas. I believe that the last thing after life is a decent burial. I would like to recommend that the Ministry of Social Transformation have some active role in recommending that our cemeteries be upgraded and that adequate space is provided. At the rate that people are dying we must make provision for the dead.

I have made arrangements with my undertaker not to die until the cemeteries are upgraded.

Asides.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Have those instructions been in writing?

SENATOR G.E.N. BROME: I honestly will suggest that the relevant people will hear and attempt to address it. Cemeteries in Barbados can be termed as most deplorable.

My father died over 20 years ago and I do not have a clue where he is laid, and this is an insult. We people of prominence should at least have some place decent for burial and we should be able to identify where our families have been laid.

Sir, we have had some international funerals around here recently, people of international status and I think very often we had to rush to clean up the cemeteries. We had to make all the necessary preparations to avoid embarrassment and disgrace. I would like someone to make some effort in the very near future where my home is in St. Peter and St. Lucy. I guess if I should die I would be buried there but I would hope they have some land space available and would hope they would pay some sort of attention to our acquiring some land there before houses are placed there. I am also sure that most of the people in Barbados would be hopeful and happy to have a decent burial.

In respect to roads, I believe we have one of the best networks in the Caribbean. The only thing is that the roads are laid out mostly like a football field, circular, which makes it kind of difficult sometimes to understand but at no point in Barbados are you lost. There are almost no dead ends. They go through the hills and through the valleys but for most of these roads that go through the hills and valleys, the maintenance rate must be expensive because when the water comes from a very high point down to the barbergreen, it digs it up.

I would suggest, and I hope the time has come, that we should build stronger roads from concrete and they should have designated areas which are not all filled with cables and so on. I hope they will put some emphasis on building some of our newer roads and repairing some of the older ones especially in the hills and valleys with concrete.

I think also, that Barbados is built on coral stone and if we were to build or to cut even one underground tunnel one of these days, I think it will help us in time to come. A lot of what we are trying to do now, perhaps if it was thought of or approached in 1960s or 1970s, development would not be a hindrance then as it is now, but people have built their homes all over the place which has restricted and limited development. Not that the houses cannot be removed, but it has a cost and that must always be taken into consideration.

I also would like to see the day come when our valleys which are filled with waterfalls and springs are developed. I was in St. Andrew by Bawdens Spring on Saturday and I was so impressed with the pure looking water. I tasted it seeing that it was spring water.

Asides.

SENATOR G.E.N. BROME: I had to do it because it was the first of its kind. I had seen in Barbados. I was impressed. Our Government can pay attention to those things in some of those rural communities. It can be a tourist attraction. Some of this water can be used for irrigation, and I am sure that, around in those areas people are still using tap water, and you have water running there. A lady said she is over 60 years and from the time she was a little girl, she saw the water running there. There are many times when a lot of our reservoirs run dry or mostly dry and there is water running there all the time.

I would hope our Government attempts to do something about them. There are many in St. Thomas, St. Andrew, St. Joseph that, I know of, and St. John. I am anxious to see the day come when our people make the best uses of all available water.

I come now to natural disaster.

11.25 a.m.

Wednesday, 29 March, 2000

Senator G.E.N. BROME: I do not think that we are sufficiently enough prepared for natural disasters and I am not impressed with the money that has been allocated to natural disaster. We have not had an hurricane here for many years, but because we have not had a hurricane does not mean we should be complacent. There are many young people who are anxiously awaiting the occurrence of a hurricane just to see what it is like. They just wait in anticipation; they hope it will come. Our people must be more educated to the dangers and they must be prepared to do something for themselves or for their communities.

I believe that the Government should allocate a certain amount of funds to most of the community groups because this little incentive will create interest; not that people are being paid, but a little incentive will create interest because they will be given a little donation for their effort. Already in Barbados we have had one day collecting garbage. But what do we term as garbage? Is it only plastic bags? Are we not aware that galvanize, loose wild flying galvanize can be more hazardous than plastic bags? I would be happy if we were to put one day aside and get Barbadians to help before the hurricane comes. We have about two to three months to play with to patch up some of the elderly people's palings or make home extension or outdoor extension. We must be scared if our home is adequately prepared but that other person's is not, so you are in trouble. We must pay attention to these things. I think I made mention of this already and someone said we cannot go and touch people's palings; but it is important

that we try to address it. It is important and it is one of the most threatening things in respect to a hurricane.

The other thing is a certain type of tree beside some homes. That can be dangerous. Some of the trees are brittle and some of them can snap at any time and cause disaster, not only for homes, but also for the utility lines. When they come down, you do not know what other effects it might have. So we should not only wait until May or June to start trimming, but a policy in respect to trees should come about, not only the preservation of mahogany trees or the preservation of trees on a whole, but at the same time, certain trees should not be planted too close to the road because if you have to make any improvement or development, you have problems in removing them. I believe a general policy on trees should be introduced.

With respect to agriculture, I think agriculture also affects me. I love it. It is one of my greatest hobbies. It gives me strength and energy. When I am having stress problems I go and take my for and my hoe and work it off. I also get a sweat. If our agriculture should be destroyed I think it would mean death to Barbados. We must go all out to save agriculture. We must put systems in place, and put some emphasis on irrigation. We must sink some dams and some ponds and so on to collect water. Right now we use a large percentage of tap water for growing vegetables and for wetting the lawns at hotels and that sort of thing. A new system has been introduced at the hotels now where they collect rain water on the ground, but there were still some people at the older hotels who were not equipped then and the Government allowed them to still use whether it drips or whether it is sprinkle water and they wet endlessly. I feel so bad to see our tap water, which is scarce in other countries and even sometimes certain parts of Barbados, people are wetting with drinking water. I would suggest that a little more emphasis be placed on water tanks and almost, not only farmers, but almost every house should have a water tank. As I travel through a place like St. Lucy, which it is virtually flat, hot and so on, I believe I see about four tangible water tanks. St. Lucy is still one of the leading agricultural areas in Barbados. I would like someone to pay greater attention not only in retaining St. Lucy as an agricultural area, but to put systems in place to accommodate agriculture; and water is one of the greatest necessities.

A few days ago, I heard of the state of the Barbados Public Library. Serious attention must be paid to the Library. We have a building right there in the Lower Green Bus Stand which is besides Courts (Barbados) Limited, and I see trees growing through that building. It is in the heart of Bridgetown.

11.35 a.m.

Wednesday, March 29, 2000

SENATOR G.E.N. BROME: I would like to see Government do something about that. It is a great building and has historical value and over the last six or seven years I have heard no mention of it. To let that building remain there for another two years, they will push it down and that would be very unfortunate.

I would hope that they do something there like a community activity in the lines of getting young children in there mainly for brain storming, for creating new avenues for business and experimenting. They can do a host of things. We have to get young people and school leavers from the first year. If that was allocated to those people, that would be something else.

It is accessible for all. Parking space can be made available and I would like to see young people in control of that building. I would like to work towards that because young people must be the ones to create new avenues of work instead of focusing their attention on short term projects. Short term projects are destined to fail because there is not enough planning put into it nor enough support.

I think that that should be a sustainable project. Young people with a good director can extract what they have. Young people are not given the opportunity to explore possibilities at an early age. Most of what people are teaching they do not want to hear because they pick it up from the TV. I believe that if you give people the opportunity to exercise their young minds and to extract something when they come up with an experiment, they can present it to Government to be analysed.

I believe our Government should be more influenced and guided by young minds. If you were to ignore what they are saying today, it will be disastrous for us in the future. We very seldom listen or pay attention to what the young people are saying. Young people are termed as misguided thoughtless and ignorant, but all the provision we are making is on their behalf. Yet they do not have a voice. I guess we should consider ourselves responsible for losing a generation or two because we have done nothing to correct measures. We thought it was all right and now we are paying the penalty because you will see that we have to support those fellows and most of them are ending up in the mental hospital which is absorbing a lot of money.

I would suggest that we do something to help those young people develop their minds as early as possible by giving them the chance to explore all possibilities and especially with respect to business.

