
THE SENATE DEBATES

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2003 – 2008

THE SENATE

Monday, March 22, 2004

The Senate met in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings on Monday, March 22, 2004, at 11.00 a.m.

PRESENT

His Honour Senator Sir Fred GOLLOP, K.A., J.P.
(President)

Her Honour Senator Dame Patricia SYMMONDS,
D.B.E., G.C.M., B.A. (Hons.) (PG CE), J.P. (Deputy
President)

Senator the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH, G.C.M., J.P.
(Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development) (Leader
of the Senate)

Senator the Hon. J. E. D. WILLIAMS, B.Sc.
(Hons.), M.Sc., M.B.A., J.P. (Minister of State in the Prime
Minister's Office and the Ministry of the Civil Service)

Senator Sir John Stanley GODDARD, K.A., G.C.M.,
B.Com., F.C.A. (Hons.), LL.D. (Hons.) (U.W.I.)

Senator B. R. COLLYMORE, C.M.G.

Senator the Hon. Mrs. V. E. NEWTON, S.C.M.,
B.A. (Spec. Hons.), M.A., LL.B. (Hons.) (U.W.I.), F.L.A.
(Gt. Brit.), L.E.C.

Senator R. W. GRANT, B.A. (Econ.), G.Dip., M.A.
(Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism and
International Transport)

Senator the Hon. Miss L. V. EASTMOND, LL.B.
(Hons.), LL.M. (Minister of Commerce, Consumer Affairs
and Business Development)

Senator I. St. C. LINTON

Senator G. P. B. NICHOLLS, B.Sc. (Hons.), LL.B.
(Hons.)

Senator Miss P. E. PARRIS, J.P.

Senator G. P. I. GOODING-EDGHILL

Senator Miss. S. C. HUSBANDS, B.A. (Hons.)

Senator F. J. STUART, B.A., LL.M.

Senator Dr. D. S. LOWE, Ph.D., Dip. Theology,
B.A., MEd, ED.D.

Senator the Very Reverend H. E. CRICHLAW,
G.C.M., B.A. (Hons.) (Dunelm)

Senator Dr. F. L. CHANDLER, Ph.D., B.Sc. (Hons.)

Senator A. C. FIELDS

Prayers were led by Reverend Father E. Massiah.

Mr. PRESIDENT: This Senate is in session.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR THE PRESIDENT

Mr. PRESIDENT: I received apologies for the
absence of Senator Sir Roy Trotman and Senator Barker
who are both out of the country. Senator Trotman is on
trade union business and Senator Barker is on Government
business.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr.
President, I beg to move that Standing Order No. 45 (2) be
suspended for the remainder of today's Sitting.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS

SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr.
President, I beg to give notice of following Resolutions:-

1. A Resolution to approve the guarantee by the
Government of the payment by Needhams'
Point Holdings Ltd. Of cost over-runs with
respect to the construction of a resort hotel to an
amount not exceeding US \$10 613 732.20; and
the payment of debt service to an amount not
exceeding US \$7 million annually.
2. A Resolution to approve in accordance of Section
5 of the Land Acquisition Act, Cap. 228, the
compulsory acquisition by the Crown of the

parcels of land situate at Drax Hall Green in the parish of St. George in this Island and more particularly described in the First and Second Schedules hereto for the public purposes of housing development and recreation respectively.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, I beg to move the first reading of the Appropriation Bill, 2004 as amended.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 1 – THE APPROPRIATION BILL, 2004

SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, the Appropriation Bill which is before us has been amended on the basis of the requirements that were just circulated. I wish to inform Senators that the appropriate amount is now \$1,186,870,380.00.

S12: Sequence 2

11.20 a.m.

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: As you are aware, Sir, we have come to that time of the year when the Minister responsible for Finance, in keeping with the provisions of Section 108 and 109 of the Constitution, is required to bring before Parliament, the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the coming fiscal year.

These Estimates before us constitute the Government's Budget for the fiscal year 2004 - 2005. This may take some persons by surprise because we are all familiar with the present state of affairs where some people have a bit of confusion in their minds about what really is the Government's budget for the fiscal year.

In fact, on Friday afternoon when I was on my way home from work, I heard a discussion on the Call-in Programme where an irate caller was stating that he did not like this recent practice which had crept into the affairs of this country to which the Budget was being brought as late as November. Then, he went on to say that if the Government was a private company in which he had equity, and that company had brought its Budget so late in the financial year, he would withdraw his funds and have nothing more to do with that company.

Unfortunately, though, the moderator was not able to deal with the issue, except to say that as far as he could recollect, the discussion which was taking place in Parliament at this time of the year, has always taken place in the month of March. This did not satisfy the caller.

I believe, Mr. President, that the misunderstanding of what is the Budget and the distinction between the Budget and the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals which, traditionally, have been brought to Parliament after the discussion of the Budget, has its genesis in a discussion which took place way back in 1962 outside of this Chamber.

My research has shown me that during that discussion, Mr. President, the particular person made the point, very categorically, that the real Budget was the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals and that the Estimates were nothing more than a conglomeration of statistics. I think that is where the misunderstanding took place. As you know, we live in a society that when certain persons speak, even though the evidence is on the Other Side, it is who has spoken, rather than what has been said.

In fact, Mr. President, I still find great amusement when I reflect on my first day of work in the Ministry of Finance, in 1973, as a Budget Analyst, and I was assigned to the section where, on one side there were two individuals sitting, who I refer to as persons who were working with the Estimates, and the two of us on the Other Side were now being referred to as the persons who will be working with the Budget.

I was appalled at the level of ignorance of those matters which existed in that Ministry at that time. Needless to say that I had great difficulty, in fact, I did not succeed in convincing those persons who held that view that there was no such distinction between the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure and the Budget. I am glad to say that today, that is not the prevailing view in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs because the person there knows well that the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure do, in fact, constitute the Government's Budget for the particular year.

Mr. President, as Otto Eckstein in his book on public finance so clearly states, "A Government's Budget is a detailed statement of expected expenditures and revenue" he goes on to say,

"The executive branch of Government reaches its expenditure and tax decisions in the preparation of this document which is before us, and the legislative branch considers the proposals and votes them into law. That is the fiscal plan of Government for the particular year."

Therefore, Mr. President, I trust that after this debate today, there will be no misunderstandings in our society, especially among the journalists and the host of the Call-in Programmes, who speak so eloquently on issues about which they understand so little.

Therefore, instead of being a conglomeration of statistics, the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure in the Budget of the Government for the year, is that document which reflects the types of activities the Government will be pursuing during the given year, as it seeks to put its plan of action to work.

The document, therefore, is not constructed “willy nilly” or by accident. Those persons who are familiar with the exercise, know that at the back of the minds of those who are developing the document, and by that I do not necessarily mean the officials, I mean the persons who make up the administration of the day, and who are having a document developed to put their plans into effect, are three broad objectives, which will guide how this document is developed.

These three broad objectives are:

1. To secure adjustments in the allocation of resources in the country.
2. To secure adjustments in the distribution of income and wealth in the society.
3. To secure economic stabilisation in the country.

As I said, these are the three broad objectives which are behind the construction of Budgets, unlike when a budget is constructed for a private sector company. If we keep these broad objectives in our minds during today, and subsequent debates on this document, and the Appropriation Bill, it will stand us in good stead, because it would help us to make more sense from the statistics before us, than would have been the case otherwise.

Sir, depending on the prevailing circumstances, at a given point in time, and because these three objectives sometimes do clash as one seeks to achieve them, it becomes necessary for us to think in terms of choices. What will happen from time to time is that one objective will gain prominence over the other, and as the circumstances change, the emphasis will also change.

Mr. President, resources in any country, at any point in time are finite. Therefore, that causes us to make choices. In this particular case, I speak of choice in relation to what will be done with the resources which are available to the economy, in terms of who will use them and for what purposes recognising, of course, that our ultimate objective at all times is to carry the country forward to a higher level of economic attainment, and to ensure that, as a result,

there is an improved standard of living for all the citizens of the country.

Senate 12, sequence 3, 11.30 a.m.

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: What that implies, Mr. President, is that the resources in the country can either be used totally by the private sector or by the public sector. If that happens one way or the other we are likely to end up with an unbalanced situation, so a choice has to be made between what resources will be left to the private sector and what would be used by the public sector.

I want to stress at this point that wherever they are, there is an obligation on whoever is using them to make sure that there are used efficiently, remembering that the ultimate objective is to carry the country to a higher level of economic development. Therefore, any misuse of them whether in the private sector or in the public sector will have disastrous consequences for the country.

Mr. President, one can assume that had those resources been left in the private sector, which experience has shown is driven to a larger extent by a profit motive than in the public sector, that they would have been used more efficiently. That imposes a level of responsibility on those in the public sector who are entrusted with the use of those resources that cases similar to those mentioned in the recent Auditor-General's Report do not occur. There is no place in that thinking for mismanagement of anything. I hope that those public servants who are listening to me would take that to heart.

Mr. President, the rationale for the diversion of resources from the private sector to the public sector is fairly well-known. There are a number of goods which the private sector has no inclination or desire to produce simply because the nature of them is such that what we call the exclusion principle cannot be applied, that is, the enjoyment is on a collective basis, for example, maintenance of law and order and public safety. Therefore, the private sector is not going to be interested or willing to provide the goods from which it is not going to be able to exact a fair return and those are the goods that normally fall within the jurisdiction of the public sector. Nobody has an issue with that.

Mr. President, there are some other goods which the private sector will provide and does provide where the exclusion principle can be applied. In those cases they would provide those goods to the point where the market dictates, that is, as long as those people who are willing to pay for them do so. Two good examples are education and health, but public policy may require the Government to intervene.

The private sector does provide those goods and will provide those goods because people are willing to pay for them and those who pay will enjoy them, but those persons who are unwilling to pay for it cannot be excluded from enjoying it. Goods like those are of such paramount interest to the development of this country that the Government as a matter of public policy would find it necessary to produce them so that all of its citizens can have access to them.

If we start out on the premise that ultimately we want to make use of all the resources available to the country including the human resources that the country at the end of the day will be better off, we cannot allow a situation to develop where some would have access to health care and to education services but a large mass of the population do not have.

Mr. President, we have to develop all of the skills of our people. Therefore, it should not be a surprise to any of us that even in this document before us, health and education, account for approximately 28 per cent of the expenditure. Government continues to place an emphasis on the provision of health services and education services for all in spite of the spiralling cost of providing those services.

One of the reasons Barbados, a small developing country with very few natural resources, has made the kind of progress it has made is because a good life of education has been made available to all persons in this community. I am sure all of us here would agree with that.

Mr. President, there are other things that the Government would do from time to time as it seeks to develop programmes with three broad objectives in mind, allocation of resources, the efficient allocation of those resources and the distribution of income and wealth. We see that being done in many ways through the tax policy where you have an income tax system that is progressive, that is, you pay according to your ability to pay.

That system also takes into account those at the bottom so that we have in place a tax credit system where a transfer is made to those who are at such a level that they do not yet come into the income tax net. There are also other transfers of various kinds such as pensions and assistance to the poor. It is in that kind of context that those things should be looked at.

Mr. President, successive administrations have acknowledged that when resources are diverted from the economy as a whole and brought into the public sector that there should be managed carefully and efficiently. That is why I think that the systems of accounting and financial management which we have in place have developed the way that it has. The process which we are undertaking today is part of that system where Parliament is given the

opportunity to have a say in how the expenditure takes place and at some point in time to hold persons accountable for how they use those resources.

We have studied the system where we have in place the Financial Administration and Audit Act with its various provisions. We have the Financial Rules and Supply Rules which set out carefully how people should keep their accounts what they should do and what they should not do. Those Rules do not make any provision for any individual to write off amounts as we have seen.

Senate 12 Sequence 4

11.40 a.m.

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, a role is set out in those pieces of legislation for the Ministry of Finance, particularly the Director of Finance and Economic Affairs, in the day-to-day management and enforcement of those Rules.

Mr. President, there is a role for the Auditor-General to conduct financial act and money audits and to make his report to Parliament. There is also a role for the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. President, all of these checks and balances were developed over time so as to ensure that there is some order in the financial affairs of the country. It has been my experience that it has served us well.

Mr. President, that is not to say that there have not been abuses over time because wherever there are human beings, some of them would become creative in carrying out their business. That is why it is always necessary for reforms to take place and for systems to be updated.

Mr. President, back in 1996, the Ministry of Finance, with the assistance from the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), started the implementation of what was called a Tax Administration and Expenditure Management Project. I say that the results have helped us tremendously, not because I was involved in the exercise but because the evidence is there.

Mr. President, under the tax administration side, the emphasis was first placed on three major revenue collecting departments which are the Inland Revenue, the Land Tax and the Custom and Excise Departments.

Sir, systems, procedures and processes were all improved at the Inland Revenue and the Land Tax Departments. Staff were trained, the technology required to do the job was introduced and the existing technology was

upgraded. We all know the result of that exercise at those two departments today because those two departments are functioning more efficiently than they did in 1996.

Mr. President, the work which was being carried a step further at the Customs and Excise Department had to do with the Acecuder Project which dealt with the upgrading of their computer system. That has served us well but, like all other things, the time has now come for the exercise to be taken to the next stage. In fact, work is now in progress where the department is being upgraded from the Acecuder Project to Acecuder Plus Plus.

Sir, the benefits that will accrue from that software is that when that exercise is completed, those importers who are linked to the system would be able to have their documents processed and payments made without having to visit the Customs Department. This is something that was in progress for some time and I am happy to say that it is reaching fruition.

Mr. President, with the indulgence of this Honourable Chamber, I take some time off to mention a number of these things because I hear persons on programmes and elsewhere, whose concept of reform is a fairly narrow one, saying that there was no Public Sector Reform, if I may use the words of someone who has described the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals as a real budget and to say that this is real reform.

Mr. President, those persons who have to deal with the Customs and Excise Department would know that they have to take their warrants to the Department, put them into an "In Box", and an officer then checks them. If that officer finds that the warrant was not completed properly, he or she puts it into the "Out Box", and at the end of the day when that person returns for his or her warrant, he or she would discover that the document has not been processed because of its incompleteness. Therefore, that person would have to furnish the Department with new information again, which could sometimes take a number of days, if not weeks. Furthermore, when the application is completed, the person then would make the payment.

Mr. President, let us, therefore, think of how it is now being done when information is submitted. Sir, having created an appropriate bank account, having given Customs the authority, payment is made through the bank, then the goods can be cleared by Customs. That is a significant improvement which is part of the facilitation of trade.

Mr. Speaker, it will go further. In the World Trade Organisation (WTO) at this moment, there is ongoing discussion since 1996 when it was first raised at Singapore. There is a discussion of a proposed implementation of a multilateral trade facilitation agreement. When one looks at the number of proposals being made, one will discover that

only those jurisdictions which have a high degree of Information Technology, good audit standards, et cetera, will be able to agree to some of those proposals. While I am not saying that Barbados would or would not agree, it is anybody's guess and determination when the time comes.

Mr. President, as happened in the case of the Kyoto Convention, even though Barbados was not a signatory to it, in the interest of facilitating trade, we saw it as a wise thing to do, that is, to agree to implement the various provisions and to improve our operations. Therefore, without being a member of any agreement, my view is that we should strive to have a non-binding agreement, so that one could choose what aspects one would wish to sign onto, or choose what aspects one would want to implement, as we did with the Kyoto Convention.

Sir, even though we were not obliged to do so, we implemented all of the provisions because they made good sense so to do, but this additional piece of software would put Customs in that position. Even if we do not sign onto the agreement, in the interest of running our affairs properly, we would still be able to collect the various bits and pieces of information that we would need to do our shipment audits, et cetera.

Mr. President, that is an exercise which is now being put into effect by the Government to improve the functioning of the Public Sector, namely in the case of the Customs and Excise Department. The Inland Revenue Department is going a step further to the point where shortly, persons would be able to file electronically.

Mr. President, within the Ministry of Finance, there is a movement toward multi-year budgeting. The document before us focusses on the cost of the transactions which would take place during the fiscal year 2004-2005 but included in this document would be projects which would have an implementation life of more than six years but all one sees now would be the cost of next year. The Ministry of Finance, over the years, has improved the document before us, to place greater focus on the programme.

Senate No.12 (5)

11.50 a.m.

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: When I first joined the Ministry in 1973, the document we used then was a shell compared with this because the thinking was not advanced and the focus was on a few line items but, over the years, work has been done to develop it.

Sir, in future we will have a document that will address the implications that will result from today's

expenditure, that is, if you put in an amount for Project A which is going to have a life of five years, you will show the cost over subsequent years so that you would be aware of what you are committing yourself to. Also, once the implementation is completed, you will then have to deal with the issue of the recurring cost.

Mr. President, the Data Processing Department is developing what they call a portal and in due course will be making more information available and accessible to the public.

Finally, in terms of the reforms that have to do with the fiscal management of the country, the Treasury will be moving towards another stage. Under the Tax Administration and Expenditure Management Project started in 1996, the emphasis at the Treasury at the time was training of staff, developing the physical infrastructure and also the implementation of the project call SmartStream which has to do with the management of the accounts of the respective spending agencies and bringing greater control from the point of view of the Treasury.

Mr. President, if you study how our financial system has developed, you will discover that as we get more and more prosperous and get involved in an increasing number of activities, it becomes more critical for us to put in place systems to ensure that persons carry out their functions properly.

Sir, SmartStream has now settled down. There were some teething problems at first and those who were opposed to changing the system have now settled down to using it. Sir, the Treasury is now getting ready to move to another stage.

Mr. President, the present accounting system which we have in place is a cash system, that is, if today Department A issues a local payment order to firm up Barbados to purchase a book at the cost of \$100, department A will make an entry in its workbook in the column called "Commitments". When the payment is made in six weeks' time, an entry is made in the Expenditure column and the Commitment column is changed appropriately. Sir, the same thing has to be done with revenue coming in.

The change that is about to be made is that of moving from the cash basis accounting system to an accrual system where when the transaction takes place, it is brought to account and if you have not paid for the item it is reflected as a payable. If the individual who owes you has not paid the same day, it is reflected as a receivable.

Mr. Chairman, I have said earlier that change takes place over time and my caution to those who use the system is that it imposes a greater obligation on their part

to manage the cash position of the Government lest we end up with huge receivables and bills. If this happens in a private company, the company would be cash-starved and would not live to see the day when it collects that money.

Sir, in my view, persons using the system have to be cautioned against large sums they owe people to be reflected in payables and large sums of receivables without collecting the money. They should not take comfort in the fact that it is documented only and you end up with huge payables and receivables.

Sir, we already have a high degree of arrears due to the Government. You will see from the Estimates before us that it is the Government's intention this year to finance part of their expenditure by collecting some of those arrears. I will never approve any Government department owing persons in the private sector and elsewhere and not paying their bills on time.

Sir, those are some of the reforms which are about to take place during the coming year that seek to improve the financial management of the country.

Mr. President, the Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue for the last fiscal year when presented to Parliament showed a deficit of \$570.1 million or 10.6 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product.

S12/12:00

Sequence 6

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: Simply taken on the basis of the records kept by the Accountant General that is straightforward expenditure minus revenue deficit.

However, when some adjustments were made, as is the norm on the basis of the approach taken by the international financial institutions, and you net out the amortisation on the basis that you treat it as a financial item, because you get inflows as well, you net out the amortisation from the current expenditure and then net out the commercial operation expenditure of the commercial entities, for example, the Printery. If you end up with a surplus, you add it to your revenue and if you end up with a deficit you add it to the expenditure. Sir, when you do that, you end up with a deficit at that time of \$258.6 million or 4.6 per cent of GDP.

Sir, when these Estimates are presented to Parliament, there are certain circumstances that are involved at that point in time. We will recall that when I was indicating the broad objectives, which are always kept in mind, I said that depending on the prevailing

circumstances, one objective may have been given more emphasis than the other. As the circumstances change, naturally, the emphasis on the various objectives. The Estimates were presented then with that picture.

This Administration has always taken that as part of its effort to manage the affairs of this country, seeking at all times to keep the size of the deficit in the vicinity of 2.5 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product. However, if the Government has to keep those objectives in mind and to implement policies to bring about changes to those that are taking place in the economy, depending on the circumstances, after September 11th when we had those unfortunate events and our tourism business sector was affected and other international events were taking place which led to a downturn in the economic performance of the country, Government found it necessary to focus more on the stabilisation function, to which I would have referred to earlier. Sir, that is why I made the point that if we keep these things in mind, these numbers will make more sense to us because they are there for a reason.

The Government has to intervene and place more emphasis on stabilisation by putting additional funds at the disposal of the tourism sector and increasing its spending to take up the slack that would have resulted by a slow down of private sector spending to prevent the economy from going into a broader recession.

Sir, when money is put into an economy, there is something called a multiplier of things. If you spend one dollar, that one dollar gives rise to twenty-five cents more activity depending on what is the situation of people's preferences and consumer habits.

The tax structure is made up in such a way that it has within certain built-in stabilisers and they go to work the same way that your body goes to work when a virus hits it. The organs get together and start taking action to defend it. Therefore, if you look at the income tax system and the transfers you will see what I am talking about. Government had to get involved to prevent the economy from reaching the point that we were at some years ago and to which we will not want to return.

I am very pleased to say that the policy worked. I will leave Senator Grant and others to speak about the significant improvements that have taken place in the tourism sector. My effort here is on the fiscal situation. Sir, that is why the Government has been able to achieve its objective and having achieved that objective, they switched the emphasis from stabilisation to another area and the deficit has been restrictive for the fiscal year to 2.6 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product. That is a significant achievement and that reinforces my point. Sir, there is no guess work here.

Sir, persons in the administration are not in charge of the world. However, they take appropriate action and you leave the rest to the Almighty. If you do what the Almighty has given you the ability to do, you will get the results.

The out-turn, based on what has transpired up to the end of January, the Estimates for February and March, the out-turn that is being projected is a deficit of 2.6 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product on the international financial institution basis, and that is within the realm that the Government said is a manageable deficit.

The Estimates which are now before us speak of revenue of \$1,940.7 million, expenditure of \$172.7 million, that is without those amendments to which I referred earlier, and a net lining of \$257.1 million and a deficit of 2.7 per cent of Gross Domestic Product on the basis of the international institution. Sir, what is being presented is far better a position than the last financial year.

Mr. President, except there are some unfortunate circumstances overtaking us during the coming year.

12.10 p.m.

Sequence 7

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: I am sure that at the end of the next fiscal year, the deficit will be well close to \$2.5 if not less, depending on the circumstances, because one never knows.

Sir, what is also important, having stabilised the economy by its increased spending, and running a higher deficit than it would normally have done early in this fiscal year, the economy has now returned to a path of growth. We are confident that this growth will be sustained into the foreseeable future.

Therefore, in the next fiscal year, 2004 - 2005, the Government is projecting a real GDP growth of 3.1 per cent. All of us know what we mean when we say, "real". There is the nominal growth, when you take into account the inflation, and then you end up with the real growth. The real growth of 3.1 per cent, which we believe is a sustainable figure over a prolonged period of time, so the economy is on its way forward, after the Government having exercised the use of the stabilisation functions.

Inflation for the next year, is projected at 1.9 per cent. As you know, today our foreign exchange reserves stand at a level than many ever contemplated in this country. I recall the days well, when we were at \$11 million. The hardest time that I ever worked in my life was during those days.

Mr. President, gone are the days when every day you have to call the Accountant-General. I had to do it and say to hold this, release that one. I had to call the Inland Revenue Department, to ask how much are you collecting today? Pay it in by 2.00 p.m. I also had to call the Land Tax Department, to ask how much they were getting in that day, and the Court Department, to tell them to take \$1 million in Treasury Bills, and so on.

It is so much easier now to manage the affairs of the country, and I wish I had that opportunity but that is how life is. I believe that the hard work of those days has paid off. We can now speak with comfort about planning the affairs of this country and still having 35 weeks of coverage on imports. We have more than 35 weeks now and what we are here saying is that we will carry the country forward and still have a minimum coverage of 35 weeks.

I had longed to see this day that we would be able to allow the country to develop and not having to get into this stop and start mode. You know how it is with engines. When you start up the engine and then you have to stop it and then you have to start it up again, in the end, you use more fuel than if you are able to run smoothly over a long period of time.

I could never believe that it was in our best interest to have every now and again to slow down the economy, because the foreign reserves were under pressure. I always spoke about the need to get us to the position where we would be able to allow the economy to develop, over a prolonged period of time, but we needed to put ourselves in this position. We are in it now and we are here developing a set of proposals for the next fiscal year on the premise that we will have, as minimum, coverage for 35 weeks of imports. Of course, here again, much of the growth is expected to come from the tourism sector.

During the coming fiscal year, the Government also proposes to make a greater effort to collect some of the arrears which are due, as part of the financing of the Budget. As I said earlier, we will keep the deficit within that target range. It means, however, that a number of the state enterprises expenditure has been capped. They will have to operate more efficiently, and try to recover their user fees, at least the cost of providing the service. This is not a bad thing because this will force them to operate efficiently.

Mr. President, before I move from this broad picture though, and get to that part of the exercise about which I am very excited, and that is the subject of agriculture, there are a few more things I need to say. Sir, every now and again there is a big discussion about borrowings. Mr. President, the Government raises the bulk of its revenue through taxation. Added to that, it gets money from fees

and fines. Unless it is a very rich Government, sometimes it has to cover a gap through borrowing.

Let me say though, quickly, that these Estimates of Revenue are prepared on the basis of those tax changes to the income tax system, corporation tax, personal income tax, the land tax system and other changes that the Minister of Finance announced, during the last year are in effect, so all of that is taken into account.

Therefore, the Government from time to time has to engage in borrowing. There is nothing wrong with a Government borrowing, in the same way that there is nothing wrong, statistically, with an individual borrowing. The question is how much is the borrowing and what is the purpose of the borrowing.

If you borrow as an individual to keep a party, then you are likely to have some difficulty when repayment time comes, but if you borrow as an individual to purchase an asset that will help you to repay the loan, that is perfect business, good business also. It is the same with the Government. As I said, there is nothing wrong with a Government borrowing. The question then is what is the purpose of the borrowing.

Mr. President, the Government borrows in a number of ways - the foreign market, the international market, the capital market, the Inter-American Development Bank, and locally from citizens in various forms, such as treasury bills, debentures and other instruments.

At the present moment, as indicated by the Minister of Finance quite recently, the total debt of Barbados now stands at about 74 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). As an administration, we feel that a figure of 60 per cent is what we would want to aim for, but remember that earlier I said that from time to time the Government has to get involved and to take measures, depending on the prevailing circumstances, which will cause it to put more emphasis on one of those objectives than the other. When the Government borrowed that money some time ago, as an additional cover for the foreign reserves and so on, that was considered necessary at the point in time.

Senate 12, sequence 8, 12.20 p.m.

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: The intended action, as has been clearly stated, is not to borrow on the capital market this year, and these Estimates are predicated on that assumption. The intention over a period of time is to bring the debt as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product down to somewhere in the region of 60 per cent.

Mr. President, the other matter that has to be looked at is the servicing of the debt and whether that is a burden. Even with the total debt being a fairly high percentage of the Gross Domestic Product, the servicing of the debt poses no problem for Barbados. It was therefore no surprise to me when a few days ago the institutional investor was able to make a statement and said what we have been saying all along.

I said it in this Chamber not so long ago that there was no issue with our debt management and a few days ago the Institutional Investor said that out loud and clear. I know that a lot of people who previously held up the Institutional Investor and spoke glowingly about it will probably now say do not mind them, but they have said it.

Standard and Poor's has said it as well because if you do the analysis of the Standard and Poor's document you would discover that Barbados still has an investment grade rating. In one instance we move from an A minus to an A minus plus. Those fine things, Mr. President, you have to work out, but Barbados still has an investment rating. When Standard and Poor's sees the 2.6 per cent deficit as opposed to what they were contemplating before, I know them well. They will change their views because they are professionals and they go by the facts.

Mr. President, say what you like, Barbados has always had a tradition of good management. There were little squirts here and there...

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: I will leave the years to the historians. However, on the capital market people have always felt confident about dealing with Barbados and, therefore, they were always surprised sometimes when we got ourselves into difficulties. Just like how that group that is constantly getting itself into difficulty now and has a number of West Indians surprised and wondering how could people who looked so strong on paper are doing so little. What they do not recognise is that mediocrity sometimes shines and causes you to feel that it is a genius, so if you are not careful you would take it for a genius, and therefore that is why they might be surprised.

Mr. President, I was not surprised that a few days ago the Institutional Investor moved Barbados from number 46 out of 172 countries to number 45. Even at number 46, the only CARICOM country that is ahead of Barbados is The Bahamas.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: I am wondering why I am so grudgingly speaking about it. I am told it is at number 43, which is even better.

That is a recognition of good management of the debt situation which is also part of the stabilization function. I thought I should mention that so that persons do not get any wrong impression. We in this Administration are cognisant of the fact that we need to keep the deficit and the debt at a reasonable level and that is how this Administration intends to proceed in the coming year.

Mr. President, if you look at the Estimates, you would discover that the major items of spending for 2004-2005 are as follows. The work on the Grantley Adams International Airport Project will continue and there is a sum of \$16.2 million for that; a sum of \$3.8 million is provided for the Inter-American Development Bank Justice Improvement Project; \$10 million is provided for the coastal infrastructural programme; \$6.3 million is provided for the road rehabilitation programme by the Ministry of Public Works and Transport and \$30.2 million is provided for the EduTech Programme.

Mr. President, I need to pause here for a minute. If we accept that it is in the country's interest to have all of our citizens gaining access to education of one sort or another so that their innate skills can be brought to the fore and they can help to carry this country forward, I therefore find it a little difficult to understand how in this information age when everybody knows that a country that has its citizens prepared in a manner that would enable them to use the technology is the country that is going to take the lead, how then could people speak out against the EduTech Programme which is designed to do just that and to make sure that all of our children, not only those who are able to pay - remember I spoke about the exclusion principle - will have access to the technology. I am now struggling to make use of it because in my time it was not available, but all of our children should have access to it.

In addition to that, there is a programme which is implemented by the Ministry of Social Transformation which deals with setting up resource centres in the communities which need to be regarded in a serious way because it is trying to bring the technology to those people who are not children now and who did not have the opportunity to use the technology at school and who do not have the wherewithal to buy the computers either that they could go to those centres and make use of the technology.

We have to prepare all of our people in this age when the international environment is changing in such a way that you have to make use of the knowledge of your people.

Mr. President, \$11 million is provided to deal with the issue of HIVAIDS - I know Senator Williams will deal with that - and \$50 million is provided for the University. I am sure that other sums were voted for that not so long ago. There is a provision of \$55.4 million for the Barbados

Tourism Authority. There is a provision for the homeless under the Ministry of Social Transformation and then you have a sum under the Ministry of Commerce to do with the development of disadvantaged small businesses, which is a very important exercise. The Minister will speak on that, and a sum of \$400 000 for the planning of the University College of Barbados.

There is a provision of \$3.5 million for the continuation of the West Coast Sewerage Project and \$1 million for the Ministry of Public Works and Transport under the Tenant's Road Programme. This Administration has promised the people in its Manifesto that by the end of the decade every community in Barbados would have a paved road.

Senate 12 Sequence 9

12.30 p.m.

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, we in the Rural Development Commission, in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Works, did a survey recently of the unpaved access areas across Barbados. Our information is that there are in the vicinity of 684 access roads.

Mr. President, the strategy which the Government intends to use is that the Ministry of Public Works, the Rural Development Commission and the Urban Development Commission, will work together to make sure that every community in Barbados has a paved road by the end of the decade. Sir, being the person responsible for this development, I would like to see it happening in my watch, and that does not go as far as another decade!

Mr. President, this is an important programme which, in the coming year, Government will be pushing forward. Work will continue on the West Coast Sewerage Project and thereto from the point of view of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. We have a vested interest.

Mr. President, it might sound a bit parochial but we see tertiary treatment from the outflows of the sewerage systems as one way of helping to provide water for agriculture. There is \$100 000 for the Secretariat of the Social Partnership. This gives us some idea of the major areas of activity.

Mr. President, I could not have allowed this occasion to pass without speaking in some detail about the agricultural sector. Unlike a number of persons in this community who have the strange view, and I say strange because it is not supported by any evidence, it is the view

held by a number of persons who have had some form of association with the sector in the past, who now try to pour cold water on every initiative they hear about by saying that they have heard it a number of years ago. Sir, that might be true, but my question to them would be: "Why did they not do it?"

Mr. President, I have no problem with persons making such statements. However, my job is not to help find them topics to groan and moan about. It is to fix the challenges of the sector.

Mr. President, there are some very exciting things happening in agriculture, and those persons who are familiar with the sector would say that. Sir, it is known that over the past three years, that Barbados has failed to meet its sugar quota to the European Union (EU) and there are many reasons for that. All of us know the reasons, including the fact that a great part of the land that has previously been agriculture was removed because there were other activities competing for the use of that land, namely housing and tourism.

Mr. President, I do not think it is going to be possible for us to get back to the level where we used to produce 50 000 tonnes but that does not mean that there is no hope for the sector. We in the Ministry of Agriculture, in consultation with those persons in agriculture, have over the past two months, been having useful discussions about the way forward. We have met with all of the stakeholders in the sub-sectors and they have, as a consequence of those discussions, submitted to us their plans to move their respective sub-sectors forward. They have identified the number of areas they would like us to help them with in moving forward.

Mr. President, we are studying those plans because the idea is that at the end of the exercise, all of us who are related to the sector will be speaking to the same plans, so that there would be no misunderstanding.

Mr. President, the last group I have to meet with, which I will do next week, would be the sugar producers. Sir, I have kept them to the last because I was awaiting the results of certain pieces of work that were taking place. On Friday, after a presentation in the office, I visited the Sugar Cane Breeding Station at Groves, St. George, where I toured the fields and had a look at some of the varieties of canes that are growing there, particularly the ones that are part of the impending fuel cane project.

Mr. President, our sugar industry is under threat, not only from activities taking place in Barbados but from developments that are occurring in the international community. As you know, we now sell our sugar in bulk to the European Union (EU) under a sugar protocol. That is under threat. Sir, some time ago the European Union (EU)

entered into an agreement with the less developed countries, commonly referred to the “everything but alms,” which gave them market access to the European Union (EU) market on a duty free basis. Sir, a number of those countries produce sugar on a larger scale than us.

Mr. President, that Protocol is about to expire at the end of 2007-2008, and we are currently in discussion with the European Union (EU) about a successor agreement, referred to as a “partnership agreement”. In the World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations on agriculture discussions are taking place on the reduction of tariffs on agricultural products.

In the discussions on market access for non agricultural products, discussions are taking place on the reduction of industrial tariffs as well. Therefore, in both ways, Barbados as a country is going to be affected from the point of view of losing revenue from import duties and from agriculture.

Sir, what that means is that even if the European Union (EU) had not entered the European Basic Agreement (EBA) arrangement, if the tariffs were brought to zero, the preferential arrangements would have had no value. If there is duty-free access when there are tariffs to third parties and all tariffs are removed, then one is at the same level as the third party.