I guess formal education would have failed, even in America, because I do not think it is all the formality that counts today but the ability to generate, and most of those people who have succeeded in generating activity were

people whom one would have thought were hopeless because they did not have a formal education.

People without a formal education also have a mind and I want our people to go out and find the people and bring them back into society. The approach by police might not be the proper one right now. I believe our Senators, our politicians, our Justices of The Peace have an important role to play and I hope that we recruit new interesting Justices of The Peace so that they can make a social contribution.

Right now our Justices of The Peace serve the purpose of signing documents. To sign a document says nothing. They have a contribution to make. I do not believe that they are given any sort of remuneration but I hope the day will come that they will be put to work and given a stipend so that they can fulfil an active role in society.

I would like to make a recommendation in respect to young people. I suggested a while ago that in communities where people still are kind of unspoilt that greater emphasis should be placed on social development to be able to extract what they have and give them an opportunity to explore new possibilities. They also need recreational facilities. I believe that in a place like St. Lucy with the landscape and the environment, something like a camp facility should be created for the people of the area and for the people of Barbados generally and be an attraction to tourists.

11.45 a.m.

Wednesday, March 29, 2000

SENATOR G.E.N. BROME: I firmly believe that and I know it will work because I do not believe that tourism, in the direction it has gone and is going will pay real dividends. I do believe that the so-called Mr. Nobody has a contribution to make. There is a sort of tourist that will be attracted to Barbados for the sake of camping, affordable living conditions and just to enjoy the nature of Barbados. Barbados has a lot to offer in respect of tourism but the people at the top that make the money, I do not believe they understand what the tourists need.

Everyone is focusing all their attention on massive beautiful hotels. I do not believe that is what people are looking for. They need reasonable accommodation but a lot of these people want to go around to the rum shops and get around with the locals. It is when you make contact with the locals that you have a desire to return. There is no one who comes to a hotel that wants to buy the hotel. Nobody is coming from England to buy a hotel or a room. They want to enjoy the locals. The more interaction people have with visitors the better it spells for Barbados. This is why Cuba will succeed and this is why the Dominican Republic

will succeed over Barbados. Our approach to packaging tourism is wrong. I have always felt so, I believe so and I have also travelled and I have seen the level of hospitality in Cuba and the Dominican Republic and one will say that this is because the infrastructure is not as good as our because they are poverty stricken but I do not believe development should destroy hospitality. We should not be allowed to destroy what we have developed.

It is also important that a foreign language be introduced as we are a tourist oriented country. Tourism began here in 1960 and no real provision, no real approach to tourism has been made, in my opinion; no more than apart from building hotels. It is not enough to say that hotels were built for the tourists and that hotels are not built for Barbadians and that the percentage of Barbadians that go to hotels can be numbered. Hotels should be made attractive enough, not necessarily physically but the prices should also be accommodating. I want to see and I would hope the day will come that there is a more positive approach. At our airport there is one language and all is in English. If you have Spanish, French or German persons at the airport someone has to be there to translate for them. They are expanding the airport and they have not thought of putting in multi lingual facilities. The multi lingual facility must be accommodated if we are really a tourist destination. I want to see that come about at our airport. I have never been to the Deep Water Harbour so I do not know what is there, perhaps they have, but all those people who come to our shores are not all from America, they are not all from England. We are not attracting enough multi lingual people. We have got to do something. We have got to equip our people with the ability. If we want to start it and we cannot do it now, let us hire people from outside to do it. Cubans will continue to do well because the Cuban product is new, it is interesting and people are not concerned about how the natives dress. They are only concerned about whether they are nice, that is all and the tourists are well taken care of. It is encouraging. I would like our people to put more emphasis on the necessary things in Barbados.

I thank you so much, Mr. President, for giving me this opportunity to make my contribution to the Senate and to Barbados.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Thank you Senator Brome. Senator Murray.

SENATOR THE HON. G. S. H. MURRAY: Thank you, Mr. President. Sir, on reflection I have come to realise that this would be the sixth Estimates debate in which I would be participating since I have the honour and privilege to be a Member of this Chamber. The Estimates debate, as I am sure my fellow Senators will agree, is generally regarded as one of the highlights of the activities in which we indulge in this Chamber and an event to which

we look forward to most eagerly because it is usually a very spicy, energising and controversial.

Sir, I must say that when I consider what has gone on in these Chambers over the last three days, I have concluded that this has to be the most sedate, non-contentious Estimates debate that I have ever experienced. The criticism was very muted and generalised. It did not have the spunk and the bitingness of previous debates. Not necessarily that it is a bad thing but even the two Opposition Senators have tried desperately and largely unsuccessfully to find anything much with which to find fault - not even to lock horn within this debate.

If I might respect a tradition and deal with ladies first. Senator Thomas-Mascoll's contribution - I would like to describe it, Sir, - I am not being uncharitable but I would like to describe it as a Poonka contribution. There was skipping, hopping and jumping. It was here, it there, there was little tuk here and a little tuk there and whatnot but it did not have any real meat to it. I will be returning to her contribution in a little while. As to Senator Clyde Mascoll, he was trying so hard to mount an attack that he had to revert to mentioning his 5-4-3 plan. That was the first time since the Elections campaign of 1994 that I have heard Senator Mascoll referred to his 5-4-3 plan since 1994.

Sir, that helps to give you the kind of atmosphere, the kind of engine that has been fueling this whole debate.

11.55 p.m.

Wednesday, March 29, 2000

SENATOR THE HON. G.S.H. MURRAY: We Sir, on this side have been well prepared for it and I would therefore like now to look at some of the matters that have been raised by various Senators in their contributions.

Senator Mascoll in one of his points tried to establish that a reduction in the non statutory applications to the various departments reflected the Government's cash flow problem and was a reflection of a policy decision not to hire substitutes during times when people were on sick leave or vacations, et cetera, but Sir, that is not true at all.

The fact is that the reduction in that allocation has come about because of the conversion of the casual employee, the temporary employees and the appointed employees to the categories of public officers. Therefore that is a straightforward explanation and I am glad to be able to erase any kind of confusion that might have been in his mind about that.

Now, Senator Mascoll has already dealt very decisively and very authoritatively in disproving and refuting. Senator Mascoll claimed that the public sector has

been the main provider of jobs over the last few years as we have achieved the magnificent objective of reducing employment to single digit figures to 9.8% at last count, but the latest report.

Sir, what is so interesting and significant about the reduction of unemployment to this level, which while not satisfactory is certainly encouraging, is the fact that it did not come about through any crash programmes, but it has been a steady, systematic approach. We did not have any crash programmes as the Democratic Labour Party was at one time very infamous for, but instead we have produced jobs that are productive and sustainable and that have contributed to the overall development of Barbados.

Sir, it is quite interesting that we no longer in Barbados hear any talk about the 30 000 jobs that the Government was supposed to have promised the country, because people are satisfied that we have made a valiant and successful attempt at seeking to tackle the unemployment problem.

All in all, Sir, when you consider that Senator Mascoll was wrong about the reduction in the non statutory allocations, he was wrong about the unemployment and several other things, but I just thought I would take this opportunity to remind Senator Mascoll that in a democracy, Sir, we are all entitled to our opinions but we are not entitled to our own facts.

Asides.

SENATOR THE HON. G.S.H. MURRAY: Facts could only be facts and facts therefore cannot be manipulated or manufactured to suit anyone's opinion. Facts remain incontrovertible once they are facts. Therefore, the facts from all sources, non political or political, whether they be national institutions or regional institutions, whether they be international lending agencies, whether they be agencies which allocate credit ratings, the overall conclusion, Sir, is that the Barbados economy is doing well, is looking good and we are on a sound footing.

We are not complacent about it but the fact is that we are encouraged and we are seeing the fruits of our labour. As a matter of fact, only three days ago when this debate started, we had the privilege, Sir, of being given the news of Barbados being praised by the IADB for its treatment. It says,

"IADB praises Barbados. The Inter-American Development Bank is hailing Barbados' economic success story."