Senate No.12 (10)12.40 p.m.

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: Whatever happens, there is going to be some implication on the negative side. Therefore, cognisant of that, over the years we have taken certain steps and are now at the point where we are about to restructure the industry. There are some interesting prospects and that is why I kept my meeting with the Sugar Producers until last because I wanted to give them the latest news.

When I toured the station at Groves on Friday, I had a presentation on one of the projects which deals with fuel cane. We looked at the numbers in terms of production cost, the yield per acres and so on and I want to tell you that it is a promising project. There are some good varieties and from the trials undertaken so far they will continue to plant at Golden Ridge, Warleigh and Groves because the researchers want to see how the varieties would react under different types of soil, and the growth has been good.

Sir, we will work on this project swiftly and the objective behind it is to use those varieties selected eventually to generate electricity. Discussions are taking place with the producers of electricity, Barbados Light and

Power, because the project is expected to make a difference.

Also, in the case of fuel cane, juice will be extracted during the process and from that we will be able to make such items as molasses or syrup. We are not only looking at fuel cane, we are also looking at other things.

Last Wednesday, I had discussions with Mr. Tilby, a gentlemen who developed the technology that was used at Uplands some years ago. He toured Groves with us and we had a long discussion on the way forward for the sugar cane industry. The intention is to have small separation plant on a trial basis operating in Barbados during the 2005 crop. Here again we are talking about separating the juice from the biomass and a number of downstream activities could result.

The gentleman is also interested in putting his pocket behind his technology. We are working on the details and, in due course, all of it will be made known. Sir, we have done more than that in terms of restructuring the sugar industry. For some time we have been having discussions with Professor Hollingsworth at Michigan State University. Last week, we had a conference call with him and the next step is to send a team to the University to start talking with him about a Memorandum of Understanding and the way forward.

I am sure that Honourable Members appreciate that I cannot tell you the details because we are talking here about intellectual property issues and if I speak too quickly, someone else will pick up the idea and run with it.

Sir, we are looking at all these things and some of them are bound to emerge as feasible opportunities. I have approached CFTC, the arm of the Commonwealth Secretariat that provides technical assistance to provide assistance to us to do some feasibility studies on some of the projects. As happened in the case of cotton, we in the Ministry are doing the developmental work and once the feasibility of these investment opportunities are established, we will give the information to the private sector and let them run with the project.

Sir, cotton is another project I am excited about. The development work was done at the expense of the Ministry and we have been given a pledge by the Minister of Finance in his Economic Statement that the research will continue so that they can get themselves on a better footing.

Sir, the crop that was just harvested, although only 200 acres were cultivated, the yield has been better in many instances. There are still too many cases where people are below the average and in a few weeks, the Ministry will be arranging a meeting with the Cotton Growers and others to

speak about the measures that will be taken in time for the coming crop where we intend to move from 200 acres to 800 acres.

This morning I spoke to a large land owner who was talking about taking his plantation out of agriculture but he announced to me that he was given instructions to put a few acres in cotton and the plan is that in January we will be reaping 800 acres.

Sir, if we get the average yield per acre up to 1 500, it would be a marvellous thing. At present, some plantations get close to 2 000 but many persons are below the 1 500 yield per acre. Sir, research is still being done in the Ministry and ultimately the plan is to go up to 4 000 yield per acre but we are doing this gradually.

Sir, we are using the WISICO trademark and this company will purchase the cotton from all the countries and then market the product. The intention is that the companies will not sell cotton to persons as was done in the past but they will own the cotton and take it to the final stage of manufacture of the garment.

They have had discussions during the last two weeks with a potential joint-venture partner who has been involved in that field for years.

12.50 p.m.

Sequence 11

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: That is a plus for non sugar agriculture to add to the restructured sugar industry from which we expect great things.

Sir, if that was all, that would have been a great yield but there is more. We have a tremendous opportunity for the export of hot peppers to Canada. The Ministry, through the Agriculture Development Fund has now created a fund to make money available to the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation so that when farmers export to Canada, they will be paid. Previously, the farmers brought their produce to the person that was co-ordinating it and they did not get their money on time. Some of the farmers told me so last year when we had consultations with the farming community across Barbados.

Over the coming months, the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation will be making sure that those farmers who want to get into the export market can do so with assistance from the Government.

In fact, during the last week, with the assistance from ECA, 15 farmers, along with a Senior Extension Officer from the Ministry and an officer from the Industrial Development Corporation went to Dominica to look at a Green House hydroponic project. We believe that one of the ways through the farming community can deal with competition is to make greater use of the latest technology. I am sure that coming out of that visit there would be some benefit.

Mr. President, I met with the food crop producers and they have given me their thoughts on how they can carry the sub-sector forward and the problems they now encounter. We think that part of the answer is to have a processing facility functioning well. A few weeks ago, I was very pleased when I had a discussion with a group of persons who brought me two processing projects that they want to start. They have our blessing. Sir, we are going to be working with them to move that food processing project forward as well. Sir, none of them is in food crop production.

We understand the problems that the farmers encounter in importing produce. The simple approach that some people take is that they say to ban the imports. While they say to ban the imports, they are hoping somehow to export their produce to somebody else, including some of the people that they want us to ban the imports from. If those exporters adopt the same attitude, what do you think would happen? It is not simply to say to ban imports.

We think that part of the answer is to create the facility so that the farmer can get rid of his produce and that value can be added to that produce by somebody else, not necessarily the farmer. The farmer is to farm and be able to sell his produce at a reasonable price. We think that this is where the processing facility will make the big difference.

The Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation is being restructured to deal with the processing aspect and to work with the farmers. They are already working with the Land for the Landless Programme. They are dealing with the irrigation for the farmers and they are giving them some funds to purchase equipment to deal with irrigation.

Sir, the Land for the Landless Scheme which we see as part of the effort to boost the production - before I speak on that I should say that beside the hot peppers, there are other products that are very profitable. For example, onions are a very profitable crop at this time. However, part of the problem now is, that we grow them for only a certain time of the year because of the ability of the variety to survive later in the year.

The Ministry has been doing a lot of work and they have done some trials on cultivars. They have established that there are some varieties which we can use to grow onions all year round. Recently I had a visit from a farmer who told me that he was very pleased about the cotton which was grown on his farm. He said to me, "cotton, hot peppers and onions, I feel okay."

We also feel that way so we have done the work on testing the varieties of onions that can grow all year round. It means that we would plant variety "A" at the beginning of the year and variety "B" later in the year. This is a project that the Ministry is excited about.

Sir, we have hot peppers, onions and root crops. At the moment we have a problem with sweet potatoes. There is a virus that is attacking the sweet potatoes and it seems to be doing so particularly on the St. Philip farms and I do now know why. We have taken samples of them and sent to the Potato Institute in Peru to help us identify the virus. Sir, we have a close association with this Institute. In addition, we are also talking to them about having access to some clean planting material and other things that may be resistant to this particular strain of virus.

Sir, for those of you who like chips, Senator Chandler will tell you that there is a variety of sweet potato, which was done in the Ministry, that can be used to make chips and you would not know the difference between sweet potato and white potato. We have a number of root crops that have been promoted.

We have come up with a plan for the sheep producers to set out how they intend to move forward to meet the huge domestic demand that now exists. At the moment, supermarkets require on a weekly basis 120 carcasses. There are several hotels that require just as many and the total industry is producing only 60 carcasses a week. Therefore, you can understand that there is an opportunity for them to produce more. We are working with them and we have developed a plan to do a number of things, including artificial insemination. We are trying to get them up to the point where they can make a dent on the huge gap that is there in a relatively short space of time.

Mr. President, we have done the same thing with the pig industry. Recently, a baseline study was done by the Ministry and we now have the results of that study. A business plan is now being developed in consultation with the stakeholders. The work that is being done is a joint approach, the Ministry and the private sector for example HiPack, A-One Supermarket, the Pig Farmers' Association and the Barbados Agriculture Society. The business plan that is being developed contemplates an expansion in food production to the point where more local pork will be used in processing a product for domestic and regional export.

1.00 p.m.

Sequence 12

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: So we have a plan of action to carry that sub-sector forward.

We have a similar approach to the goat industry. Work is going on between the producers and the Ministry on that, and we have a plan from them.

The poultry industry has also given us their plan and you know that the poultry industry in this country is very well organised. It is probably the most sensitive of the sub-sectors we have to deal with, and in that context, the Government will continue to keep in place the revenue which we now have, to give them a certain degree of protection against cheaper imported poultry products. They are moving forward and we are working with them.

Recently, we had a scare with the development of Asian flu in the United States, from which we purchase our hatching eggs for the industry. I met with the members of the industry to discuss specific measure they would put in place at their respective farms to make sure that everything is done at a certain standard.

The Government has agreed to firstly make Asian flu a notifiable disease. At the moment it is not, and the Government has agreed that the legislation will be amended to do that, and the work is being done by the Attorney-General's Chambers now to make it a notifiable disease, so that in the event that it gets into Barbados, no one will hide it. We are taking measures to prevent it from getting here.

We have put a ban on imports of chicken products from those parts of the United States and Canada, where the flu is presently in existence. It is not in existence in the State where we order from. We have been taking the hatching egg from Georgia, but we are watching that situation.

We also have to seek and obtain approval for legislation to be put in place to deal with the illegal importation of exotic birds. There are a number of persons importing into Barbados these exotic birds illegally. They are hiding them away in rolls of toilet paper. They think they are tricking the quarantine officers at the Airport. Then they bring them to Barbados undetected and unchecked and that is a possible threat to the local poultry industry, so we are putting stiffer penalties in place to deal with those cases, if we catch them.

Sir, I also have to speak about the problems that have been brought into Barbados by travellers hiding planting material in their suitcases and feeling smart that they have tricked the Customs and are beating the quarantine system. Then they let loose various diseases and pests on the farming community. Sir, not only the farming community. Some of them eat anything.

The giant African snail was not brought in that way. We suspect that it came in attached to a container but that loves the hibiscus. It loves sweet potato as well as the slip, so it will eat anything. We are now spending money trying to deal with pests that individuals brought in by hiding away planting material, so we have to deal with that because we have to protect the agricultural community from these people who are not thinking about the consequences of their actions.

Mr. President, in addition to the earlier sub-sectors, we have been meeting with the 4H Movement. We in the Ministry believe that youth have to be brought on board in our drive to carry the agricultural sector to a higher level. I had meetings with the members of the Leaders' Council and with the Foundation and we have assigned a senior officer in the Ministry to deal with the 4H and the schools.

We feel that the young people in the schools, especially those schools where they have agricultural programmes, have to be brought up-to-date on the latest technology so that they will be experts at using the technology. We believe this is the way forward and we have an officer dealing with the greater use of the technology.

Sir, we have in place a scheme through which students at the BBC and SJPP are attached to the Ministry, to the workshop if they are doing engineering, to the extension officer if they are in that area where they go out, and as announced by the Minister responsible for Economic Affairs in November, we are now putting the mentoring programme in place, where we are making arrangements for them to be attached to farms that are managed on a best practice basis, so that they will be learning the techniques of farming on the job. As you know, benchmarking is one of the things we are putting in place to help people lift their standards.

Added to all of those, Mr. President, we are dealing with issues such as agricultural health. As you know, under the Sanitary and Phyto-sanitary Agreements of the WTO, it is the Ministry of Agriculture that has responsibility for ensuring that Barbados reaches its obligation when it comes to plant health and animal health. We are not talking about the things that concern the Ministry of Health. Under the SPS Agreement, it is the Ministry of Agriculture that has the responsibility for agricultural health, plant health and animal health.

At present, we are working on a number of pieces of legislation which will soon be coming to Parliament. Several of them are already in draft, some to do with the slaughterhouses, red meat, white meat, veterinary drugs, markets administration, fish quality inspection and the establishment of a national agricultural health and food safety authority. The ultimate body of that will do the certification in relation to the export of our agricultural produce.

Sir, as many of you may know, the Sanitary and Phyto-sanitary Standards which the European Union has set, Barbados is not one of those countries which is on the list that can export without hindrance agricultural produce, including fish, to the EU. We want to be on that list and, therefore, over the last weeks, through our Mission in Brussels, we have signalled to the EU that we want to be on that list. We now have the questionnaires to answer, which is the first part of the process.

On Friday, I met with all of the persons in the Ministry and persons from the Vet offices and the Fisheries Department to work out how we are going to approach this matter. The legislation about which I spoke, is part of the solution. We are working on that and, hopefully, in the not too distant future, Barbados will be on that list so that we can export our fish and so on, to the EU. We are also on the way to dealing with the problems to do with the margarine, which I am sure Senator Fields knows about.

Mr. President, when I met with a farmer on Friday, he said to me, "You have a Ministry that is so vast," and I am now finding that to be the case. The truth about it is that I could speak the whole day about agriculture, because, as I told a farmer this morning who visited me before I came here,

Senate 12 sequence 13, 1.10 p.m.

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: I am excited about it and I know that the farming community is just as excited or even more excited than I am. I have seen signs of a renewed interest in agriculture. I know also that we together are going to disappoint a lot of persons who are eager to proclaim agriculture dead, but who would discover that it is very much alive. I am sure they will be disappointed because they do not wish to see it alive.

As I said, we are working on the establishment of the agriculture health and food safety.

As far as the fishing industry is concerned, we have had similar meetings with them and we have discussed with them issues such as product development. We did the same thing in relation to the poultry industry. In fact, in all

of the subsectors we are emphasising that one of the ways to deal with the competition is to talk about product development, new products and new ways of dealing with the same material and so on. The fishing industry within that context has put forward their proposals how they can move forward and the kinds of things they would want to see done and so on. The same way that the boat owners have difficulties in obtaining insurance, the same way the crop producers have problems when their crops get damaged, the fishing industry has some problems and we are trying to deal with them.

We in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development have looked at a number of schemes that exist elsewhere and we are working on helping them to put in place schemes that will allow them to get coverage in the unlikely event they suffer damages.

As far as the fishing industry is concerned, there are two things I wish to mention now. When I met with those persons who do long line fishing, that is, those who go out and catch tuna and so on, they raised with me certain concerns. The issue of fish quality legislation and other pieces of legislation that we have discussed with them will cover some of their concerns.

One of the concerns they raised with me was the situation that exists now at the Fisheries Complex at the landing site. A few weeks ago the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development was able to obtain a supplementary from Parliament to deal with that problem because while there was an overall plan in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development for the redevelopment of that Complex, I decided to take out that component and put that as phase one.

The contract has been awarded and the construction of the steel frame is going on now, so very shortly that problem will be fixed at the landing site and the area would be nicely paved. It would then become a restrictive area to those who work with the fish and not a thoroughfare where everybody would be passing in and out.

A few weeks ago we also obtained another supplementary to deal with the roof at the Oistins Fishing Complex. The tendering process has been completed and we will shortly be awarding the contract. Unfortunately, we will not be able to spend all of the money provided through the supplementary by March 31, but with the assistance of the Minister of Finance, we are able to get a move in the House to cover the remainder of the work.

Vending: Mr. President, I met with the Vendors' Association. There are some vendors who currently sell at the back here in Palmetto Square and in the Estimates before us we have a provision to deal with the renovation of the old Griffith Reliance Pharmacy Building to house

them. We have worked out that with them already and that work is going to proceed in the coming fiscal year.

We are also going to move ahead with the construction of vending facilities at Redman's Village and at Bathsheba. There is a little hiccup at Bathsheba that has something to do with a particular site and the historical relevance to the site and so on, but we will deal with that.

Mr. President, apart from those, we will be creating in the coming year a number of outdoor sites across Barbados, the first of which will be established at Spring Garden. With the assistance of the Barbados Port Authority, we went there and identified some land for a number of large vendors. These are vendors who wholesale and formal vendors.

We do not believe it is proper to house those same vendors in the facility where the retailers are vending because they would do great damage to the retailers if the wholesalers and retailers are selling at the same site. In consultation with them, we agreed that we would allow them to vend on open sites where we would pave the area and put in water and toilet facilities. We took the vendors to the site at Spring Garden and we are now awaiting their response as to exactly what it is they want to do there.

We also have a plan after a number of town hall meetings for other sites across Barbados where farmers who do not want to vend the whole week would be able to go and set up on Fridays and Saturdays and do their vending. We will put them at points where people can move off the road, buy and move on because we do not want to create any traffic congestion.

Mr. President, I know time is fast moving on and I am forced to conclude even though I have much more to say. I think it would be good for me to conclude on this note by saying that last year when we celebrated the World Food Week at Heritage Park that the great harvest which was the last event held there was a resounding success. I was very pleased to see the enthusiasm of the school children as they looked at the black belly sheep and were judging them. The elderly folks who were there were pointing at the heifers and had reasons why this one should be the number one and why that one should be number one.

It was very pleasing to my heart so much so that the members of the farming community, led by the Barbados Agricultural Society, and assisted by a number of other private sector persons, and with assistance from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, have been meeting now for the last few months making plans for restarting the Annual Agricultural Exhibition from this December.

Mr. President, we in the Ministry feel that at least once a year we should focus the nation's attention on what is happening in agriculture, particularly to the new things, so that is an event we are certainly looking forward to.

Mr. President, with your indulgence, there are three things I must say before I close. Recently Cabinet agreed to amend the appropriate existing legislation to allow the logo which has been developed for the black belly sheep to be registered. The work which the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has started, through the Caribbean Agriculture Research and Development Institute and the University of the West Indies, on studying the DNA profile of the sheep is going to be carried on because we want it concluded fairly quickly.

Senate 12 Sequence 14

1.20 p.m.