Sir, that is a further endorsement and justification of the route along which we are travelling. The applauding of the programmes has come from far and wide and while we

appreciate them, Sir, we do not, like I said, intend to be complacent, but intend to be energised by such encouraging assessments and give us fortitude to press on with a mammoth task ahead of us.

As I finish off with Senator Mascoll, I must also point out, Sir that it is interesting when I reflect on the predictions and prognostications of disaster after disaster upon disaster and the doom and gloom that Senator Mascoll has predicted for this Government and for this economy, not one has materialised. Not a single one.

As a matter of fact, it is so sad that this is but one year in which he did not predict any further economic disaster on Barbados. He is now like the boy on the burning deck having cried once and when he meets many competitors he having cried for so long, he himself no longer takes his predictions seriously. Sir, that is the best ceremony that could be given of his thing.

Sir, the Independent Senators made some very useful contributions and I want to thank them very much for their observations, more so than their criticisms because I think their observations, the spirit and tone in which they were given reflected a general satisfaction in the way things were going, but they were just giving some diatribes and pointing out some areas in which we needed to pay attention in order to keep us on our toes.

We, Sir, are appreciative of that and I hope that as I deal with some of their concerns, I can erase them and show them that we are serious about providing them with a good and sound Government.

Sir, Sir John Goddard in his contribution made a number of very interesting points. One point which I would like to deal with is when he said that senior managers in the public sector need to be suitably rewarded and be held accountable for their actions and for their deeds, et cetera. That we must agree with. They must be suitably rewarded but at the same time, we in Government appreciate that everybody must be suitably rewarded, stretching from the most senior to the most junior.

Sir, as a matter of fact, studies on that area have shown that the gap between - and I am sure Senator Collimore would agree with me - the top management in the public sector and the middle management, even the lower rank in Barbados, is the closest in the Caribbean. In other words, there is a wider distribution and more even spread of wages across the public sector in Barbados than elsewhere in the Caribbean. While I appreciate Senator Goddard's observation, I would like to point out that that is the nature of the Barbadian society. It is a much more equitable society and that is the way we see it as going.

Therefore in making that observation, I would also like at this time to thank the public servants for their contributions over the last several years in office for putting in the kind of hard work, making the kinds of sacrifices, demonstrating the kinds of commitments that would have made all the gains that we in Barbados would have enjoyed over the last year, particularly generally the last five or six years, possible.

The Barbados public service still remains an outstanding service. It still remains an institution that offers very attractive, rewarding, exciting and challenging opportunities for Barbadians. I think that we can still be proud of them and that they still have a very long contribution to make by making Barbados' success even more outstanding in the years to come.

Senator Goddard also made reference to the question of investor confidence in Barbados and despite the findings of the survey for which, as Senator Barker observed, there is no basis indicating how scientific it was, but it was just a survey, though not every survey is reflective of the true state of affairs, we still know, Sir, from all other indicators that investor confidence in Barbados is very high and that Barbados' image in the Caribbean and wider afield is no longer laughed at. It is no longer embarrassing to say that you are a Barbadian. You no longer have to go to Puerto Rico and be embarrassed that they are not going to take your Barbados dollars any more. The Barbados economy is strong. The dollar is sound and our image again has been restored. Thanks to the work of the Government and thanks particularly to the outstanding work of the Prime Minister.

Senator Laurie, Sir, spent some time dealing with the Auditor General's report for 1999 and I understand his concerns.

12.05 p.m.

Wednesday 29 March, 2000

Senator the Hon. G. S. H. MURRAY: He asks what is Government's policy regarding the blatant abuse of the rules and procedures contained in that report and he said he spent sleepless nights because of the contents of that report. The report does not offer comfort to anybody but I would not like the impression to go abroad that the Government of Barbados is ignoring or indifferent to the strictures in that report. I know that Senator Laurie is an avid reader of the records of the Hansard that covers this Chamber, that while he may be spending sleepless nights on these things, and understandably so, there are lots of us in Barbados who still have sleepless nights about what is going on at the Barbados Agricultural Society and therefore we know that there are still some questions to be answered in that regard.

Sir, specifically back to the Auditor General's Report, the point is that when the Auditor General presents a report it is really the role of the public Accounts Committee to investigate those reports and follow up on the strictures of the report. Whenever the report comes out the Prime Minister makes it plain to his Ministers and public servants and the Permanent Secretaries that they have to take it very seriously and take whatever steps are necessary to correct the deficiencies in the report.

I remember there was some mention in the report about a special audit on the Government Printery but since that a lot of steps have been taken to bring the Government up to scratch a lot of the things that were complained about. The accounting system has been improved, the question of billing etc, has been improved. Accounts receivable have been much more up to date etc., so we take it seriously. I know that in this instance the Director of Finance has written to all Ministries and all departments drawing their attention to the situation as contained in the report and giving them deadlines for representing responses and to taking action to correct the issues about which the Auditor General has complained in that report. So, Sir, that takes care of Senator Laurie's strictures in that regard.

Senator Collymore also made some very interesting comments. I also like to listen to him very carefully because of the wealth of experience and expertise he brings particularly as it obtains to the public service. He made an interesting observation that really says a lot for Barbados. Without speaking about the public sector in general, he made the observation that the demands and expectations of our people are now so high that he doubts that any single government can achieve them all at one time. I think that really represents a very interesting perspective of Barbadians' attitude today. It also indicates that the expectations are high because persons once again have confidence in the country, they have hope, they can dream, they have ambition and therefore they think that their ambitions are once again achievable and therefore they can have high expectations.

Senator Collymore also spoke about the question of the Urban Development Commission and he wondered why the allocation was put under the capital section, but when I made some enquiries, I was told that urban has always been given a lumpsum, given the nature of its job and the lump sum money is controlled by the Board, and the programme which spends that money also has to come to Cabinet for approval, but the lump sum is given to it because of the nature of the job. In other words, if they decide that they have to repair an old lady's house, they have to have a generous sum of money which they are accountable for, to be able to respond to the urgencies of the situation in that regard. It has been that way from the very beginning, but there is a system. There is a mechanism in place. There are checks and balances on that procedure

and therefore his understandable concern about it being taken advantage of. It is not so easily done because as I said there are checks and balances in place. As I said, this has been the system which has been put in place for the Urban Development Commission, given what it has to do.

Senator Laurie also made a very good observation about stressing the importance of the maintenance of government plans and buildings. We appreciate that. As a matter of fact, anybody looking at the Frank Walcott Building knows that is a policy which has been implemented there with great success. We at Government Headquarters have learnt from that. We have now hired a maintenance co-ordinator who now has the job of looking after the maintenance of that building and the surrounding building. Anybody who has been to Government Headquarters recently will attest to the fact that that in itself has improved the appearance of the building tremendously. We no longer have to wait on Public Works to send a plumber or somebody to fix a window; there is a team there that can do it on the spot. Therefore, the building is not allowed to run down and incur significant expense when all it would have taken was a few dollars to set it rolling.

Sir, I would like to spend some time looking at the Government's position as regard some of the Ministries under the Prime Minister's office and under his purview. Under the Prime Minister's office, Sir, I would like to pay attention to the whole question of Independence and to observe that the amount for Independence celebrations allocated in the Estimates is \$275,000.00, which represents an increase of \$75,000.00. Out of that sum also comes the money for the community independence celebrations and the Community Independence Secretariat because of having developed a strong working relationship with the private sector; and also having begun to inculcate among the Parish Independent Committees a sense of self-help and generation of their own funds, we have been able to arrive at increased sponsorship from the private sector and support from the community through the Parish Independent Committee. As a matter of fact, some of our major events have been sponsored. The Lighting Ceremony is sponsored by Life of Barbados, the launching ceremony by Texaco, the committee Mini-parks Competition by Barclays Bank, et cetera. We have been able to control expenditure by attracting support from the private sector and at the same time holding training courses where we encourage the parish independent committees and give them the skills to be able to generate their own fund raising, so that they do not depend on central government for handouts; but while given a token support, they themselves are generating their own funds and having a sense of independence and connection with the community.