Wednesday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, Barbados previously exported its Black belly sheep. In fact, recently too prior to the change of legislation in January which now requires that anyone wishing to export black belly sheep now has to get an export licence, this had to be done because Government has tried to assist the sheep industry by providing funds to the creation of a feed lot so that farmers could produce the lamb, then pass it onto someone else who would look after its development whereby that farmer could continue producing.

Sir, it hurts my heart to have discovered that recently 100 black belly sheep had been exported at a time when we had to meet a huge domestic demand for lamb. Therefore, I trust that these persons would desist from undermining the developments that are taking place in the farming industry.

Mr. President, if we are able to establish through Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) testing that the black belly sheep is a special breed, we could claim intellectual property rights and claim the black belly sheep as a national resource. We feel that should be done, along with the registration of a log before exporting the sheep so that in the future, anyone who buys the sheep has to recognise the origin of the sheep. Sir, the sheep that we saw running across the highways in the United States of America were not genuine black belly sheep because these had long horns, which is not one of the things we would allow, were we to register the sheep.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: When I checked the history of those sheep, they had originated

from Barbados many years ago, but were now crossed with other species.

Mr. President, our way forward for the sheep Ministry industry is putting them in a position to establish intellectual property rights and then to expand their production.

MR. PRESIDENT: Senator Griffith, I understand you are in full flow but would you please wind up during the next two minutes?

SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: There is a plan to establish a beef feed lot. We have plans from beef producers who have identified the land and are willing and ready to establish a lot where they will rear one thousand heads of cattle. Sir, we now import 2.6 million pounds of beef and, therefore, through such an operation we can carve off part of that import.

Sir, we must understand that we have to pay serious attention to the issue of food security and to increasing our production but we also have to pay attention to reducing the food import bill. These are some of the things that we in the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development are working on, and are designed to:

(a) Increase the contribution of the sector as a whole to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP);

(b) Help us to produce more food to feed ourselves and in the process, to reduce the food import bill;

Mr. President, if we put in place an effective land use policy and the water solution which has been developed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, this agriculture sector will do well.

Mr. President, I have the assurance of the Honourable Prime Minister that whatever solution is found for the water problem in Barbados that it would include a component to deal with having adequate water available to the farming community.

Mr. President, I thank you.

SUSPENSION

SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 2.30 p.m.

The question that the Sitting do now suspend until 2.30 p.m. was put to the Senate and agreed to and MR. PRESIDENT suspended the Sitting accordingly.

1.25 p.m.

Monday, March 22, 2004

RESUMPTION

MR. PRESIDENT: This Honourable Senate is resumed.

SENATOR F.J. STUART: Mr. President, every year, in accordance with the requirements of the Constitution of Barbados Sections 108 and 109, Government is required to lay in Parliament, Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the ensuing financial year. This must be done before the end of the current financial year and is, therefore, done in the month of March.

These Estimates come in the form of an Appropriation Bill which sets out the various items of expenditure which Government contemplates undertaking in the financial year ahead. Accompanying the Appropriation Bill, usually, is a fairly lengthy second reading speech, both in the Other Place and in the Senate, and today was no exception. Sir, to use the word "lengthy" takes no cognisance of the fact that length in the Senate is constrained by the provision of the Standing Orders of this House.

Sir, today, true to form, the Leader of Government Business the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, delivered the second reading speech on the Appropriation Bill for the year 2004/2005.

S12/14:30

Sequence 16

Monday, 22 March, 2004

SENATOR F.J. STUART: I had hoped when he began that I would have heard a report card on the expenditure which was approved for the last financial year as a basis for justifying the expenditures which are being contemplated for the financial year 2004/2005 but I was to be disappointed because we were treated to a very lucid lecture in economics in the first part of the speech and then in the second part of his speech a very excited and enjoyable excursion into the area he loves so much, the area of agriculture.

The speech, therefore, has left a number of questions unanswered. As I sat and listened to the Honourable Leader of Government Business, I from time to time pinched myself to be reminded that the Barbados of which he was speaking was the one in which I live, this very idyllic picture of all things going well, the deficit coming in right, the national debt a little bit off but we are working towards the desirable percentage, 60 per cent of Gross Domestic Product, debit to Gross Domestic Product ratio of 60 per

cent against the existing 72 per cent, and all the other platitudes to which, annually, we have been treated over the last 10 years.

Mr. President, my misfortune, I suspect, is that I was, between the period 1994 to 1999, exposed to the same punishment in another place. So, today's punishment just represented a change of locus for me but the pain was still the same.

I do not intend to join the Minister on issues of deficit, national debt and that kind of thing because I think that I understand enough about what is commonly called "positive economics", to understand that there is nothing more to it than explaining how the capitalist system works and what can and cannot be done to keep it in existence. Positive economics in a capitalist system is about how to protect, organise and allocate capital on issues of labour and the socially excluded are only incidental.

I am accustomed to the fictions of what the deficit and the debt to Gross Domestic Product ratio are. As people talk about these things, you get a sense that they are really discussing something that is ordinary. Unfortunately for me, when I go to lime at street corners or go into shops in Barbados I do not hear anybody discussing any deficits. I do not hear anybody discussing any debt to Gross Domestic Product ratio. I do not hear anybody discussing any debt to equity ratio. People's concerns are a little more mundane than that, a little more true to life than these elegant abstractions which seem to attract and preoccupy those who speak on these matters from time to time.

Sir, logicians have a phrase called "the fallacy of misplaced concreteness" by which they mean that there are some of us who have a tendency to take abstractions and so concretise them by the way we discuss them, that if you are not careful you would believe that there are things that you can reach out and touch, live and put in a bag and carry away these fallacies of misplaced concreteness.

Mr. President, a lot of the abstractions we hear about and I heard today really bear no relation at all to the real concerns which I hear from people in Barbados from day to day and which are really concerns of mine as a politician with a particular world view.

Of course, I must add that I have lived since I became an adult under two Barbados Labour Party Administration dispensations, one between 1976 and 1986 and the one between 1994 and now. It occurs to me that there is really no fundamental difference between the two that there seems to be a mindset in the Barbados Labour Party that these abstractions have some kind of concrete existence and once you talk about them excitedly people will be swept along by your excitement and it will become reality for them as well.

Mr. President, unfortunately, that is not so and after all we heard before the Senate was suspended for lunch, the real pulsating concerns of the homeless, jobless and other disadvantaged and socially excluded people in Barbados continue to be the same.

Of course, the Honourable Leader of Government Business could not resist the temptation of making a courtesy call on the period between 1991 and 1994. He did not do it too explicitly but in contrasting the bad old days with the good new ones, he had to make reference to the fact about the period when he had to work so hard. He said that he had never worked so hard in his life but things are different now. Sir, that was supposed to be the mark of distinction between a period presided over by the Democratic Labour Party and the present period presided over by the Barbados Labour Party.

I would just ask him to internalise, if only for purposes of humour, that the personnel at the Ministry of Finance are different now from what they were then and that he was one of the chief functionaries at the Ministry of Finance during those bad old days. It was his advice that the Government of the day was taking. If things are so much better now...

SENATOR the Hon. E.R. GRIFFITH: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the Chamber. May I ask what advice was the Government of the day taking from me?

S12: 14.40

Sequence 17

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR F.J. STUART: The Honourable Senator was an official in the Ministry of Finance at the time and that he is not there now, and it may very well be that his absence helps to explain why things are as good as he is describing now, and that his presence then, may well be the explanation why they were as bad as they were then. This is all I am saying. He may internalise only for the purposes of humour. He must not be so hypersensitive.

Asides.

SENATOR F.J. STUART: Mr. President, I believe it was in the year 2000, the then President of the United States, Mr. Bill Clinton, paid a historic visit to Vietnam. I say, historic because I believe he was the first American President to visit that country, since the notorious Vietnam War.

While on that historic visit, President Clinton made a statement, which I regard as memorable, and of deep

philosophical significance. He said that he looked forward to the day when Americans would stop seeing Vietnam as a war and begin to see Vietnam as a country. A moment's reflection would reveal that at the mere mention of the word "Vietnam", one tends to think of the Vietnam War. Americans tend to think that way and people outside of America as well. We tend to overlook the fact that, as President Clinton said, it is a country with people like us. People who eat like us, who sleep as we do, who work as we do, who indulge in recreation as we do, and I am sure who make love as we do.

Sir, mention of Vietnam has always tended to evoke images of a war rather than a country made up of highly civilised people. I refer to President Clinton's famous statement only to say that by parity of reasoning, I also look forward to the day when the Barbados Labour Party will begin to see Barbados, not just as an economy but also as a society.

Now, that distinction is important for me, and for most people living in the Caribbean because historians agree that when these islands were invaded in the 17th Century for the most part, they were never designed for social living. They were always and exclusively designed for purposes of production. They served the productive purposes of the invaders over a long number of years. In fact, in the case of Barbados, at the middle of the 18th Century, Barbados was described as the brightest jewel in the British Crown, producing as it did, most of the sugar that Britain needed and was doing all the things that the mother country needed.

Small wonder then that after Emancipation in 1838, around 1950, a Governor Harris of Trinidad and Tobago reflecting on the 15 or more years that had elapsed since emancipation, said that a race had been freed, but no society had been found, because since the islands were never designed for social living, there was no recognisable society, as we understand the term today, and the purposes of production were still being served.

The whole purpose of politics in Barbados, as I see it, given that kind of history, and the efforts of successive Governments of Barbados, has been to try to create here a society, by having regard to the welfare, the concerns, the passions of the less fortunate, or the underprivileged of the socially excluded.

If one must be fair to the facts, a massive initial contribution was made to that effort by the Barbados Labour Party of the 1950s, when an enviable panoply of labour legislation was introduced into Parliament to ameliorate and improve the life and living conditions of workers here. Those efforts were continued by successive Governments, but it is a matter of the gravest concern to me today, that we seem to be back at a stage, or going back

to a stage where this Barbados Labour Party Administration is treating Barbados as an economy, and not as a society.

This is where the divide, I contend, between the Barbados Labour Party and the Democratic Labour Party is to be found, and that is where the battle will be joined between the two sides in the politics of Barbados. Once you get caught up in treating this country as an economy, the economic utterances that we heard in here today, become paramount and, as long as the figures are right, all reality is right.

No effort is made to look behind the figures to see the reality of actual living flesh and blood human beings and how they are making it in Barbados. It all has to do, once we get into that economic mindset, with concentrating on issues of growth to the exclusion of issues of development, and you end up therefore bereft, I contend, of any serious philosophy or ideology, make your pick of development. This is why at the start of this Barbados Labour Party Administration in 1994, the country was told that the dream for it was to have a car parked outside every house. That was the philosophy of development of the Barbados Labour Party, just after it came to power in 1994.

As long as you could have a car parked outside of every house, all was well with the world. That was the best of all possible worlds, to use the words of, I believe, Dr. Pangloss in Voltaire's *Candide*.

Subsequent to that, we have heard about Barbados becoming a developed country by the year 2010.

Senate 12, sequence 18, 14:50:14

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR F. J. STUART: I like to be fair to the facts. I have heard that talk from the Democratic Labour Party platforms as well but nobody has ever explained it to me. I have never heard it explained by the Barbados Labour Party and I certainly have never heard it explained in my own party, so therefore I cannot pretend to understand it.

What I do know is that that concept of development means nothing more, as far as I can grasp anything about it, than satisfying criteria laid down by the World Bank and other such international financial institutions, and bears no relation at all to the actual reality of ordinary people in this country.

We have become a developed country, but we certainly would not be able to attend G8 Summits, we certainly would not have a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council and we certainly would still be

importing needle, pins and nails. Mr. President, so much for that approach to development. Until I get more details on it and until it is better explained to me, I better leave it alone.

Mr. President, I am not interested in these statistical indices that define things like development. Ultimately for me, the maximizing of human satisfactions in those critical areas that make for making people truly human are much more important than satisfying these arid statistical criteria.

I hear sotto voce, I am not supposed to take cognisance of asides, that it was not so in 1991. I agree that it was not so in 1991 but the people have spoken and the Barbados Labour Party came to power in 1994 to cleanse Barbados of all of its defilement which is what we are dealing with today. The people have spoken in 1991 already and we are dealing today with the Estimates of 2004-2005.

Mr. President, I cannot discuss the Gross Domestic Product of Barbados without asking how the wealth created by this Gross Domestic Product is distributed. It can make no sense to me if out of a 3 per cent growth in any financial year, 90 per cent of that growth goes to the 10 per cent at the top of the society and the remaining 10 per cent goes to the other 90 per cent. The issue of distribution must figure whenever we are talking about growth and must go to the issue of development as well. Mr. President, if you are telling me that the per capital income of Barbados is \$15 000, it makes no sense to me and continues to be an extraction. I cannot tell a tenant with a notice to quit who comes to my office with her face hung down navigating between despondency and despair that she has nothing to worry about as she is worth \$15 000 according to the per capital income of Barbados. That is what I mean by extractions that really make no contact with the real life condition of people in Barbados.

Mr. President, if we are boasting about growth, about Gross Domestic Product and about per capita income, the issue of employment, the right and the privilege of people to find work that they enjoy so that they can earn to meet their various needs also has to be factored into the equation. I like to be fair to the facts.

This Government has sought to tackle the unemployment problem, and as I understand it unemployment is just about 11 per cent in Barbados today, but that does not represent perfection by any elasticity of meaning. It does not say that a Minister could stand up in here today and paint a picture as though nothing is wrong in Barbados when, in fact, 10 out of every 100 people who want to find work cannot find any.

Mr. President, the issue of who controls the resources of Barbados has to be a factor that must be taken

into account if you are discussing genuine development. It really cannot make for the consolation of Barbadians if they think that in their own country they have no serious stake as control in critical areas of the economy is now located outside of the country and that in terms of control in their country they do not play a mainstream role in the issue of determining their own life chances.

These are developmental concerns that make me step back from the very idyllic and endemic picture that was painted in the speech delivered by the Honourable Leader of Government Business, the distinguished Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development in here today.

Mr. President, I have already said from the Floor of this House that between 1994 and the present that the Honourable Leader of Government Business in the Senate is the most enthusiastic and, seemingly to me, the most intellectually on target Minister of Agriculture the country has had over the last 10 years. He has conceptualised the problem of agriculture and is attempting in a very enthusiastic way in bringing along all of the stakeholders with him to tackle the problems of agriculture in Barbados.

I said that before and there is really no harm in saying it again. I think Honourable Senators saw it in here today as he virtually lost himself as he discussed matters relating to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. He had to be lassoed and pulled back by you, Mr. President, as he went on.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I would not use those words.

SENATOR F. J. STUART: I am obliged by your ruling, Sir.

Mr. President, it is therefore important that we get to the Barbados that the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development elected to ignore. He dealt with the Barbados that suited him but there is a Barbados that he ignored that I think would bear some of our attention.

Senate 12 Sequence 19

3.00 p.m.

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR F. J. STUART: Mr. President, in spite of all that has been said in here today, the reality is, and I believe the Honourable Minister did make this point, that this year's Appropriation Bill makes provision for spending in the Ministry of Health to the tune of \$242 686 007 and in the Ministry of Education, expenditure to the tune of

\$241 931 936, the two largest allocations in this year's expenditure.

Mr. President, there is nothing unusual about that. Over the last 25 years, the pattern of public expenditure in Barbados has not undergone any fundamental change, certainly not so far as health and education are concerned. Sir, but it must be a matter of the gravest concern for the citizens of this country, not just that we are boasting on the issue of education, for example, but are we getting value for the money that we are spending? That is the issue and that is why I had hoped for a report card from the Honourable Minister, which has not come.

Mr. President, we could have been told how well last year's appropriations were spent and why this year's appropriations are justified. We could have been told about the results that flowed for the people of Barbados from last year's expenditures and how the people of Barbados could look forward to more and better of the same. Sir, we have not heard any of that from the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Honourable Leader of Government Business.

Mr. President, one of the features of the issue of health in Barbados is that whenever one mentions the word "health", one tends to conjure up images of doctors, nurses, hospitals, polyclinics, ambulances, and that kind of thing. In other words, anything connected with medicine tends to be conjured up by the word "health".

Mr. President, put differently, for numbers of years now, we in Barbados have practised what I would call a "medico-centric" practice of health, a model that accords centrality to doctors, nurses, hospitals, ambulances, polyclinics, and those kinds of outlets.

Mr. President, one of the ironies of all of this is that while we approach it that way, the very doctors tell

us that a sufficient number of our health problems result from lifestyle practices.

In other words, a medico-centric model is pursued when the causes of the illnesses with which this medico-centric model purports to deal, are socially derived. Of course, there is nothing new about that because the most casual look at the Moyne Commission Report of 1938, will disclose that from as far back as then, the Moyne Commission had associated, after penetrating analysis of health problems across the Caribbean and here in Barbados, the overwhelming majority of our health problems with social and institutional deficiencies. Therefore, the problem is, in fact, not a new one but we have continued to pursue it in spite of the evidence that is available to us.

Mr. President, some time recently there were series of programmes on the national television dealing with what, I believe, were called "The Silent Killers" and as I

listened week after week, it kept coming through that these illnesses had to do with lifestyle rather than strictly medical causes.

Mr. President, therefore, the very first challenge I think we face in dealing with health, and in justifying expenditure on health, is determining to what extent this medico-centric model has been serving the country's best purposes. That is an issue to which I will return, but I have to say that since this model evokes images of doctors, nurses, hospitals, et cetera, it is absolutely important to address an item in this year's Appropriation Bill that deals with the capping of the subvention to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

This not only has health significance but it also has political significance because the Queen Elizabeth Hospital was an active issue in Barbados over the last 10 years, and in its most recent manifestations continues to be, over the introduction of a Board.