In the Estimates there is a sum of \$50, 211.00 which is this year allocated to the churches. I would like to say in

that regard, Sir, that ever since the ecclesiastical affairs was put under the Prime Minister's office, we have been working hard at seeking to find some solution to some outstanding problems that have existed between the Government and the various denominations. There has been a committee set up which is chaired by the Permanent Secretary in the Prime Minister's office, and which has representation from the Ministry of Finance, Education, Houses and Land and the Environment. They are looking at the whole question of government's desire to compensate these denominations for the use of church buildings and lands.

Government is very serious about settling that debt. Government feels that the church is a very important institution in Barbados that makes a tremendous contribution to the spiritual and also material well-being and the general wholesomeness of the Barbadian society, and we feel we have an obligation to seek to compensate those churches for, like I said, the church buildings and the lands which the Government and by extension the society has had the benefit of over the years. This committee is meeting on an on-going basis. The last meeting, I think, was some time last month. They now have to come back with some further details to work out costing, pricing and valuations etc. We are determined that this whole issue be resolved as soon as possible in order to fulfill the Prime Minister's decision that this is debt which Barbados must pay to its religious institutions.

Therefore, Sir, I am very pleased to be able to report that considerable progress is being made in that regard and we look forward, Sir, to this issue being wrapped up as soon as possible.

Sir, there's also the question of government security. As you know, government has provided security through its security guard service.

12.15 p.m.

Wednesday, March 29, 2000

SENATOR G. S. H. MURRAY: At the same time there is a private security guard service that is overseen by the Prime Minister's Office. You will recall, Sir, that where the private investigators and security guard service is concerned, the Auditor General in his 1988 Report also had some things to say about the deficiencies in how that area was operating.

I am pleased to say that Government has again taken the strictures of the Auditor General very seriously in that regard. We have taken steps to plug the major openings that existed in that service where the private investigators and Security Guards' Advisory Board have suffered from a lack of staff which would do the follow-up work.

We have just appointed an Investigation's Officer who has already taken up duty and is working and achieving success, whose job is to actively ensure that the security guards are licenced, that their licenses are renewed, that the agencies themselves are licenced and that they themselves hire licensed security guards.

What was happening was that because of the lack of staff and because of a lack of follow-through, Government was losing considerable revenue in this area. This Investigating Officer is following through on that. He is going out to the agencies and not just waiting.

The tradition has been that at a time of the year an advertisement would be published in the Press and be carried on the radio and TV saying that these licences are supposed to be renewed by a particular time and therefore we would have to depend on the initiative of these persons or institutions to respond. Now we are going out actively and are obtaining good cooperation. We are also enhancing the coffers of the Government in that regard.

The Government Security Guard Service also is being looked at considerably. Government Security Guards provide services at 82 different locations across Barbados. There is a committee which I chair which is looking very seriously at seeking to enhance the whole operation of this service, enhance the image and enhance the professionalism, especially through training. As a matter of fact, this committee has started to work. We have been looking at the whole question of training, recruitment, promotion, discipline and things of that nature.

There is a training course which should begin on Monday that will start the trend of having ongoing training for both the senior security guards who are the supervisors as well as the rank and file of the Security Guards' Service. This is going to be an ongoing exercise. We intend that in a year or so all the 300 guards, I think, which are in the Service will be exposed to training. Then we intend to retrain them in order to provide them with information and skills to cope with the changing needs and circumstances in Barbados as regards their job.

There was a query raised as to the wages of the private security guard. That is an area in which the Private Security Guards' Advisory Board is looking at the question of the legislation. There are also some amendments that will have to be made to the legislation that cover both the private security guards and the Government security guards. There have been some drafts produced and they are being looked at so we can take some decisive steps to bring these services up to scratch because of the important role they perform in Barbadian national life.

The question also of the Barbados Defence Force is a matter I would like to deal with. The Defence Force is

celebrating its 21st Anniversary this year. It has a wide range of attractive activities to mark this very momentous occasion. The Barbados Defence Force, as we all recognise and acknowledge, has over the last 21 years provided us with a very outstanding service. It is service of which we are proud and which all Barbadians appreciate, but we have found to our regret that after 21 years the Defence Force still does not have a pension scheme. We think it is unfair and unjust.

Again, we have taken steps to deal with this. A committee has been set up to look at this matter. It has membership from the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of the Civil Service, the Ministry of Finance, the Supervisor of Insurance and the Director of National Insurance etc. They will be working with the Barbados Defence Force to try to rectify this situation.

A submission will be made very shortly to the Defence Board. Because it was a new exercise, we have had to gather information from a number of different sources to try to arrive at the best possible team for our men and women of the Barbados Defence Force. A submission will very shortly go before the Defence Board so we can give some realisation and hopefully give a 21st Anniversary gift to the Barbados Defence Force in a way which is long overdue.

Along with that, Sir, a sister agency, so to speak, to the Defence Force is the question of the Barbados Cadet Corps which is this year celebrating its 196th anniversary. That also provides a very useful service. I think there are now some 20 cadet companies. There are 580 cadets in the Corps. By the end of March there will be another 210 added which would bring it to almost 800 cadets. This number will include some 30 sea cadets who train once a week with the Barbados Coast Guard in order to build those young ones and provide some succession planning for the Cadet Corps.

The Estimates, Sir, also provide some money for the Cadet Corps to have a permanent camp site at Paragon. This had been mooted for some time but work has actually started, I am pleased to say, and this camp site will not only be devoted to the cadets but it will be open to all the youth groups of various types in Barbados who will be able to go to Paragon, which is a very picturesque, windswept site on that part of Barbados. It will provide excellent facilities not the luxurious facilities but good facilities which will be the nature of encamping that will allow them to carry out their various programmes and exercises in a safe and secure surrounding.

We think this will, apart from contributing to the development of various skills and attributes within the young people of Barbados, also make a very strong connection between the Cadet Corps, the Defence Force

and the society, so that there is no dichotomy or suspicion between the civil society and the military arms of our society.

We are very optimistic about that and look forward to it very eagerly. We are hopeful that it will be ready by the summertime and, therefore, some of the groups who hold their summer camps will be able to enjoy that.

The Estimates, Sir, also provide some \$2 million for the relocation of the Coast Guard. As you know, Sir, the Coast Guard which is presently located at Fort Willoughby at the Pierhead will be removed to reclaimed lands to the north-west of the Flour Mill at Spring Garden, an area occupying some 15 837.39 square metres. The site was selected particularly because of its close proximity to the Bridgetown Port and easy access to the sea. It will also facilitate the Coast Guard in carrying out its duties in the Port and in monitoring traffic, et cetera.

The present site at Fort Willoughby was considered unsuitable especially after the damage which it suffered by the storm surges in 1999, surges which caused wave action, flooding and infrastructural damage to the building. It was felt that it would be better in the long run to provide it with a more suitable location. It is this suitable location we are looking at on which work we hope will be started this financial year to solve that problem. At this stage the preliminary concept drawings have given us an estimated cost of some \$22.5 million.

I am pleased to advise that we are expecting a \$5 million grant from the private sector through the means of Barbados Shipping and Trading to make this possible. We think that is a very useful contribution to an institution upon which we will all depend for various means of protection. We look forward to and appreciate this support.

In relocating the Coast Guard to that site, I would like to assure the public that given its location on the sea, an environmental impact assessment study will be done to make sure that whatever facilities are put in there do not do any damage or injury to the environment and to the overall well-being of Barbados, physically, et cetera. We intend to take especial care to ensure that it inures to the benefit of Barbados in every possible way.

Sir, I would also like to pay some attention to the question of the Ministry of the Civil Service and deal with some of the issues they have been engaged in as well as speak on some of the plans for the future.

One of the things that has been occupying the attention of the Ministry of the Civil Service at the moment is the question of the new Qualifications Order. The last time there was a qualification order was in 1974 and that was amended in 1976. We recognise that since then new

jobs have been created, old jobs have changed and the demands and requirements for jobs have undergone tremendous change.

12.25 p.m.