Mr. President, when this Government came to office in 1994, one of the many pledges it made was that life at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital would not be the same again, that it would have improved substantially for the better and that it would have been snatched from the abyss in which they alleged the Democratic Labour Party had been sinking it.

Sir, a number of measures were taken which the country was assured would have brought about these loudly proclaimed results for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. For example, I believe it was around 1996 that the Hospital was virtually decapitated by the removal of four of its most senior functionaries, they being used as the explanation for the inefficiencies and problems at that institution.

Sir, not only were they removed brutally, I would say, but along with the removal, some additional monies were pumped into the institution and we were told that with the problems removed, we could look forward to an upswing in the fortunes of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Senate No.12 (20)15.10 p.m.

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR F.J. STUART: Mr. President, the story goes that the four dismissed persons went to court to have their reputations protected. The court agreed they were wronged and damages were awarded against the Government for its conduct, damages which I am assured, up to recently, have not yet been paid so that these wronged persons walk around Barbados with long faces, the Government not having seen fit, according to my most recent information, to compensate them in accordance with the award of the court.

Mr. President, nothing has really changed at the Hospital and its problems continue. Waiting hours at the Accident and Emergency Department did not shorten, problems in the workshop did not improve, ancillary staff did not become more satisfied, the morale of nurses was not boosted and doctors continue to complain about the conditions under which they work, sharing the grievances of the nurses as well.

Sir, the most recent act in that scene is that having, like Simon Peter, toiled all night and caught nothing, Government has decided to introduce a board at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, which is supposed to solve all problems like the four top men.

I know there has been a lot of debate over the introduction of a board at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. It is not the first time that the issue of introducing a board has been mooted. I seem to recall that in 1972 when the Democratic Labour Party was in office the issue of introducing a board at the Hospital was the subject of a committee's investigation and the same concerns that have been raised in recent times in relation to the present Board were raised at that time by the Committee reporting on its feedback from the staff at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Suffice it to say, I do not believe that the Government should beguile itself into believing that the introduction of a board at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is going to solve the problems of that institution. Sir, there are good boards, bad boards, successful boards and unsuccessful boards all across Barbados and there is nothing magical about the alchemy of a board because, Sir, a board does not change base metals into gold. Ultimately, a board is manned by individuals produced by a society and there have to be other considerations to dealing with the problems at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. For all that, we in the Democratic Labour Party wish this new attempt at solving the problem at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital well because we think that the issue of healthcare is too important to be left in the vicissitudes of that kind of administrative experimentation. We hope that the Board can bring that type of stability to the Hospital that not just the Government but the people who are served by the Hospital so passionately need and deserve.

Of course, it seems to me that a careful look has to be taken at the management systems in place at the Hospital and the extent to which those systems are responsive in a timely fashion to the challenges thrown up day by day at that institution. Sir, just putting a board in place and leaving antiquated management systems in place will do that institution no good. There has to be a solution somewhere to the problems of long waits at the Accident and Emergency Department.

Asides.

SENATOR F.J. STUART: I am not here to tell the Government what to do. Mr. President, as recently as last night I had to tell a gathering of Democratic Labour Party supporters that we are not here to tell the Government what to do because telling the Government what to do keeps the Government in Government and the Opposition in Opposition. We are not here for that but, certainly, we are here to highlight some of the problems facing the country for the benefit of its citizens and to call on the Government to address some of these problems.

Mr. President, I hope a close look will be taken at the management systems in place at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and some attempt made to humanise them and make them more responsive to the concerns of those who have to work within the system. Sir, this is the history that dates back to 1994 and has brought us to this juncture at which we now find ourselves.

Mr. President, I was speaking earlier about the model of healthcare which we have pursued. It seems to me that if most of the more critical illnesses which beset the nation are related to lifestyle, in other words, are socially derived illnesses, that a medico-centric approach to healthcare may not be the appropriate approach. Sir, I lay no claim to expertise in these matters but I rely on history.

As I said, the problem is not new. Lord Moyne in his Commission Report dealt with it in the 1930s whereas it was social conditions and the housing conditions under which people live, those problems have been solved to a large extent now and the problems now manifest as lifestyle conditions.

It seems to me, from listening to people in the medical profession that a lot of these problems have to do with that aspect of our lifestyle that relates to diet. If these medics are right, and I have no reason to believe otherwise, it seems to me that we are dealing with a social as distinct from a medical problem. This is no different from the problems to which Lord Moyne pointed out in his Report in 1938.

S12/15:20

Sequence 21

Monday, 22 March, 2004

SENATOR F.J. STUART: In Barbados in 1938, according to the Moyne Commission Report, 98 per cent of total expenditure on health was spent on the curative aspects of health and only 2 per cent spent on the preventive aspect of health care. In other words, the system was biased in favour of institutional care, doctors, nurses, hospitals, ambulances, et cetera, rather than preventing people from getting sick.

I do not know what the percentages are today but it seems to me that when I listen to those who express their concerns in this area, that the situation in Barbados has not changed fundamentally in terms of the model we used since the 1930s. There may have been modifications but, in terms of the emphasis, the medico-centric model still dominates our approach to health matters.

How do I think this matter might be addressed? For example, at present in our schools there are guidance counsellors who deal with a particular aspect of a child's life but I am not aware that this nation's education system makes any consistent use of the dieticians that we have in Barbados. I am not aware of it and I stand to be corrected on that. I think that in the same way that a school needs a guidance counsellor that, faced with a problem as critical as the health problems, the silent killers that we hear so much about, that every school in Barbados should have access to the advice of a dietician a certain number of times during the school term.

Sir, the resources we have in that area are plentiful at the present time. It is very important that if we are going to deal with this problem, we have to deal with it by starting in the school system and there has to be a cadre of dieticians available to the education system to spread the gospel of proper dietary habits for children.

Sir, that cannot be divorced from the kind of diet produced and prepared by the School Meals Department. In fact, it is my view that the School Meals Department and these dieticians will have to work in close collaboration for the benefit of our children.

Mr. President, our physical education developments at schools tend to, in my view, place a lopsided emphasis on preparing people for games of various kinds and not, as I understand it - it certainly was not my experience at school and I do not know many people whose experience it was, not essentially on the importance of physical exercise.

Those people who are not interested in sports are usually left out of physical education programmes and, generally speaking, the ones who are interested in sports assume more prominence. I am not saying that is so in every school. I am speaking generally because I have taught and I have seen people who were not really interested in sports of any kind, just basically opting out of physical education because they were not interested in what was going on.

It is my view that in addition to preparing people in various areas of sporting activity, the importance of physical exercise, along with proper dietary diets, should be a focus of our education system so that the whole mindset of the physical education departments in our schools would have to undergo some change.

Sir, if all of this is to be reinforced, the work place has to come into this as well. Perhaps, this is where the labour union comes into this as well, because it makes no sense dietitians preaching this gospel in schools if, at the adult level, the parents who have a greater influence are not making their contribution in that regard. They also need to be educated.

Mr. President, it seems to me that the labour movement might have to think of making exposure to dietary advice at the workplace a certain number of times during the life of a collective agreement, a feature of all collective agreements in Barbados so that they will be mutual reinforcement between what goes on at the work place and schools. I think that might go some distance because it would then influence the spending habits of parents and could lead to a more healthy approach to diet and to living.

Mr. President, it is not simply a question, in my view, of boasting that we are spending this amount of money on health. I think we have to reexamine the health model that we have to pursue and adjust it to fit the challenges confronted by the Ministry of Health.

If I may move on quickly from the Ministry of Health to the Ministry of Education, another big spender in the Appropriation Bill. Again, history would help us here. Sir, this Government came to power in 1994 and by 1996, I was in the Other Place at the time, a White Paper on Education was laid and fully debated there. That White Paper was the road map which we were all told that we should follow and that would guide the Government in its education policy.

I do not recall reading in that White Paper anything about any project called EduTech, any education sector enhancement project or anything of the kind. The White Paper proclaims: "Each one matters" but nowhere in that White Paper, as far I can recall, is there any mention of or treatment of any project or programme called EduTech.

EduTech came after the White Paper on Education.

15.30 p.m.

Sequence 22

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR F.J. STUART: Sir, education in any country's life is, perhaps, its most important productive sector. There are productive sectors that produce goods and services. The education sector produces people, our most important resource.

Mr. President, there was a time, not too long ago, 40 or 50 years ago, when access to education in Barbados was the big issue of education, the availability of school places to satisfy the demand for those places. Sir, being fair to the facts, both Governments have, over a number of years, sought to confront the issue of the availability of school places. An adequacy of school places was produced over the last 40 years. This, of course, has led, as we all know to the virtual elimination of private secondary schools, which filled a large gap in that area of demand, before the Governments were able to provide these facilities.

Sir, concomitant with that, was a view on the part of the beneficiaries of education that it was to be linked with opportunities for social mobility. In fact, it is still true that when we discuss education and the achievements in education, we link it to social mobility, the fact that it has been the gateway through which people have escaped from one status group to the other. If places were scarce under the colonial order, that was by design. Education was designed to be scarce, because, colonialism by its very nature, emphasised the subordination of colonial interest and the preservation of metropolitan interest. Those problems were solved over the last 40 years here in Barbados.

Mr. President, I like to remind myself that when we talk about the colonial period, it was not very long ago and very few of us in this House today have not known two National Anthems by heart. I have always reminded myself about that and this is only a reminder that not long ago, Barbados was a colony.

Sir, the question we have to ask in education, it seems to me, is whether the mindset which is appropriate to deal exclusively with the availability of school places, is appropriate to this new social and educational setting.

Colonial education was highly individualistic. Most of us can remember sitting in classrooms and trying our best to make sure that the persons beside us did not get a chance to see what we were doing and how we were doing it, because the whole aim of schooling was to prove that we were better than the person sitting next to us. In other words, the focus of education was competitive between individuals.

Sir, we now live in a world in which the virtues of cooperation are being promoted between nations. The question one has to ask is, if it is cooperation between nations that is going to ensure the survival of all of us as a people, if Barbados needs to cooperate with its neighbours in the Caribbean, for example, in a Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) and with other nations in the hemisphere, in a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) how come that cooperation is necessary at that

level, but between Barbadian citizens, competition should still be the ethic that guides us.

It seems to me, Mr. President, that we can only take full advantage of the opportunities offered by cooperation between nations, if we begin by practicing cooperation amongst ourselves. It seems to me that the competitive and highly individualistic environment in the classroom has to yield to a more cooperative ethos, which emphasizes students working together to solve problems, rather than student A, working on the problem trying to prove that he is better than student B.

In my view, this would lead, inevitably, to a respect for other people's aptitudes and will guarantee a more cohesive society, as we move to strengthen our social bases and our regional bases as well. This is the challenge of education. It has to move from individualism to social responsibility and, therefore, the focus cannot be what can an individual get out of the system but, how can he strengthen the society by cooperating with others.

The home will have its part to play, I concede in that, but given the fact that the school has a coercive apparatus right through the day, the school has, in my view, that critical role to play in promoting this idea.

Mr. President, when the Leader of Government Business spoke on EduTech today, he said that only the benighted would disagree that our children need to be exposed in this highly information sensitive world to the most modern technologies available. I heard this repeated often by the Minister of Commerce and Business Development, Senator Eastmond.

I have no problem with any of this. I think the emphasis is right. It is important that man be married to technology for the purpose of enhancing his mastery over his environment, and what better place to start than in the schools. This is how man has always promoted his mastery over nature and his environment, by the creation and utilisation of technology. Technology has always mediated the relationship between man and nature.

Senate 12, sequence 23, 15:40:14

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR F. J. STUART: However, that is no excuse for a Government introducing a project, without adequate preparation, that has so far gobbled up hundreds of millions of dollars with very little to show the country for it. That is where the divide between the Democratic Labour Party and the Barbados Labour Party comes. This project was proclaimed by this Government but today we do not know where it is and we cannot point to any flagship and say that is the success that we are all aiming at.

Mr. President, when I was at school, the little biology to which I was exposed taught me something about a form of aquatic life called an "amoeba" whose distinguishing feature was its ever-changing shape. If there is any equivalent of the amoeba in the public life of Barbados, that equivalent is EduTech for every time you hear about it, it means something else.

In my view, the Ministry of Education has done the poorest of jobs in reinforcing this nation's faith in that project. As I speak today, my information is that tomorrow six or seven senior officers from the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports will be travelling to Boston to observe the use of technology in Bostonian schools and that next Tuesday the same thing will happen. This is about six years after this project was introduced and six years after we have been hearing all the talk about how well it is doing when all indications are that the project is in deep crisis. However, it continues to gobble up millions of dollars.

Mr. President, in this year's Estimates I believe it will account for just over \$30 million, yet there is nothing really to show for it. I am given to understand that the Ministry of Education did not factor into the project the cost of replacements and maintenance and that the Ministry was advised by some experts from Israel, I am told, to be cautious in its approach to this project. All of this has gone by the wayside and the taxpayers of Barbados so far are the only losers in all of this.

I had hoped that the Honourable Minister of Agriculture would have spent some time telling us how the expenditure on this project was justified to reinforce our faith in this \$30 million that the Government is allocating to the project again this year. Mr. President, I agree that the children of Barbados have to familiarise themselves with this most recent technology, but this project has been bungled so far and we need a clear statement where it is going and how much it is going to cost the taxpayers when it comes to full maturity. That is one of the major issues in the Ministry of Education today.

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Honourable Leader of Government Business was kind enough to obliquely refer to breaches of the Financial Administration and Audit Act as he discussed fiscal disciplines and checks and balances in the expenditure of public monies.

The other scandal in the Ministry of Education is in the Auditor-General's Report of 2003 as it relates to the St. Leonard's Secondary School refurbishment project. I have a particular interest in this because I well remember all of the excitement when the announcement was made that the contract for Phase 2 of that project had been awarded to B. C. C. Steelworks and the circumstances that were given for

the award of that contract. There had been some irregularities in the tendering process leading to the disqualification of at least one other tenderer and it was said that since this company was ranked at number two, it had to get the contract.

Mr. President, I am not going to deal with that situation at length in here today because this is better dealt with elsewhere, but the record has to show that the country was told that those irregularities that led to the award of this contract had been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions and that nothing has been heard from the Director on that matter. The workers on the project have had to complain about their National Insurance not being paid.

The Auditor-General's Report is replete with examples or with instances of breaches of the Financial Administration and Audit Act and the Rules made thereon. The result is that Barbados is paying the Caribbean Development Bank commitment fees of \$29 800 every quarter for what has turned out to be nothing more than a sweetheart contract.

I had hoped that the Honourable Leader of Government Business would have told us something about this. The idyllic picture he painted made no mention of any of these issues and the impression has been left that all is well in Barbados, that all was well with last year's appropriation and that we should close our eyes and sail on with this year's appropriation, so nothing at all was said other than an oblique reference to the St. Leonard's School refurbishment project.

Mr. President, I do not know of any previous Auditor-General's Report that has had to treat any project of Government in recent times as the Auditor-General has had to treat the St. Leonard's project in its 2003 Report, so the Government has to provide answers on this project, the circumstances in which the contract was awarded, all of the foul ups, bleeps and blunders that have followed on the award of the contract, the commission fees that Barbados has unnecessarily to pay the Caribbean Development Bank as a result of what went on at St. Leonard's School and how a Ministry of Education could know as many as three years after work had been done on a hard court that work had been done there if there was any commitment to proper standards on that project.

Senate 12 Sequence 24

3.50 p.m.

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR F. J. STUART: Mr. President, how contracts were awarded for more than \$100 000, in breach

of the Financial Administration and Audit Rules, without any reference to a tender. Sir, these are all the things.

I sat here today with baited breath and uncontrolled expectations, waiting on the Honourable Leader of Government Business to tell us something about these things. Instead we heard about the deficit, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the National Debt to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) ratio, et cetera. We heard of all these abstractions, the fallacy of misplaced completeness, while trying to give these things a reality for us, a reality over and above the mal-expenditure of the public's monies, and the culpability of the Government in that regard.

Sir, these monies were taken from the Consolidated Fund to pursue that project and we are not able to access Caribbean Development Bank approved funding because we have satisfied none of the criteria that would facilitate access to that funding.

Mr. President, what madness is that? We have heard nothing about these things here today. Therefore, in addition to the policy problems related to the Ministry of Education, the philosophical issues that the Ministry has to address, the Democratic Labour Party is concerned about the EduTech Programme and that project at the St. Leonard's Secondary School.

Sir, these issues are not going to blow away because at a time when strict controls were needed at the Implementation Unit of the Ministry of Education while Phase 2 of this project was going on, a material personnel change took place there that might well provide the explanation for some of these abuses.

Mr. President, the third issue I want to look at, and again the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development was kind enough to have mentioned what is going on in his Ministry and what he intends to do with regards to the issue of Fisheries.

Mr. President, the fisheries development is important to the Barbados economy. We are surrounded by water and fishing has always been an essential part of what we do. Sir, history will help us here again. When the Barbados Labour Party came to office in 1994, it was on a Manifesto that said the most urgent issue facing the fisheries industry of Barbados was the conclusion of the Fisheries Agreement with Trinidad and Tobago.

Sir, 10 years later, the most urgent issue is still urgent because that Fisheries Agreement has not yet been secured. The Democratic Labour Party was held up to public ridicule on the issue of not concluding a fisheries agreement and the country was assured that agenda item number one, so far as fisheries development was

concerned, would have been the conclusion of a fisheries agreement with Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. President, that issue has now become enmeshed in a whole set of issues but I think the record has to be put straight on this. Barbados has a territorial sea of 12 miles. That was made possible by the passage in 1978, to come into effect on January 01, 1979, of a Barbados Territorial Waters Act. Also passed in 1978 to come into effect on January, 01, 1979 was a Marines Boundaries and Jurisdiction Act, by which Barbados declared that it was entitled to an exclusive economic zone of 200 nautical miles and where the distance between Barbados and adjacent states made that 200 nautical mile economically impossible, that the medium line between the two states would determine each state's exclusive economic zone. Sir, that was in 1979, twenty-five years ago.

Also in 1979, around the month of August, the Parliament of Barbados passed a Barbados Defence Act. I believe it came into effect on August, 15, 1979. Section 208 of that Act, as far as I can recall, gives the Barbados Coast Guard the power to protect Barbados' resources, not only in its territorial sea, but in its exclusive economic zone. Sir, Section 212 of the same Act gives the Coast Guard of Barbados the powers of arrest in the exclusive economic zones of Barbados. Again, that is 25 years ago.

Mr. President, we hear that this issue which now bedevils the Fisheries Agreement is a 14-year old issue. I say "No", it is a 25-year old issue because seven years have elapsed after the passing of that legislation and no serious attempts were ever made by the then Government to sort out the issues relating to Barbados' exclusive economic zone. Sir, from 1979 to 1986, seven years have passed without any serious attempts being made to sort out issues relating to Barbados' exclusive economic zone.

Mr. President, therefore, if the Barbados Labour Party cannot conclude a fisheries agreement with Trinidad and Tobago because of maritime delimitation issues, I take offence at the fact that any attempt should be made to try to offload that issue onto the Democratic Labour Party, as a result of something that was supposed to have happened in 1990. Sir, the legislation to which I just referred was passed in 1979, twenty-five years ago, and not in 1990, which is 14 years ago.

Mr. President, I am amused that the Barbados Coast Guard could have the power of arrest, to arrest in Barbados' exclusive zone and did not know where that economic zone was located. That was an occasion for laughter.

Senate No.12 (25)4.00 p.m.

Wednesday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR F.J. STUART: Mr. President, I leave that matter there and say that this Government still owes the people of Barbados and the fisheries industry a fishing agreement with Trinidad & Tobago which the Democratic Labour Party stated was the most urgent issue facing the fishing industry 10 years ago because, if it was urgent then, it is urgent now. Sir, I leave the matter there but I want to make it clear that it is not true that the issue is 14 years old but goes back 25 years to 1978/79.

Mr. President, I move on to the Ministry of Housing and Lands and to the National Housing Corporation which attracted some attention in the Other Place when these appropriations were being discussed last week. Again, history will help here a bit because this Government, when it came to office in 1994, placed some emphasis on the issue of housing policy and in the year 1997, produced a White Paper on housing.

This White Paper was the successor to a Green Paper which was for discussion purposes only. It is now seven years after this White Paper was produced. Sir, this document is already a document of the Senate and seven years ago, at page 13, it said that on average the National Housing Corporation receives some 800 applications annually for its rental unit, another 800 for house spots and that it satisfies about 25 per cent of its demand mainly through the reallocation of units which become available.

The reality is that over the last 10 years, this Government has been acquiring land all across Barbados for purposes of dealing with the low-income housing problems of the people of Barbados. The Government has built up what it has been pleased to call a land bank, but the loud and clamant appeals by persons across Barbados, desperately in need of low-income housing, are still going largely unanswered by the Government through its National Housing Corporation in spite of the existence of its land bank and all the proclamations contained in the White Paper of seven years ago.

Sir, much concern is expressed about the high levels of liquidity in the commercial banking system and I am here to say today that there is also excess liquidity in the land bank but that somehow the liquidity in the land bank, even though there are demands to use it, is not benefitting those persons who need it most.

The National Housing Corporation is associated with the average person who wants a house spot or rental unit but not with the fulfilment of their expectations but with despondency and despair. Sir, the time has come for the Government to begin to deliver on low-income housing in Barbados. I do not think that those who need houses can take the frustration anymore.

Mr. President, in my profession, too often I come across people who are tired of going to the National Housing Corporation who have been going there for years and this explains the present fatigue. There is no indication that their expectations of getting a rental unit or house spot will be met. They are given a reference number and told to bring it when they return. They go back on an unending trek to and from the National Housing Corporation only to be told that they are not ready yet.

Sir, it leaves one to ask what the White Paper was worth. If it were used as a road map, the Government still cannot find its destination, that is, the delivery of rental units and house spots to those who need them in Barbados.

It seems to me that the National Housing Corporation is getting an appropriation of about \$4 million this year and it is time to call on that Corporation and the Ministry of Housing to confront the issue that house spots and rental units are desperately needed in Barbados.

Sir, to be fair to the White Paper, it has acknowledged that as a result of the passage of the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act that the demands on the Corporation were increased as private landlords were afraid that if they rent out their lands, they would not get it back, so they became more reluctant after the passage of the Act to rent out house spots to people.

Sir, the National Housing Corporation and Ministry of Housing, so far as the delivery of low-income housing is concerned, have not been success stories over the last 10 years but there has not been a word about it today from the Leader of Government Business in the Senate. He felt more comfortable in the stratosphere of percentage deficits, GDP, debt to GDP ratio and such things.

Mr. President, I go on to the Fair Trading Commission under the Ministry of Commerce, Consumer Affairs and Business Development. I know recently there was a debate in the Senate on this issue and I did not say much about it then for very good reason. I can still remember the amused silence in which I listened to the contribution of my good friend Senator Grant, who confidently expected a heated debate on the issue and when it did not come, he could not contain himself.

I recall him saying that he was glad the Opposition had agreed. However, he still went on to make the speech he would have made if there had been a confrontational debate. Sir, I sat in amused silence as he unburdened himself of the speech he had internalised.

S12/16:10

Sequence 26

Monday, 22 March , 2004

SENATOR F.J. STUART: Sir, this issue has been the occasion of ridicule of the Democratic Labour Party and the statement was that the Democratic Labour Party had given away a 20-year licence when all around us people were liberalising the telecommunications sector. Therefore, we were backward and the Government that now embarks so feverishly on this liberalisation of the telecommunication system was entitled to a loud and, perhaps, deafening applause.

I do not begrudge the Government for that. All I want to say is that it is conceded that the telecommunication sectors have been the subject of various forms of liberalisation and deregulation across the Caribbean and the United States of America. I want to use the United States of America as my reference point today.

Sir, one gets the impression that people in Barbados believe that what is happening here represents some grand departure from known reality and that consumers in Barbados forever hereafter are the beneficiaries of privileges out of this sector the result of the liberalised policies that are presently in pursuit by the Government.

I am not being critical of liberalisation policies. How could I be in the context of what is going on in the world around us and in the context of the country's need to make telecommunication cost competitive having regard to the fact that we want to cheapen the cost of doing business in Barbados for those involved in the international business sector.

Mr. President, what has been happening here recently has happened elsewhere as well. During the Clinton presidency in 1996, a Telecommunications Act was passed in the United States of America as well as one was passed here in Barbados. The same splurge that manifested in Barbados in recent times in the cellular market also occurred in the United States of America. The same interconnectivity issues with which we were battling here with recently also occurred in the United States of America. In fact, between 1997 and 2001, as a result of the passage of the Telecommunication Act, US\$55 billion was spent and circulated in the United States of America in the communication sector. There was a big bubble in the United States of America as there is here today.

Mr. President, everybody was excited about competition coming to Barbados. Sir, by October, 2002, the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission in the United States of America was saying on the sector that no one is prospering, spending, investing or growing. He was saying that the status quo means certain death. Why did all of that happen? Just as is the case in Barbados today, so was it in the United States of America.

People failed to distinguish competition for a market and competition in a market. They mistook all the frenzy and bubble while the competition was going on for the market as what would obtain for competition in the market. Once the market was secured and the competition for it was fought out, the immortal words uttered by the Director of Federal Communications of the United States of America then came into vogue. He had to say what he said and that is "the status quo means certain death" because no one was investing, growing, spending or prospering.

While it is true that consumers are getting some fairly attractive offerings out of cellular telephony at the present time, this bubble is going to come to an end as well. Competition for the market is going to come to an end and then we are going to get to the stage where we will be dealing with competition in the market and that is where reality is going to strike.

In the meanwhile I would say this. All those people who believe that more players in the market and competition et cetera will redound to the consumer, had better look at the other side of that coin, at the profits that are going to be raked in from the pockets of consumers as well.

Whereas on the land line telephone, the target market is the dwelling house, which usually contains just one line at a fixed rate, under cellular telephony, the target market is the individual, so you can have in a household of six individuals owning telephones and buying phone cards that is where the difference is.

Sir, school children are now part of that market. It is now routine to watch men and women riding bicycles and talking on the telephone. There are also people who stand at the bus stops, waiting for a bus and they are talking on the telephone. In fact, one of the more ludicrous examples of what I am saying is, the caller who made a call on a call-in programme a few evenings ago complaining that she drove on a transport board bus and the driver drove the bus using one hand for a considerable distance and the other hand he was using while talking on the telephone. Sir, that is where it is going.

S12: 16.20

Sequence 27

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR F.J. STUART: I am given to understand that the cheapest phone card you can get is \$20, but the average individual is not going to just use one phone card in any month, that might be one phone card per week, given the itch to talk in Barbados. The cellular telephone is

appealing to an itch that is almost uncontrolled in this country.

Therefore, the profits of those involved are going to be guaranteed, and are going to be much larger than we envisage at the present time. I hear complaints being made, and they are quite justified that steps will soon have to be taken to regulate the use of cell phones, while people are driving vehicles. There is enough evidence of it on the roads to suggest that it is an issue the Government has to give its urgent attention, if there is not to develop a traumatic connection between the use of cell phones and motor vehicle accidents.

Mr. President, I am not as bowled over by all of this talk about liberalisation of the telecommunications sector as others are. I understand its importance as far as international businesses are concerned, but, in terms of the average consumer in Barbados from a poor household, I can see how there is going to be a change in spending patterns as people minister to this itch to talk.

Sir, to be on a bus and calling somebody and saying that the bus is now here by Banks and when it gets further up, they call and say, we are now here by this place, just to talk, large sums of money are going to be spent by persons who can least afford it in this area of activity. I say no more on that for the time being.

Mr. President, the other issue I want to look at, very quickly, is the Ministry of Labour. The appropriation as indicated in the Bill for the Ministry of Labour is \$30 299 649. The Ministry of Labour, Sir, I take it, would be responsible for looking out for the interest of the workers of Barbados. It certainly does for those who work in the Farm Labour Scheme.

It has to be conceded that not much has happened in that Ministry over the last 10 years, of direct benefit to the workers of Barbados. The challenges facing labour today are greater than at any other time in the last 50 years. This Ministry seems to have fallen asleep as far as pursuing the interest of the workers of Barbados is concerned.

In every Manifesto of the Barbados Labour Party since 1971, employment protection legislation was promised to the workers of Barbados. In the last Parliament, an Employee Rights Bill was introduced and died with the dissolution of that Parliament. We have heard nothing further about it. When we do hear about it, we do not hear about it from anybody in the Government. We hear about it from people in the Employers' Confederation, as recently as some time over the last few days.

It seems to be a matter of greater concern and urgency, not by way of advocacy for it, to the people in the Employers Confederation than to the Minister of Labour or

anybody else in the Government, this at a time when the sense of security at the workplace is at its most fragile.

Now, the form that legislation takes, will surely be a matter for negotiation between the owners and capital and labour, but employment protection legislation, an Employees' Rights Bill is urgently needed in Barbados to, at least adumbrate, and to define the rights of workers in this country, and to reduce tensions at the workplace as employers take full advantage of the absence of this legislation, to wheel power in unusual ways. I know what I am talking about, because most of the cases end up in the offices of lawyers.

Sir, there is employee protection legislation. There is also safety at work legislation, which for 10 years the Government has sat on, and this has remained in the realm of promise, while workers work under some of the most horrible conditions in some cases but with no legal recourse, because of the inadequacy of existing legislation.

As a Party committed to the interest of the workers of Barbados, the Democratic Labour Party considers these two pieces of legislation absolutely important and urgent, and we call on the Government, through the Ministry of Labour, to accord some priority to getting these Bills before Parliament, and getting this law on the statute book, justify for a change, the appropriation of \$30 million to that Ministry, by at least producing something of which the workers of Barbados can be proud.

Sir, for 10 years, there was nothing coming out of the Ministry of Labour to promote the interest of workers of Barbados. The Shops Act was amended, not for the benefit of any workers, some time between 1994 and 1999. As far as legislation targeting workers' rights and guaranteeing their promotion is concerned there was not a piece of legislation out of the Ministry of Labour.

In this year's appropriation, that Ministry is getting \$30 million of taxpayer's money, a condonation it seems to me of the indolence and non productivity of the Ministry as far as the interests of the workers of Barbados are concerned.

Mr. President, I listened to the Government's introduction of the Appropriation Bill for the year 2004-2005. I did not recognise the Barbados in which I live in that introduction.

Senate 12, sequence 28, 16:30:14

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR F. J. STUART: Perhaps that meant that there are really two "Barbadoses" and that the Government represents one Barbados and the Opposition represents the

other. I am pleased to stand up here today and to let the Government know how the other half lives. I hope occasion will not arise for me ever to stand up in here to let the Government know how the other half dies. We can certainly avoid that prospect by the Government taking cognisance of some of the suggestions made here today.

Mr. President, as is well known, it does not lie in the power of this House to obstruct these appropriations, but even if it laid in the power in this House, we would not be minded so to do. However, we felt we had to raise these concerns and to let the people of Barbados know that what they heard this morning was about a Barbados that they could not recognise and that the real Barbados in which they live and move and have their beings and in which they have to face their challenges is represented by the Democratic Labour Party.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 4.50 p.m. today.

The question that the Sitting do now suspend until 4.50 p.m. today was put to the Senate and agreed to and Mr. PRESIDENT suspended the Sitting accordingly.

Senate 12 Sequence 29

4.33 p.m.

Monday, March 22, 2004

RESUMPTION

MR. PRESIDENT: This Sitting is resumed.

SENATOR Sir John Stanley GODDARD: Mr. President, before commenting on the Estimates 2004-2005, I would like to commend the Honourable Leader of Government Business for his presentation of the Estimates earlier today. It was divided into two parts, the first part dealt with the background to the Estimates, which I found to be very informative and interesting. It clearly indicated that he would be leaving much discussions on the line items for his colleagues on the Government's side.

Mr. President, the second part of his presentation dealt with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and, as we all know, he is the Minister of Agriculture. He was able to put an enthusiasm and a zeal into agriculture that I have never before seen, and if anybody can get that Ministry to move and to perform, it would have to be the Honourable Senator because he spoke

with such feeling and passion and has such wonderful ideas for the development of agriculture, which we all say is a very important part of our economy. We say it but we do not do very much about it. Therefore, I would like to commend him for his comments on the background to the Estimates and to agriculture.

Mr. President, the Estimates deal with Government's operations and the financing of those operations. It is a management tool and in both the private and public sector, what cannot be measured, cannot be managed. Therefore, one would have to study and analyse the figures as contained in these Estimates and establish the relationship between those various figures, otherwise they only remain figures and for all intents and purposes, remain meaningless.

Senate No.12 (30)4.50 p.m.

Wednesday, March 22, 2004

Sir John Stanley GODDARD: The Estimates show that the current revenue is projected to be \$1 940.65 million. That figure is 5.5 per cent higher than the revised Estimates of 2003/2004. We must not take that figure for granted. We must analyse it in the light of current economic issues and there are several of them. Government is projecting that the real GDP is expected to grow by 3.1 per cent in this year but this would depend on the performance of tourism which has improved after the setbacks suffered with 9/11, and the SARS epidemic in Canada and tourism is on the up again.

International business tends to be stagnant because Governments of developed countries are under pressure to prevent their companies from setting up offshore operations because they feel a lot of revenue is lost, therefore, that sector is not growing as rapidly as it should.

Manufacturing seems to be improving again and a lot of thanks has to go to the imaginative 100 per cent Bajan campaign and it is showing signs of improvement.

In agriculture, I was thinking in terms of sugar cane. We should see the sugar industry as producing raw sugar for export. We used to produce over 100 tons, it is now down to 50 tons and this year the projection is 40 tons. I am glad to see that the thinking in the Ministry of Agriculture is to see what other usages can be made of the sugar cane plant so that more foreign exchange can be earned.

Then there is the integrated regional cotton industry which is a move in the right direction. The Minister with great enthusiasm referred to plans to improve the production of onions, hot peppers and livestock. He mentioned hydroponics which I have some experience in. I

have a word of caution that we should be sure we know what we are doing with hydroponics. I was growing tomatoes and it took me two years to determine the right variety and mix of nutrients and I had a lot of conflict.

The WTO, with the advent of China on the world scene, industries have relocated into China from the United States of America, Canada, Japan and other developed countries because the wage rates in China are 10 per cent of the wages' rate in United States of America. For that reason alone, it is a very attractive place to relocate a business.

We cannot deal with the international outlook without taking into account HIV/AIDS and international terrorism. Only two days ago, we had the bombing of a train in Madrid and only today, the Leader of the Palestinian movement, HAMAS was killed in the Gaza Strip. We may say that it happened on the other side of the Atlantic but no place is safe in today's world.

In summary, the world is now experiencing what economists call a "synchronized world" which means that very soon, we may have growth in a few developed countries and decline in others, but forces have come together and economic growth today is taking place in the Americas, Europe and Asia. Sir, how long it will last, we do not know but we can only be the beneficiaries of this.

All economic outlooks predict increases in competition and the need for higher levels of productivity. The estimated current revenue of \$10 940.6 million seems reasonable but all outlooks are subject to many uncertainties and to potential risks.