Wednesday, March 29, 2000

SENATOR THE HON. G.S.H. MURRAY: We think that a new approach has to be given to the question of qualifications for jobs and we are taking a general view of this Order to incorporate all the amendments and changes that would have taken place in Barbados in 1976 when it was a totally different world almost. This new draft qualifications order has been approved by Cabinet and is now being worked on by the Chief Parliamentary Counsel, and we are hoping that this will be able to reflect the skills and the qualifications that exist in the society as well as prepare people for the skills that we need in the future.

The Barbados Public Service will be even more equipped to provide the services that are required of Barbados. In the past year or so we are pleased to have played a major role in the restoration of the eight per cent pay cut to the civil servants. That story is well told and I do not need to go over it here again, but I would like to make one observation and to express my opinion that a great disservice has been done to the public service of Barbados by persons for whatever reason who should know better, people who are in leadership positions who tried to dissuade them from seeking to invest their money in securities.

There is this myth that has been perpetrated that you have to have a lot of money to start to invest. That is not true. The point is that if we are going to be serious about building an investment country in Barbados people have to be given whatever opportunities. If they have disposable income they can afford, not that you are taking away from providing your necessities, but if it is money that you can afford to invest you have to start doing so, and this was an excellent area in which a lot of persons could have started.

I think it was very wrong of the leadership of the Barbados Union of Teachers to have taken the stance that they did. It makes me feel that given the political connections that exist between the leadership of that union and the Democratic Labour Party that it is seeking to continue the idea that certain people in Barbados should live hand to mouth, so to speak, and with hands always in their pockets and not plan and build for the future.

Sir, it is the same attitude that the Democratic Labour Party had when at Christmas they would give workers a Christmas advance, and we know that after Christmas January and February are hard months, so that when you give a person an advance and you take it out in

the next two or three months it works hardship on a lot of people. We, in the Barbados Labour Party, have always felt that that was the wrong attitude, that people had to be taught thrift, even taught savings. That is why we gave a policy to encourage the growth and development of the credit unions and that when people saved at the credit unions or borrowed money from the credit union, they had to be saving while they repaid and what is gained in interest comes back to you in the form of benefits and dividends. That is the culture that we have sought to encourage and this was in keeping with that saving.

I very much regret, Sir, that that retrogressive step, that backward attitude had to be exhibited to dissuade persons from doing so. I hope that is the last we see of that antiquated primitive way of looking at persons and their livelihood and that we never see a repeat of it again.

I would like to touch on the question of the regrading and the classification exercise that is afoot in the public service. This is fairly well known and I would like to report that progress is being made and a consultancy service is being acquired with the assistance of the Inter-American Development Bank and calling upon the very experienced persons who will seek more to provide this quantitative basis to the evaluating of jobs in the future than has been done in the past. This reclassification and regrading exercise will obtain not only in the general civil service but also apply to statutory boards. The first step will be what is known as a diagnostic survey which will be the forerunner to the wider study. That is well underway.

On another matter, Sir, the Government proposes to have a Public Service Act which will look at such areas as conditions of service, management of financial administration, the handling of disciplinary measures, the functions of the various Commissions. There is a Committee which has been set up to come up with a policy framework and it is well at work and should be submitting a report to Cabinet very soon with proposals in that regard. So considerable work has been done in that area.

Sir, by and large one of the greatest areas of satisfaction over the last year must have been the success that we have had in implementing Government's decision to convert the post of casual and public employees to public officers. That is really one of the outstanding achievements of this Government and I would like to thank the Ministry of the Civil Service and the trade unions for the supportive role they played and the great deal of cooperation they exhibited in bringing it to finality to the point where we have so far established some 4 346 posts, and we expect some 241 more of these posts will also come into being very soon. So far some actual letters of appointment have gone out to some 3 381 public officers. They are going to receive a letter of appointment appointing them to the new status of public officer which

means that they will no longer be regarded as second class employees. They are now guaranteed year-round employment, security of tenure, easier access to credit, because when persons saw 'casual employee' on job letters or letters of documentation they felt that they were in an unstable situation and they could not service any debt incurred.

Their retirement benefits will also be greatly enhanced and in many cases their benefits will almost double. In addition, persons can now retire at 60 and get a Government pension for five years until the National Insurance benefits kick in at 65. In the past, the so-called casual worker who retired had to go for five years without a pension until their National Insurance came into effect.

Sir, we are very pleased with that and it is hoped that by the end of April, all the letters would have gone out to all the affected new public officers and that will be a chapter closed, but a chapter of which we could be exceedingly proud.

Sir, the Personnel Administration Division has also been hard at work in doing a number of serious initiative jobs. They are pushing ahead with the computerisation of that department. They are involved in putting together the whole question of a new performance and development appraisal system which would provide a more scientific and more professional basis for evaluating public officers.

As you know, Sir, one of the greatest bugbears among public officers has been the question of the old confidential report which many times did not reflect a true indication of a person's performance over the years but was done sometimes on the whims and fancies that reflected a supervisor's opinion of an officer at a particular time rather than an overall period of time.

This system, as I said, is going to change all of that so that persons in many areas of the public sector have a system where you can be graded not once a year but periodically. You have set targets and goals.

12.35 p.m.

Wednesday, March 29, 2000.

SENATOR THE HON. G. S. H. MURRAY: You are called in and counselled and these things are pointed out to you and you are given a chance to rectify the situation and then you are evaluated over a year's time and not just at one particular time. We think this will go a long way to enhancing the morale of the public officers and to feel that they are getting a fair share in the public service, that they are treated with equanimity and even handedness across the system.

Sir, the Personnel Administration Department, as I have said, is developing this programme and it is hoped that this will start on a trial basis in a number of departments from next month so that we can try to iron out the kinks as much as possible because we know there will be some teething problems but we will, hopefully be able to set the record straight and correct the defects before it is implemented on a service wide basis to benefit the civil service.

One of the issue I would like to deal with, while it comes under the Head of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, it really involves the Ministry of the Civil Service. It is Head 37 and it deals with the sum of \$2.5 million under Structures for the Ministry of Public Works and Transport. I am dealing with this, Sir, because this sum will involve the whole question of the whole future of the National Insurance Building. Sir, we are tired - we have been embarrassed and we are tired and we have been discomforted by the repeated walkouts and complaints that have emanated, justifiably so, from the employers and other occupants of that building over the last several years.

We in Government have been able to take some short terms remedial steps and to make things a bit more comfortable for the workers but we never thought that was the end of it. We are not putting a Band Aid over what was obviously a major festering sore but we felt that radical work had to be done if the workers and the public who do business in that building, if they are to be treated in a proper manner, if they are to enjoy good surroundings and good facilities, which they deserved, and which their money paid for through taxes.

In this regard, the Ministry of Public Works and Transport will, out of that sum of \$2.5 million, begin a systematic refurbishment of that building starting from the top floor which is the fifth floor. The Ministry of Labour has moved out of the building and it is now vacant and what we will do there, as has been done in the case of the Treasury Building, we will start on the top floor, enhance, refurbish and improve that floor, move a department to that floor and then go to the next floor and do it systematically for the entire building so that persons can be assured of good air-conditionings, good lifts, good telephone services and good floors etcetera in the future.

Asides.

SENATOR THE HON. G. S. H. MURRAY: They are doing it in a systematic basis because there is not enough room, for example, to shut down the whole building and move everybody out. We could not find the space, for example, to service those persons and that building will be done step by step and should start within the first month or two of the financial year. I have spoken to the Chief Technical Officer and he has given me the

assurance that workers can expect to see some actual, physical, systematic improvement of that building within a couple of months.

Sir, we are therefore very happy to be able to keep yet another pledge which we have made to the public servants by enhancing their situation and by giving them facilities which they richly deserve and which we are sure will lead to greater comfort and greater personal physical comfort and motivate them to even higher levels of productivity. I would also like to thank the workers of that building who have had the patience of Job over the years to put up with the very trying conditions which never affected their productivity and their performance. For example, that building is occupied by the Electoral and Boundaries Commission and the condition in that building has never affected the performance of their workers in getting Barbados ready for a general election and our general elections have proceeded smoothly, thanks, as I have said, to the sacrifice and the contribution of these workers. Therefore we commend them and thank them and assure them that better days are definitely coming for them.

Sir, I would also like to deal with a couple of other matters under the Prime Minister's Office to assure persons for example, that the Committee on National Reconciliation has done some good and useful work and the Estimates also provide money for them to continue their very valuable work up to end of July this year or so. The sum of \$125 000 has been provided for that Committee. It has had some meeting already around Barbados. It has had some five town hall meetings. It has some fifty written submissions and so far it has divided itself into a two subcommittees, one to deal with social and cultural matters and the other to deal with political and economic matters. It has also commissioned some research on youth activities and youth surveys through the Division of Youth Affairs with a symposium being planned for next month April 2000 to further the work of that committee. We look forward to that committee completing its work because we are sure it will have some interesting things to tell to Barbados which will hopefully bring a more cohesive, integrated and tolerant society, a society which will be better for all us and which we can more enjoy.

Sir, I also want to talk about the question of the Fair Trading Commission. One of the most important steps by this Government has been the question of setting up of a Fair Trading Commission. We think that this is going to change forever the life of Barbadians. Both the life of Barbadians, their outlook to business, their lifestyle and their quality of life because certain protection will be given to them which they had not had before. Sir, we think that this something that we look forward to see coming to fruition in the time ahead.

The Ministry of Social Transformation is another important institution which has done very good work for Barbados in the time of its existence and I commend the Ministry for its work. It has been a revolutionary step, it has had to break new ground and it has tried to change an attitude toward the whole question of poverty, the whole question of need, the whole question of persons who are disadvantaged in Barbados' society.

Sir, it is quite interesting that this year we have not heard any complaints or strictures about the Urban Development Commission or the Rural Development Commission. We remember over the past how these institutions were lambasted, how they were criticised very harshly and being categorised and called port barrel departments etcetera. Now we have live to see the day when they have become accepted.

12.45 p.m.

Wednesday, March 29, 2000

SENATOR THE HON. G.S.H. MURRAY: Now we have lived to see the day when they have become accepted and acceptable with the effect that some of their harshest critics are now some of the people who are seeking most to have constituents in their areas of responsibility benefit from the Urban Development Commission and Rural Development Commission.

Therefore, I would like to assure those involved in the Ministry of Social Transformation that this phase too will pass and that this is a necessary embryonic stage where they will have to be subjected to the failings of persons who are seeking basically to make sure that this Government does not get the credit for a very useful institution in tackling the whole question of poverty, the whole question of need and also teaching people how to be better citizens and how to be more useful and productive by teaching them skills to make sure that they are not always at the handout stage.

The same way that the Queen Elizabeth Hospital was criticised, the same way that the Deep Water Harbour was criticised, the same way the ABC Highway was criticised, they have come to be regarded now as fundamental aspects of Barbadian life without which we could not do, I predict that the very same thing will happen to the Ministry of Social Transformation and I look forward to seeing that come about in a very short time. Therefore, I would like to commend them for their work. They have done a herculean job in a very short time. I am sure that the Barbadian public is being grateful for it.

Sir, this debate has taken place in the context of a society which is doing better, which feels better about itself, to the point where sometimes, Sir, I wonder if we do

not seek to wonder how easily people tend to forget. Only nine short years ago, Sir, we were living in a totally different world and we must not allow the success and the progress that we have made since those days to forget the dark, dire, damp days of 1991 and onward, if only to make sure that history does not repeat itself. But at the same time, Sir, we cannot be unmindful of the fact that this Barbados Labour Party Government has been the instrument that has transformed that whole era of depression, and pessimism to one of optimism as reflected in Senator Collymore's wise observation of the rising level of expectations that have been created in Barbados. I think in north America these days are referred to, given the buoyancy and the long term health of the US economy, as the wealth effect.

There is wealth around, the wealth is being generated, the wealth is being spread and people are feeling good about themselves. They are feeling good about their country, they are investing, they want to build houses, they want to buy land, they want to buy cars et cetera and this reflects the attitude of the Barbados Labour Party.

We do not go for glitzy glamorous slogans like, "crime and violence" and "families first." We go for slogans that are well thought out and have philosophy behind them, like "we put Barbados first," "the great combination," "we going with Owen." "Job Number one is jobs," "the politics of inclusion." Those are the things, Sir, that we go for, because we have programmes that match programmes that give substance to this and achieve our goals and give meaning to what we say.

The fact is that Barbados is enjoying perhaps the longest period of economic growth and development and sustained wealth generation probably since the 17th Century when Barbados was described as the brightest jewel in the Crown of England.

Fortunately, Sir, we are doing it now for ourselves and by ourselves and not for England. We are doing it for our own Crown. I am glad to say that the prosperity is being generated and being spread throughout Barbados. There is a lot more personal initiative being demonstrated. Businesses are springing up. Lots of young people are getting involved in businesses. We have a private sector which is responding to the climate positively. The Government is playing its part in engineering the situation. The Government is also playing its part in providing agencies like the very same Ministry of Social Transformation, the Urban Development Commission, the Rural Development Commission, to eradicate poverty to make sure that this prosperity is spread throughout the system and throughout the length and breadth of Barbados and as has been said, that no one is left behind.

Sir, therefore it gives me great pleasure to support these measures and to say that the Barbados Labour Party has done a good job through the wise and astute leadership of the Prime Minister who is highly regarded for such skills not only in Barbados and the Caribbean but further afield.

Right now I think the Prime Minister is at Tufts University giving a presentation. He was invited to speak on the question of small states because he has been able virtually single handedly to put the question of small states on the international agenda. He has chaired a Commonwealth Task Force on this measure and now the international lending agencies and the major economies have decided to take on board the whole question of recognition of the special needs, peculiarities and vulnerabilities of the small states as a result of the initiative of the Prime Minister and the support of this Government and the people of Barbados.

As I wind up, Sir, I would like just to say that the way I feel about these Estimates and the way I feel about this economy and the performance of this Government, is that it makes me remember a passage in the Bible which I read. I do not remember exactly which part of the Bible it came from, but I am sure of this part of it - I am sure Senator Barker will help me and if Senator Rock was here he would also assist me - the part that says, "I would rather be a door keeper in the house of the Lord than to dwell in the tents of the ungodly."

I therefore am very proud to be part of this productive, successful Government. I would rather be a door keeper in that respect, than to dwell in the tents of the ungodly of the non-productive ones who at one time had sought to destroy Barbados.

I thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR THE HON. P.C. GODDARD: Mr. President, as I rise to wind up this debate, I must say that I feel as though I am batting on an exceptionally good wicket, despite some of those on the other side who flashed at balls on the offside and who swiped and swiped.

Asides.

SENATOR THE HON. P.C. GODDARD: There were some very valuable contributions throughout the course of this debate and it was particularly interesting to see how many Senators addressed the issues of the Ministry of Health. I was very appreciative of the comments that were made and not unaware of the contributions that were being made of the Ministry of Health.

Senator Thomas-Mascoll clearly understood that we both had a common perspective on the social programmes

and particularly the health programmes for Barbados and the objectives. There were several issues that she raised which I would like to respond to, such as the air-conditioning at the Accident and Emergency which is receiving the attention of the Ministry and which will occasion a major replacement of that system, not just the units themselves, but the entire ducting.

It has been determined that that ducting has to be changed because the material that was used in the original ducting was the incorrect material which facilitated the growth of fungus, and though it could be steam cleaned, it would then reappear over a period of time.

12.55 p.m.

Wednesday, March 29 2000

Senator the Hon. H. C. GODDARD: We have to move from one type of material to another which will ensure a continued proper maintenance of that system. This will be completed in a very short period of time.

With regard to the issue of nurses, we are under continual pressure and are keenly aware of the lack or the inadequate number of nurses on duty at any one time. We are currently processing fifty applications for nurses to join the staff, not only of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, but of the other institutions that come under the Ministry of Health. In addition, we have agreed with the Community College to double the students of the nursing school in the next school year, and we will have to further redouble our efforts to expand the school of nursing in Barbados.