Sir, talking about the revenue is one thing. It is important but we must remember that the collection of revenue is also very important.

S12/17:00

Sequence 31

Monday, 22 March, 2004

SENATOR Sir John Stanley Goddard: I would like to refer to the Report of the Auditor- General of 2003, section 3.4, dealing with the Inland Revenue Department and a coding:

"The Inland Revenue Department submitted a statement showing arrears as at March 31, 2001, of \$143.8 million. These arrears comprised \$28.4 million in Income Taxes due from individual taxpayers."

Sir, I can only assume that over the last two years that the total has increased.

Sir, Item 3.7 deals with the Customs Department:

“ The Customs Department submitted an arrears

statement for the period ending March 31, 2003. The total was shown as \$92,927,548.82...”

Sir, Item 3.9 deals with land:

“The Land Tax Department reported arrears as at March 31, to June 30, 2003 of \$104,011,167. ...”

Mr. President, other arrears would be taken into account. The total arrears were in excess of \$380 million, as reported by the Auditor-General.

Mr. President, this is what the Auditor-General had to say in Item 3.17:

“The management of arrears continues to be a growing problem for Government Ministries and Departments. Based on information obtained total amounts due to Government are in excess of \$380 million. Efforts must therefore be made to allocate an appropriate level of resources, and to put adequate systems in place to properly manage receivables.” I am sure that every one in this Honourable Chamber would agree with that.

Sir, we now turn to the expenditure side. The current expenditure shows \$2 172.49 billion and the estimated capital expenditure is \$257,000,052.00, which is a total expenditure of \$2,429.5 million. This represents a 5.6 per cent increase over the revised Estimates for the previous year, 2003/2004. There are no significant changes in the Estimates for 2004/2005 from the previous year with respect to the amounts allocated to the various Ministries as percentages of the total current expenditure.

Sir, it is hoped that both the number and the amounts are sub diametric, brought to the Other Place, are greatly reduced in 2004/2005.

The Auditor-General highlighted many areas where there were breaches of the Financial Administration and Audit Act. There were a lack of public internal accounting and proper controls in many cases. There were long delays by many statutory entities in submitting financial reports to the Barbados Audit office.

In section 2.1 the Auditor-General said:

“ Many of the statutory entities whose accounts are audited by the Barbados Audit Office continue to submit statements long after they are due. It has been eight years since the Samuel Jackman Polytechnic submitted financial statements for auditing and there are other statutory Boards

that are several years behind in their submissions. This is an area of concern.”

I am sure that we all are in agreement with the Auditor-General's sentiments. However, he said that there was considerable improvement in the timeliness of the financial reporting of Ministries and Departments. He also commented on the repetition of the many weaknesses and deficiencies previously reported. He went on to say that from the taxpayers' point of view, this is not satisfactory. This is taxpayers' money that is being mismanaged.

Finally, he commented on the recently constituted Public Accounts Committee. I am quoting from the new Public Accounts Committee Act , Section 1.15.

“The Public Accounts Committee has been reorganised and expanded with the passing of the new Public Accounts Committee Act, 2003. In accordance with Section 7 of the Act, the Committee is required to report to both Houses of Parliament on any matters in the Auditor-General's Reports which it considers should be drawn to the attention of Parliament.”

Mr. President, I am one of the Senators on that Committee. I am happy to report that our first meeting which was held last week was constructive. There are 13 Members on that Committee and 11 Members were in attendance, and that is a good sign and the decision was taken that we would meet monthly or more often, if necessary. I think it is going to be the last Thursday in every month.

I now move to the Government operations and financing as shown on page 3 of the Estimates. The estimated fiscal deficit is projected at \$488.89 million or 8.6 per cent of the nominal Gross Domestic Product and the market price is estimated at \$500 663.3 million. When converted to international financial institutional basis, the fiscal deficit is projected at \$153.6 million or 2.7 per cent of Gross Domestic Product.

I believe that the Honourable Leader of Government Business has already commented on that. However, we have to see how that deficit on the Accountant-General's basis of \$488.89 million will be financed. It will be financed by the foreign debt in the amount of \$111.892 million, or 32.9 per cent of what is required and the domestic debt is 7.1 per cent amounting to \$377 million.

The national debt is the accumulation of past budget deficits and services and there are the more simpler and accurate definition of the national debt. It means that over the past years any Government spending more than it was receiving, so the net deficit, even though some years they may be surpluses, it is the national debt which has to be funded.

The national debt, as per the Central Bank of Barbados as of October 31, 2003, was \$4 226.8 million, an increase of \$267.6 million or 6.7 per cent over October 31, 2002. In that same period, international reserves increased by \$352.2 million or 19.9 per cent, to \$2 121.0 million.

The domestic component is 68.6 per cent or \$2 898.5 million. The foreign debt is 31.4 per cent, roughly \$830 million, amounting to \$1 328.3 million.

17.10 p.m.

Sequence 32

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR Sir JOHN Stanley GODDARD: At the present time, the national debt represents 74.6 per cent of GDP. The Honourable Leader indicated the Government's intention to reduce it to 60 per cent, naturally over time, because it cannot be done overnight, but I applaud that objective.

At its present level, the national debt is both satisfactory and manageable. I would like to see it come down to 60 per cent of GDP. However, the composition of the national debt, between the foreign and domestic components, and its amount as a percentage of GDP, needs to be very carefully monitored, and not allowed to deteriorate. I am sure the Government is fully aware of that and is watching it carefully.

Mr. President, I would like to commend the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance for announcing recently that greater emphasis will be placed on strategic planning in the future, to cover a longer period, whereas on the present focus, the Estimates cover just a one-year period. The Honourable Leader made reference to that, and he also referred to half yearly. The present cash basis of accounting will be changed to an accrual basis which will give more accurate figures in the Estimates.

I will now like to make some general comments on a matter which came to my attention, from reviewing and reflecting on the Estimates. First I would like to deal with improvements. In spite of what some people say, many roads have been updated. I can think of Culloden Road, Pine Road, Bay Street, Roebuck Street, Dash Valley and many others, but much work remains to be done.

Years ago when those roads were built, I do not think they were meant to carry loaded 40-foot containers. I do not think they have the foundation to carry that weight, so there will always be buckling, twisting and turning, so a lot of money needs to be spent on roads, even though a lot of money has already been spent.

Sir, if I may be permitted, I would like to describe the worst stretch of road in this island which I drive on it practically every day, from Cliff Land in St. John, Landcox Hill, Church Village on the left, Chapel Land on the right, pass St. Philip's Parish Church, pass Chapel Plantation, pass Sunbury to Six Roads. If anyone knows of a worse road than that, please let me know. I have been driving on that road for years, so this gives me an opportunity to comment on it.

Secondly, there has been an increase in the housing stock.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator, could you please move a little closer to the microphone. They are having some problems with the recording. Thank you.

SENATOR Sir John Stanley GODDARD: Yes, Sir.

There has been an increase in the housing stock in this island. Many low and middle-income houses have been constructed by contractors in the private sector and the Government, notwithstanding that there is still a large unsatisfied demand remaining.

Quite often, people who know that I have to be in the Senate, come to me and ask me to do something to get a house for them or to get them moved up the list. I tell them that I am helpless in that regard, thank you for the Honour but there is nothing I can do about that situation. Sir, there is a frustration out there.

Another improvement is the extension to the Grantley Adams International Airport. Tourism is the most important element and it is important that we have a modern international airport. This is exactly what the Grantley Adams International Airport will be, even though it has been very inconvenient to the travelling public during the construction period.

We have also had the reconstruction of the Hilton Hotel at Needham's Point and 350 rooms have been added to our hotel room stock, as well as significant convention space. This will boost up, not only the Hilton Hotel, but all the hotels on the south coast that are close to the Hilton.

I just regret that the late Sir Harold St. John did not live to see the completion of the Hilton Hotel. He had a tremendous interest in it, and up to his last days, he was following its progress.

I would also like to refer to the maintenance of law and order. There have been considerable successes in combating trade in illegal drugs, on both land and sea, and I commend the Police Force for the excellent work they have been doing. I also hope that the Report of the Law and Order Commission, would be acted on. There are some

very distinguished people sitting on that Commission, under the Chairmanship of Sir Roy Marshall. I would hate to think that it is just another report that will collect dust on somebody's shelf. I do not think so, but I hope not.

Then, Sir, there was the establishment of the Fair Trading Commission (FTC) which was long overdue but, better late than never. It was established to ensure fairness and transparency in business transactions, for the protection of consumers, and we are all consumers, and we all want protection, but also for the protection of businesses. Frivolous stains can be brought against businesses by unscrupulous people. While we think this is only for the protection of consumers, it is also for the protection of businesses.

While talking about the improvements, Sir, I have to talk about a few disappointments and water would have to head the list. There are frequent unavailability, and poor distribution of potable water. I do not usually blame the high percentage of leakages, which I have heard estimated up to 50 per cent - I do not think that is realistic - and the very low mains that they use to distribute the water. I have been informed that failed valves and pumps, and an antiquated distribution network that mixes the inter-reservoir connectivity to that of the consumers' distribution system, are also a cause for the unavailability of potable water.

This situation causes closure of schools, great inconvenience to households and hotels, and tourism is still our number one industry, so we cannot treat our visitors that way. It also causes disruption of business, so I hope priority will be given to the water situation.

Next, I come to traffic congestion and inadequate road signage. We, as Barbadians are familiar with the roads, at least in the areas where we live, but imagine a visitor to this island driving around in a mini moke. I am surprised that there are not more accidents.

Today, driving up Broad Street to come here, I noticed the double crosses needed painting, and the lines in the middle of the road needed painting. We really need to do more to improve the traffic flow. This would be inexpensive in relation to having to build new roads to relieve the congestion.

Then, Sir, there is the overcrowding at Glendairy Prison. I believe it was constructed, a long time ago, to house 350 inmates. I am told that today there are more than 950 inmates in that institution. This is not healthy and it is not good. Something needs to be done about that situation.

Sir, I must also deal with the disappointing performance of the Commission for Pan African Affairs

which has been allocated, \$900 277 in the Estimates for 2004-2005.

Senate 12, sequence 33, 17:20:14

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR Sir John Stanley GODDARD: Sir, especially disappointing is its continuing failure in Government's programmes as part of its mandate relating to the nation's population groups and institutions of the continent of Africa and the wider African Diaspora. Part of its mandate relates to the fostering of relationships, cooperation and interaction in the areas of economics, trade information and other aspects of culture that will be implemented in collaboration with existing departments of government. This is clearly outlined under Head 13 that deals with the Prime Minister's Office at programme 040 subprogramme 051. In my opinion, the Commission for Pan African Affairs seems to function unfettered as an alternative Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade.

Mr. President, I come next to Parliament Building. Right across the courtyard is the West Wing, a magnificent building which has been abandoned for a long while. I think a lot of work has been done on the roof as it should have been, but it is put to no use. It needs to be considered. Here it is that we have in Barbados over 350 years of Parliament. The suggestion I want to put forward is that West Wing could make a wonderful museum of Parliaments throughout the Commonwealth and democratic countries. It would cost some money but I believe visitors to this island will be prepared to pay a fee to visit it, so it would be almost if not totally self supporting. I just do not like to see that magnificent building staying there idle.

Next I come to the Greenland Landfill which has been a deafening silence after millions of dollars have been spent on digging that hole previously. Surely there is a need for the application of improved technology in incineration or gasification. I am not getting into the very technical areas. While those options would have been considered unwise some years ago, the forms of technology are improved to such an extent now that some serious consideration could be given to one or the other.

Mr. President, I now come to public sector reform. I have had someone described that to me as an oxymoron. That might not be fair. I do recognise the achievements that have been made by certain government departments which cannot be denied. However, I would like to say something that the Director of Public Sector Reform has reported to have said. He said that all of the improved systems, environmental conditions, raises of pay and the work system would not make a difference if persons have no interest in making a meaningful change in the delivery of quality service.

Mr. President, he could not have said it any better. I believe there are good policies and strategies within the public sector, but the processes and structures regarding the effective implementation of those policies and strategies seem almost to be a disease in the public sector and frustrate the objectives of any Government in office irrespective of party.

I next come to the growing disregard for discipline and responsibility in the society generally. We all recognise it, we read about it daily, we watch it on television and we hear on the radio about the vandalism at the schools, in public transport, on the roads and highways and in places of public entertainment. PAREDOS is doing good work, but that is just one non-governmental organisation.

We need more public and private sector support for providing parental guidance and training in conflict resolution and the management of affairs. It all comes back to the home. Before we blame the school or anybody else, we should come back to the home. Unless there is parental guidance and control, what happens after that would never be too effective.

Finally, the apparent growing indifference to the environment and noise pollution is of great concern to many. Litter is being thrown in the canefields, in the gullies and at the sides of the roads. We are becoming a very noisy society. This may be a reflection of my ageing, but I do not think so, Sir, because I heard this from persons of all ages. I suppose it is a certain amount of nostalgia to a former age where it was more peaceful and more quiet. I am not knocking change, change is inevitable, but all changes are not necessary improvements.

Finally, Sir, I come to the opportunity where I must deal with HIVAIDS. Twenty years ago HIVAIDS was unknown. Since that time over 60 million people worldwide have contracted HIVAIDS and many have died from it. Today, it is estimated that there are some 42 million people living with HIVAIDS. Two-thirds of that 42 million live in South Sahara Africa. The Caribbean is the next most infected region on earth in relation to population.

The Government received US\$15.15 million for the period 2001-2006 from the World Bank to provide antiretroviral drugs and to upgrade treatment and care programme, which is highly commendable, but the year 2006 is only two years away and I do not know if there is any assurance that such aid would continue.

Government spends a lot of money on the HIVAIDS programme. Apart from the funding of the HIVAIDS Commission, we see as we go through the Estimates the amounts provided to each ministry dealing with HIVAIDS, which is commendable. However, it is not too early to start thinking about financing the requirements and the sourcing

of financing for after 2006, that will be the last year for the draw-down of that World Bank loan. Mr. President, I am suggesting that the private sector has a serious responsibility to the society and in its own enlightened self interest to join the fight against this scourge. Only today I read in the newspaper that a UNICEF spokesman said that Barbados could have a prevalence rate of 20 per cent in 10 to 15 years. The prevalence rate in the Caribbean today is 2.3 per cent which, if it is correct, is a frightening prediction. We therefore need to enlist the support of the private sector and I will urge the Government to assist the private sector by providing special financial incentives to the business community.

There is nothing like an incentive to get some action. If it is just treated like another good cause or another charity, the private sector would not respond in the same way. I am of the private sector and I think I know how the people in the private sector work.

Mr. President, I am a patron of the Special Olympics and I would like to make a plea on its behalf. It receives an annual grant of \$15 000 from Government which is not very much, yet it has to take care of over 500 special athletes who are mainly young persons with mental disabilities. Today, they have their big sports programme at the National Stadium, and I should be there, but to me this debate takes priority over that.

Mr. President, I also happen to be a patron of the Caribbean Dyslexia Association which receives nothing from Government, yet it is estimated that one in every 10 children is dyslexic. That does not mean that they are stupid or foolish. Many brilliant persons have been dyslexic. It is a learning disability.

Those children have to be specially taught how to learn with that disability and teachers have to be trained so that they can impart that knowledge to those children. I am not asking for a lot of money. The Special Olympics/Barbados and the Caribbean Dyslexia Association are two very deserving causes.

Senate 12 Sequence 34

5.30 p.m.

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR Sir John Stanley GODDARD: Mr. President, I would also like to share an experience I had at the St. Cyprian's Primary Boys' School a few years ago, in relation to mentoring. We older folks are so quick to criticise the youth, what are we doing about it?

Sir Conrad Hunte, Ronald Smith, others and I, were invited to the St. Cyprian's Boys' Primary School every

Friday morning to have a chat with the boys after prayers. There we would talk about nationhood, family, responsibility, duty, et cetera. Sir, it was a joy to be interacting with these boys who were between the ages of 9 and 10. It was a wonderful experience to be doing that, and I think I probably learnt more from them, than they have learnt from me.

Sir, there were two occasions that I will never forget. After meeting with them I asked them what they thought was so special about that coming Sunday. One little boy replied that it was Mothers' Day. I told them all to go home and on Sunday morning, go into their mothers' bedrooms and give each mother a big hug and a kiss and tell her how much he loves her, and to thank her for all that she has done for him.

Mr. President, I cannot tell you how many mothers I have met afterwards who have not thanked me for what I had done to their little boys. Sir, I used that to demonstrate how important mentoring role can be. I am referring to older men mentoring young boys, and older ladies mentoring young ladies. It costs us nothing and I believe it is a responsibility that many older persons would be very willing to discharge.

Finally, Sir, the Cricket World Cup. That is a challenge. I know that a lot of work has been and is being done but this would mobilise this society, not only Barbados but the Caribbean as a whole. I am not going to talk about the performance of the West Indies Cricket Team at this time. That may cloud the discussion but hopefully by 2007, the team would be performing better. However, I do hope that the West Indies Cricket Board would not make the same mistake that it has made with this one, and would introduce a surcharge on English visitors. It is wrong, it is discriminatory, and I am wondering whether or not it is constitutional.

Mr. President, Barbadians have so much for which to be thankful but we should not take past successes for granted and assume that they would continue automatically well into perpetuity. Barbadians must recognise that developing a culture of performance is a prerequisite for growing and sustaining a service economy. I submit, that developing such a culture in an age of rapid change is important.

Mr. President, I thank you, and I do support the

Estimates debate.

Her Honour SENATOR Dame Patricia SYMMONDS: Mr. President, I wish to express my strong approval of the Estimates and to praise the Honourable Minister of Finance. He has maintained economic stability, has reduced the deficit, and has demonstrated masterly

ordinary fiscal skill, at a time when the world economic order is presenting many difficulties for some countries. At the same time, the Honourable Minister of Finance is able to continue fulfilling social and other developmental needs of our citizens.