The noise level on Martindales Road was raised and I have approached the Minister of Transport to redirect the minibus and ZR traffic from around Martindales Road, because they are the major offenders. They use their horns like the stage coaches used to use the coach horns in the past. They use them as communication between one another and between people and for people standing on the side of the road. They totally disregard the silent zone along Martindales Road. In addition, when the hospital was in place, the traffic was very much different. We recognise that the heavy duty traffic such as the oil trucks, the container trucks and so on add significantly to the noise on that road and we are going to be addressing that problem as well.

The issue of NGOs was raised and as I pointed out, the Ministry of Health was working with NGOs to make them more independent. NGOs, by their definition, are non-governmental organisations and should strengthen their capacity to raise funds from non-governmental sources, and they should strengthen their relationship with the commercial community and the citizenry at large who contribute to their success. Quite frankly, the better the

NGO performs, the more likely they are to gain funds. Where the NGO provides specific and quantifiable services for government, the government is more than willing to compensate the NGOs for that service and we have done so in many instances, but I think that the NGOs need to strengthen their capacity in fund raising among the general community in Barbados.

Senators Newton and Brome raised the issue of the library service and I myself am an avid reader and book purchaser. I love books and I believe that the library service needs to be strengthened. I think that we do need to have adequate human resources that are well trained, who understand how to catalogue and take care of books and so on and so forth. I think that the nature of the library has changed. I would wish that in discussing the issue of newspapers we could have discussed the issue of the fact that the libraries need to have Internet connections, that they need to have multiple Internet locations where people can come in and browse the newspapers as I do every morning.

This morning I read the New York Times, the London Times, the Financial Times, the Sydney Herald and the Washington Post - a quick scan of those newspapers to get the general flavour of the news of the day. What is useful about those websites is that each of them has an archive. You can search the newspaper of the date that you want in each one of those sites. This is an invaluable research tool that could be resident in the library. Encyclopaedia Britannica is available on the Internet. You can search the entire Encyclopaedia Britannica and its links to other publications on the Internet and therefore the critical tool for the research capabilities of libraries in the future is going to be the Internet. It is not going to be, it is. So I would urge that the library service concentrates on providing adequate Internet connections for people to go to free of charge.

Finally, I come to Senator Mascoll and his contribution. The economy is healthier than it has ever been. Senator Mascoll's prognostication about bursting the 'Ways and Means' and about our inability to earn foreign exchange just a few short months ago, have come to nought. I will complement him for shifting gears and staying away from short term forecasts, leading to a forecast of 2004. That puts it far enough away to where he cannot run into trouble.

SENATOR C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. President, on a point of order, in last year's Estimates debate I made a number of predictions, contrary to what the leader of the Senate is saying that my analysis of the economy is flawed and that is always my forecast. I am here to say that in fact if you would recall, I predicted the increase in interest rates in the Estimates debate of 1999. On the issue of printing of money which the Leader has alluded to ...

Mr. President: Order please.

Senator C .A. MASCOLL: Not a speech, a clarification. Page 8 of the Auditor General's Report in fact does in a very strange way support all that I have been saying on the printing of money. This I will address in the public domain.

Mr. President: Senator Goddard.

Senator the Hon. P. C. GODDARD: Mr. President, on the issue of the printing of money, we used the 'Ways and Means' briefly and legally within the limits of what was set by law. I might point out that in other accounts we had money of deposit which were in excess of what we used in the 'Ways and Means' and therefore we are really on balance. We were always in a positive position with the Central Bank and therefore Mr. President, I would really have to say that the whole issue of printing of money was something that probably was taken on board by those who really did not understand what was happening and may have contributed somewhat to the confidence factor that was reported in other publications, but Senator Mascoll's shift to a long-term forecasting is moving to a relative position of safety.

1.05 p.m.

Wednesday, March 29, 2000

SENATOR THE HON. P. C. GODDARD: However, given the projection this Government has for the medium term, continued growth at about three per cent, continued capital inflows that are on the books and the continued decrease in unemployment in this country, I think when we arrive at the period of 2004, one will find the strongest economy that Barbados has ever seen.

Some discussion was made about the international business and its lack of performance, but let me just say that the International Business Company formation and the Foreign Sales Company formation in 1999 were greater than in any year prior to 1995. There was continual growth despite the international climate that was being developed by the OECD.

Business formation is but one test of growth. The existing companies that have been formed in Barbados have been growing and some of the insurance companies have doubled and trebled their business in Barbados, so there is significant and continual growth in what has been called the offshore sector, or what I would refer to now as the financial services sector of Barbados as it is being integrated more and more into our business activity in Barbados.

Barbados has to be proactive and steadfast in its development as a low tax, clean, international domicile for the conduct of global business by both Barbadians and foreigners. We have led the debate with the OECD countries. We have pointed out that Barbados is not the tax haven they have conjured up in their minds and we have differentiated ourselves from those locations of secrecy and those that have a bit of a cowboy image.

Barbados is about serious ethical, clean business. All of our regulations, legislation and the practice of our conduct are aimed in that direction. Unlike the Bahamas, we are steadfast in the development of ethical, international business.

Some comment was made about PRT but you have to see the whole plethora of businesses like PRT that are being conducted in Barbados. Some of them have 90 per cent of the individuals who are writing the software as Barbadians or Caribbean nationals, so we are seeing a tremendous growth in this area in a global context. We are also seeing, like Senator Williams said, the growth of the call-service business so there is a growth in this area which will have significant demand for continued growth in employment.

Finally, Senator Mascoll made the comment that only 10 per cent of the cruise ship passengers get off in Barbados. Well, it has been a long time since I worked in Bridgetown but I did not think that my observations then were that different from today when the perception that I had then was that the majority of our business being done in town was with cruise ship passengers.

I checked over the last few hours and the leading cruise ship agents tell me that their estimate of passengers that disembark in Barbados is between 85 and 90 per cent so clearly Senator Mascoll got the wrong 10 per cent figures. The contribution that these individuals make to the tourism business in Barbados is significant and their spending is high.

In addition to that, it is estimated that 20 per cent of cruise ship passengers that come to the Caribbean return to the Caribbean for a long term stay. The cruise ship passengers afford an excellent opportunity for the hoteliers of Barbados to do their marketing exercises amongst them and to capture them as return visitors.

Senator Mascoll said he did not know where the \$50 million was that was being spent on the airport. He could not see it with the naked eye. Well, you have to get outside of the Arrivals Hall to be able to see it or outside the waiting area at the Arrivals Hall. You have to get on the other side. You have to travel. You have to be able to see the new taxiways, the new runway surfacing, the new lighting facilities, the new equipment that is being installed,

the new parking aprons which are expanding to accommodate more aircraft that are coming to Barbados. These are the things you have to be able to see. You just cannot wait for people that are coming off the aircraft to observe where the money is being spent. You actually have to go and travel.

Of course, there is also a brand new parking area that has been well expanded. There is new work being done over at the old Terminal so there is quite a bit of work being done. There is quite a bit of expansion taking place at the airport to improve the facilities to be able to take the expanded traffic which will come when we have more hotel rooms as well.

We are now at the point where you could not have gotten another person into a hotel during the months of February or March. I knew of one hotel that had a bit of difficulty and was looking to relocate some of their guests and could not find an empty hotel room anywhere in Barbados. They called me at 10:00 o'clock a Friday evening. This is the truth of what was happening in Barbados.

Mr. President, I think much has been said about the economy and about the projections of the economy. I would like to congratulate the Minister of Finance. I would like to congratulate my colleagues who sit in Cabinet and make policy for the benefit of all Barbadians.

I would like to commend these Estimates to the Honourable, the Senate, estimates that will redound to the benefit of Barbados, set the policies in place for continued, strong economic growth, continued reduction in unemployment and the enhancement of the social fabric of Barbados.

Mr. President, I beg that this Bill be read a second time.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

On the separate motions of SENATOR THE HON. P.C. GODDARD the Bill was read a third time, passed, certified as a Money Bill and cited as the Appropriation Act, 2000.

1.15 p.m.

Wednesday, March 29, 2000

ORDER NO. 2 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE
BORROWING

OF \$6 772 937 FROM ANGLOCO LIMITED AND
\$12 093 316 FROM NSG EXPORTS LIMITED

SENATOR THE HON. P.C. GODDARD: Mr. President, this Resolution seeks approval for the loan agreements with ANGLOCO Limited and NSG Exports Limited, supplier credit in the amount of \$6 772 937.00 and \$12 093 316.00. The purpose is financing and securing vehicles and equipment for the Barbados Fire Service and for the purchase of vehicles and equipment for the Barbados Defence Force, the Royal Barbados Police Force, the Prison Service and the School Meals Department by means of supplier credit.

I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

The question was put and agreed to.

ORDER NO. 3 - SECOND READING OF THE MONEY LAUNDERING (PREVENTION AND CONTROL) (AMENDMENT) Bill, 2000

SENATOR THE HON. P.C. GODDARD: Mr. President, in moving that the Money Laundering Act be read a second time this provision is to change the Minister responsible for the Money Laundering (Prevention and Control) Act, 1998 from the Ministry of Finance to the Attorney General's Office. This means that the Minister responsible for administering this Act will now be the Attorney General.

I now move that this Bill be read a second time.

The question was put and agreed to.

On the motion of SENATOR THE HON. P.C. GODDARD, the Senate resolved itself into Committee on the Bill, HIS HONOUR SENATOR C.L. BOLDEN in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Senate is in Committee.

Clauses 1 to 3 were called and passed.

On the motion of SENATOR THE HON. P.C. GODDARD, the CHAIRMAN reported to HIS HONOUR, THE PRESIDENT, the passing of one Bill in Committee and Mr. PRESIDENT resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of SENATOR THE HON. P.C. GODDARD the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Money Laundering (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Act, 2000.

QUESTIONS TO MINISTERS

SENATOR SIR JOHN STANLEY GODDARD: Mr. President, I would like to give notice of the following question.

Will the Minister state what remedial measures, if any, Government has implemented or proposes to implement to deal with the unsatisfactory situation in Government accounting details of the 1999 Report of the Auditor General which has highlighted:

1. many shortcomings in various aspects of compliance with the Financial Rules based on Cap. 5; 2. Serious weaknesses in internal accounting controls; and
1. Deficiencies in the application of accounting knowledge in several Ministries.

ADJOURNMENT

SENATOR THE HON. P.C. GODDARD: Mr. President, in moving the adjournment, I would like first to thank the staff for the long hours they have put in in covering this debate and I would also like to thank the Press for their coverage of the debates to date and for the hours that they have put in covering the debates of the Senate.

I beg to move that the Senate be adjourned sine die.

The question that the Senate do now adjourn sine die was put and agreed to and Mr. President adjourned the Senate accordingly.

1.25 p.m.

CONTENTS

RESUMPTION

Senator G.E.N. Brome, 1, 2, 3, 4; Senator The Hon. G.S.H. Murray, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13; Senator The Hon. P.C. Goddard, 14, 15; Senator the Hon. H. C. Goddard, 14; Senator C. A. Mascoll, 15.

ORDER NO. 2 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE BORROWING.....	16
Senator The Hon. P.C. Goddard, 17.	

QUESTIONS TO MINISTERS

SENATOR SIR JOHN STANLEY GODDARD.....	17
ADJOURNMENT.....	17
Senator The Hon. P.C. Goddard, 17.	

SPEAKERS IN THIS ISSUE

BROME, Senator G.E.N.
GODDARD, Senator SIR JOHN STANLEY
GODDARD, Senator the Hon. H. C.
GODDARD, Senator the Hon. P.C.
MASCOLL, Senator C. A.
MURRAY, Senator the Hon. G.S.H.

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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. Opening. The source opens without the convening sentence (Pursuant to the adjournment ... met at ...). The date is taken from the heading of the source.

Q3. Order No. 1, Appropriation Bill. The record opens with 'RESUMPTION' and no Order heading for the Appropriation Bill. After Senator the Hon. P. C. Goddard moves the second reading, the Bill is recorded as read a third time and passed, with no Committee stage recorded. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Take-slip, about 11.55 a.m.. One take-slip reads '11.55 p.m.' between those for 11.45 a.m. and 12.05 p.m. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Speech label, Senator the Hon. P. C. Goddard. One label in the Leader's winding-up speech reads 'Senator the Hon. H. C. GODDARD'. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Order No. 3, heading. The heading 'ORDER NO. 3 - SECOND READING OF THE MONEY LAUNDERING (PREVENTION AND CONTROL) (AMENDMENT) Bill, 2000' is typed as an ordinary paragraph. Printed as in the source.

Q7. Questions to Ministers. The items of Senator Sir John Stanley Goddard's question are numbered '1.', '2.' and then '1.' again. Printed as in the source.

Q8. Senator G. E. N. Brome. Senator Brome begins 'I rise in support of the measures before the House today'. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The Senate resumed on Wednesday, 29th March, 2000, with Mr. President in the Chair, to continue the debate on the Appropriation Bill, 2000 and the Estimates. Senator G. E. N. Brome supported the Bill, saying that he was overwhelmed by the progress he had seen around the country. He urged attention to the state of the cemeteries, which he called most deplorable, prompting Mr. President to ask whether his instructions to his undertaker were in

writing; argued that not enough money had been allocated for natural disasters; asked for funds for community groups and the use of an old building of historic value for young people; and said that tourism should look beyond large hotels to reasonable accommodation.

Senator the Hon. G. S. H. Murray said that this was his sixth Estimates debate and the most sedate and non-contentious he had experienced, describing Senator Thomas-Mascoll's contribution as a 'Poonka' contribution. He cited the Inter-American Development Bank's praise of Barbados' economic success, and replied on the Auditor General's Report that it was for the Public Accounts Committee to investigate such reports, describing steps taken on the private investigators and security guard service overseen by the Prime Minister's Office. He spoke of a new approach to qualifications for jobs, a staff appraisal programme to be started on a trial basis by the Personnel Administration Department, and \$2.5 million under Head 37 for accommodation for public servants, and noted that the Prime Minister was speaking at Tufts University on small states.

Senator the Hon. P. C. Goddard wound up the debate, replying on health matters raised by Senator Thomas-Mascoll: ducting at the hospital had to be replaced because the original material had encouraged fungus, and fifty applications from nurses were being processed. Senator C. A. Mascoll rose on a point of order to say that his predictions of the previous year had been borne out and that page 8 of the Auditor General's Report supported what he had said about the printing of money; Senator Goddard replied that the Ways and Means facility had been used briefly and within the limits set by law.

Senator Goddard projected continued growth of about three per cent, continued capital inflows and falling unemployment, said that International Business Company and Foreign Sales Company formations in 1999 were greater than in any earlier year, and spoke of the debate with the OECD countries. He said that about 20 per cent of cruise passengers to the Caribbean returned for a longer stay, described the work under way at the airport, including new taxiways, runway surfacing and parking, in answer to Senator Mascoll's question about the \$50 million, and said that no hotel room could be found in February or March. The Bill was read a second and third time, certified as a Money Bill and cited as the Appropriation Act, 2000.

Senator Goddard then moved the Resolution to approve the borrowing of \$6 772 937 from ANGLOCO Limited and \$12 093 316 from NSG Exports Limited, supplier credits to finance vehicles and equipment for the Barbados Fire Service, the Barbados Defence Force and

other services, which was agreed to. He moved the second reading of the Money Laundering (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2000, which transfers responsibility for the 1998 Act from the Ministry of Finance to the Attorney General; the Bill passed through Committee, His Honour Senator C. L. Bolden in the Chair, and all its stages.

Senator Sir John Stanley Goddard gave notice of a question on the measures to deal with the shortcomings in Government accounting highlighted in the 1999 Report of the Auditor General. On the adjournment, Senator Goddard thanked the staff and the Press for their long hours covering the debate, and the Senate was adjourned sine die.