Mr. President, as usual Senator Stuart was eloquent but I think that in some instances, some of his statements collapsed under the weight of his philosophising and misunderstanding. Sir, I will allude to a number of them. I remember very well because I had to take some young school children in when the Democratic Labour Party put 14-year olds out of schools. There is now university education up to the age of 16. There is an Alleviation of Poverty Programme. There is the Urban Development Commission and the Rural Development Commission.

Mr. President, I wish to refer to Senator Stuart's comments on physical education and to assure him that physical education is compulsory at primary level. There are syllabuses for it and it is separate and distinct from any programmes of the National Sports Council. Sir, every class, from nursery level to class four level, must do two periods per week, and at the secondary level it is part of a compulsory course in the lower schools.

Mr. President, a new Physical Education syllabus has been introduced for Caribbean Examination Council Examinations. There is also an officer for physical education attached to the Ministry of Education.

Mr. President, I wish to look at the Ministry of Social Transformation and to two of its mandates. As Honourable Senators know, the Ministry of Social Transformation has been allocated a sum of \$76 612 776. I wish to refer to the National Committee on Ageing, which I have the honour to chair.

A new committee was appointed last year and its terms of reference are very wide. If effectively carried out, they can help to change the quality of life for senior citizens. There is a Green Paper in draft, on which the Committee is going to review and express its opinion, before it goes to Cabinet.

Mr. President, the terms of reference are as follows:

(a) To make recommendation to Government on all matters relating to ageing and to the quality of life of older persons by identifying and valuating various governmental and non governmental programmes of both direct and indirect concerns to older persons.

(b) Working with the Ministry of Social Transformation and other relevant governmental and non governmental organisations, to ensure improvements in the

quality of life of older persons, and reviewing and making recommendations on relevant research and other reports.

(c) To propose and support activities which will:

(i) Recognise the contributions of older persons;

(ii) Provide for the continuing education of older persons;

(iii) Contribute to healthy lifestyles among older persons;

(iv) Provide for the cultural development of older persons;

(v) Provide for improvement in the quality of life for older persons;

(vi) Assist in identifying areas of research on ageing.

Mr. President, it has now become commonplace that in

the year 2015 we should have an ageing population and therefore, we have to plan for it since the dependence ratio will have more seniors. We also have to plan so that people would live out their lives, while continuing to make a good contribution wherever possible and to be well looked after where there is an inability for them to look after themselves.

Mr. President, it gnaws my heart to see or to hear of the neglect of older persons. I was particularly concerned, as I would expect all Honourable Senators would be, when I heard about an elderly person who had been abused by being placed in inhuman conditions.

Senate No.12 (35) 5.40 p.m.

Wednesday, March 22, 2004

Her Honour SENATOR Dame Patricia SYMMONDS: I know that others are living in circumstances of squalor, socially abandoned by their relatives and alienated from society. People in the society must be vigilant and bring such cases to the attention of the social services authority.

We have to envisage a time when we shall be looking after the needs of the elderly equally as well as we now look after the youth and children in our society. Sir, because of this trend, the dependency ratio will have more senior citizens than youth. I think there is a need for a comprehensive elderly legislation through which seniors can be protected against maltreatment and abuse in the

homes and residential centres. I am confident that this caring Government will address this as soon as possible.

The advent of the Senior Games which was so well publicised is an excellent idea. It evokes much interest and support and is now a family event. A special committee has been appointed to organise these games and another exciting, well-organised fulfilling day is anticipated very soon.

Mr. President, the National Committee on Aging will be looking for innovative ideas to carry out its mandate successfully and to work with other organisations. Our Committee comprises persons with a wide variety of skills and experience. Both men, women and youth are represented and are already displaying much enthusiasm. Moreover, the committee is interested in getting male seniors to be actively involved in this development programme.

We have a problem which is universal where the male participation in senior social recreational activity is low. The males need to get the message that they can have a better quality of life on retirement if they become involved in community, organised social and recreational activities.

I am sure that Senator Collymore will agree with me that BARP is playing an important role in the society and is to be praised for the work it is doing.

We are also aware that the Queen Elizabeth Hospital has an alternate care for the elderly programme which plays an important part in the provision of care for the elderly. It is important for us in the society to pay close attention to the quality of service being provided by elder caregivers. Just as children can suffer neglect or abuse, so can the elderly if they are placed in unsuitable homes.

The National Assistance Board has been kind in giving accommodation and a secretariat for our committee and the Minister of Social Transformation along with his officers, in his usual dynamic and humanitarian approach to the concerns of the elderly, should also to be commended.

I wish to turn to the Bureau of Gender Affairs. Among other things, the Bureau of Gender Affairs is charged with the responsibility of:

“Facilitating gender mainstreaming of national development policies and programmes so that the quality and equity between men and women can be achieved.”

The mission of the bureau is to:

“Ensure the integration of gender and development into all areas of national development, plans and policy so

that men and women can benefit equally from existing opportunities.”

During 2003, the Bureau continued its gender sensitisation programme for its focal points. It also continued its educational programme in HIV/AIDS.

The workshop held in collaboration with the Maurice Byer health discussion group of Christ is Answer Family Church on September 29th was a most successful HIV/AIDS programme held during the year. This workshop attracted 99 men and 23 women.

In an attempt to highlight the issue of masculinity, the Bureau held a seminar entitled “Men in Caribbean Societies” in collaboration with the Centre for Gender and Development Studies.

In addition, it held a nutrition and health function “Men Embracing Families”, which focused on the emotional, health and nutritional issues of men. It brought together a wide cross-section of men, their partners and spouses as well as children. Approximately 200 persons attended, 30 per cent of them being men.

The Bureau, in an attempt to help empower men and women to become more productive in the quality of their lives, collaborated with the Barbados Professional Women’s Club and MESA to facilitate a number of self-development workshops for men and women. MESA’s programmes sought to help men in listening and supporting other men providing a forum to share experiences and ideas to assist in the development of young males spiritually and to identify and help some of the specific needs of youth.

Sir, I want to mention domestic violence because I understand there has been an upsurge of it. The Bureau, because of this, sought to sensitise secondary schools to the issue of domestic violence and conducted programmes with three secondary schools, Springer Memorial, Princess Margaret and St. James Secondary. The Government has implemented a number of programmes aimed at eliminating violence against women. There is a provision of services for victims and offenders. The Royal Barbados Police Force has a victim group established. It is a nonprofit making organisation and any new recruit has to be trained in domestic violence intervention.

There are plans for an activity to be held in June around Father’s Day to emphasis the role of men in families and society and a public education programme will be developed to bring awareness among the public of gender issue and gender management systems adopted by Government to integrate a gender perspective into national development and programmes.

S12/17:50

Sequence 36

Monday, 22 March, 2004

Her Honour SENATOR Dame Patricia SYMMONDS: Mr. President, I understand that gender inequality is a critical factor in the increasing incidences of HIV/AIDS in Barbados. I noted with interest that Sir John mentioned HIV/AIDS. Sir, because of power relations, our economic situations that force women sometimes to make desperate choices, women are more vulnerable than men.

In terms of legislation, we know that nothing discriminates against women but ideological and cultural practices where women are seen in traditional roles still form a guard against women’s progress so that general sensitisation and training seem to be two of the main answers, and gender mainstreaming is one of the main tools to bring about gender equality and sustainable development.

Sir, often complaints are made about the inadequacy of staff at the Bureau of Gender Affairs but, of course, it is a matter of priorities. I must say that there has been an increase in the staff and I trust that more will be done to strengthen this institution when it is feasible.

Mr. President, \$241 931 936.00 is allocated to education. In spite of some flaws, the standard of education in Barbados remains high and the system is one of the best managed in the world. I said that before and I make no apology for repeating it. This standard is due to the financial priority placed on it, along with health, by successive Governments. It has been heightened by this Government through its vision, proaction, physical ingenuity, and its offering a universal education for 5 to 16 years.

In addition, there is a new concept that each child matters. Hence, this Government is ensuring that no child is denied the opportunity to make a contribution to the economic and social development of Barbados, including those with special needs, intellectual deficits, physical deficiencies and psychological challenges.

Significantly, in the last five years more children have come out of school with certification. It must also be remembered that education is a continuum. School is only one aspect. It provides the basics and the right attitude.

Sir, I refer to the Sir Winston University of Halifax. I mentioned it before in this Honourable Chamber and it is continuing its training of approximately sixty of our teachers in Barbados in a Bachelors and Masters programme in special needs in order that teachers will acquire the knowledge and skills and, therefore, be better able to face challenges which these children have.

Sir, furthermore, all the schools which were refurbished under the EduTech programme now have ramps to facilitate access to the buildings and bathrooms which were specially designed bathrooms for persons with disabilities. This was never done before. It is not only a matter of economics, although we need that to bring about these reforms, it is also a matter of social justice.

Sir, I want to say something about EduTech as at March 2004. Mr. President, \$30,221,469.00 have been allocated to education and from what I have observed, it is money being well spent. May I remind Honourable Senators of its objective. The primary goal of EduTech is to increase the knowledge of citizens contributing to the sustainable, social and economic development of Barbados. Its specific objectives are to prepare students who are creative, literate, well-trained and readily retrainable at any point in their development.

Also, to ensure that all students understand the necessity of being able to live and work harmoniously with other person in their environment and to increase the efficacy of the teaching/ learning process by encouraging teachers to shift to child-centred learning and more collaborative forms of learning in their classrooms and ensure that all children leave school with the basic qualifications and abilities that are required to participate productively in the skilled, information-intensive job market.

I wish to stress that the project is a comprehensive school improvement programme designed to help the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports implement the form of the national curriculum teaching methodologies and assessment procedures.

Sir, it encompasses four interrelated components and in light of the programme's magnitude and complexity, it requires seven phases for full implementation of the programme, and I think that is important to remember.

Sir, there is the civil works which involves the physical refurbishment, upgrading of classrooms and other facilities which include the retrofitting of specific classrooms to accommodate installation of various educational multimedia resources.

Sir, there is a human resources development component of the programme. The aim is to train approximately 3,000 education sector professionals in an effort to make maximum use of the resources available. The majority of training is site-based wherever possible. As at September 30, 2003, between 120 and 176 teachers had completed the first and second courses respectively to support the full operation of the programme coordinating unit and to boost the capacity of specific ministry sections

to implement various aspects of the programme. That is one of its components.

The procurement and installation of hardware and software are the fourth one. This component involves the purchasing of learning technologies and associated applications for use in the school system. A test and fixed approach is being done throughout the implementation of the programme.

Mr. President, as at February 2004, 31 schools have been completed.

18.00 p.m.

Sequence 37

Monday, March 22, 2004

Her Honour SENATOR Dame Patricia SYMMONDS: In Phase 1 Public/Primary, and I should mention them, Cuthbert Moore, Deacons, Westbury, Sharon, Irvine Wilson, St. Joseph, St. Mary's, South District and Christ Church Boys', an impressive number; Public/Secondary, Combermere, Ellersley, Alexandra and St. James Secondary and Private/Primary, St. Gabriel's; Private/Secondary, Metropolitan.

In Phase 2, ten primary schools have been completed under contractual arrangements with Ajax Construction, Edu Systems and CRS Building and Maintenance. These schools were Mount Tabor, St. Matthew's, St. Luke's, Pine, St. Paul's, Grazettes, St. Jude's, St. Andrew, St. Bernard and St. Cyprian's.

There is work in progress at Princess Margaret Secondary, Coleridge and Parry, St. Lucy Primary, West Terrace Primary and Bay Primary.

Curriculum reform is also part of EduTech. Field testing at the revised curricular at primary class four and secondary level four, continued. The revised curricula for Primary Class Four, physical education and religious and moral education are to be completed. The Second Level Four, religious and moral education is to be completed. All the other revised curricula have been completed and training for teachers to use the curriculum is ongoing. I think that should be enough to allay any fears or completely destroy any sort of misunderstanding.

Now, I wish to say something about the University College of Barbados. It is in its embryonic stage but some criticism has been launched about that, not here but I have heard it, and I wish to say something. The proposed University College of Barbados will be the institution formed from the amalgamation of the Barbados

Community College, the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic and Erdiston Teachers' Training College.

Mr. President, there are many benefits to be derived from this amalgamation. One administrative organisational structure, providing services for any University College of Barbados students will be more cost effective than each campus providing its own administrative services. It will also reduce duplication of programmes. Programmes will be offered in the applied sciences and arts which the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus at present does not offer. It will increase access to world-class tertiary education. It will respond in a proactive way to the demand for existing programmes and curricula will be upgraded.

Obsolete and deteriorating facilities will be improved and its object is also to improve the delivery of programmes to include business trends, so that the concept of enterprise learning, and this is important, will help to focus the instructors and students on the recognition of new opportunities in traditional subject areas.

It is suggested that the organisation of the University College of Barbados (UCB) is based on clusters of excellence to provide identities to the four campuses of the institution as follows:

The BCC: Languages, cultural arts, graphics and performing arts and communication technology. SJPP: Applied technology, environmental engineering and resource management. Erdiston Teachers' Training College: Health science and education. Marine Gardens: Hospitality, tourism and international business.

At this stage, the Ministry is examining the reports of the sub committees set up to look into the UCB.

Sir, I wish to address the problem of oralcy which over the years has been one of my concerns. It has been said that speech is one of the greatest gifts given to man and it represents, perhaps, the highest form of human achievement.

Mr. President, in return for the vast investment in education, our people need to value it more than they seem to do nowadays, and they need to support the Ministry and the schools in the quest to keep standards high. Regrettably, the standard of broken English has declined. Therefore, it is receiving the urgent attention of the Ministry and the schools.

Oralcy is an integral part of the language arts programme and the Ministry, together with a panel of teachers, is designing an oral language programme, beginning with the early childhood stage. It is at that stage that language is most easily developed. Cabinet fully supports these programmes and more than four years ago,

they directed that the language of the classroom should be standard English.

If one is not able to exploit the language, communicate effectively and express our feelings and thoughts, it denies access to many other experiences. Perhaps the fundamental requirement for oralcy is to have the vocabulary, idiom and structures suitable to situations which one is most likely to meet in life to be able to use instantly what is appropriate and, furthermore, recognise what is inappropriate.

The rationale behind the language arts syllabus at primary level states, and I quote:

"A balanced language programme should promote competence in each of the four language arts, listening, speaking, reading and writing and the programme must be so structured that students are able to benefit from the inter-relationships that exist among these four processes."

Just knowing the elements of language is not enough. Students need exposure to a number of opportunities which allow them to use language in its many contexts, such as formal situations, informal situations, writing and speaking. In addition, students must develop competence in presenting argument logically and critically.

Many people do not seem, nowadays, to regard competence in language as important, and this is unfortunate for this is a social and emotional use of language, including the development of self-esteem. Some people seem to see English as a language for only a limited number of people in the community. Emphasis on oralcy will build the bridge which allows for a smooth transition from natural proficiency in dialect. Sir, no one is saying that dialect does not have its place, but children do not have to learn it. It comes naturally but they have to try and be bilingual, so they can move from that natural proficiency to full communicated competence in standard English.

Some of us may have been looking at cricket today, and here is where we will see that dialect takes its place, nobody is going to shout out, "why don't you hit the ball well"...

Senate 12, sequence 38, 18:10:14

Monday, March 22, 2004

Her Honour SENATOR Dame Patricia SYMMONDS: Some of us may have been looking at or having a peep at cricket today, and here is where we would say dialect has its place. Nobody is going to shout out: "Why don't you hit the ball well?" They would come out and say: "Man, hit the ball". There you see where dialect

comes in sometimes and where you need formal language for certain situations.

Mr. President, before I leave the area of education, I wish to make a fervent appeal to the teachers of English in Barbados to revive the association for the teaching of English and for that matter specialist teachers in other subjects to revivify any associations that have fallen into disuse. In the past, the Barbados Association for the Teaching of English was a vibrant and influential organisation in which the clear voice of the teacher of English and the lover of English was heard, and it needs to be heard today just as much as it was heard years ago.

Finally, Mr. President, I turn to another of my favourite interest which I think is important for Barbados, that is sports. Participation in sports worldwide is greater today than it ever was. It is advantageous for the sports person and the spectator. Sports is a great leveller. For the average sports person it provides opportunities for travel thereby broadening his or her experience.

I will not go into the financial aspects of it and those benefits, I dare not. It is an educator teaching one how to win with humility and how to lose with composure. Further it instills discipline which is so much needed in our society, co-operation and perseverance as well as being conducive to good health which is important even to the reduction of some chronic diseases. Senator Stuart spoke about physical education and that is where that would come in. In addition, it provides recreation and entertainment. For all these reasons it is important to a nation and deserves the unqualified support of governments and citizens.

We have been fortunate in Barbados to have governments who have been strong supporters of sports, in general, not only cricket. At the same time I would say that where our people are concerned that our country needs to be built up to support athletes and that sports must become an extremely important part of our lives not just sports for fun as some people regard it.

The National Sports Council plays an integral role in the development of sports in Barbados. It continues to be very active and to carry out its mandate. Its aim is to develop an active, healthy and fit society through sports and physical activities in line with the overall efforts of the Government in nation building. Please note that.

Two of its main objectives are to develop and improve the knowledge and practice of sports in the interest of social welfare of the individual and the enjoyment of leisure among the public at large and to achieve excellence at the national, regional and international levels of competition with a view toward enhancing national image and goodwill.

Mr. President, the National Sports Council has a staff of over 267 persons and an annual budget of \$13 million. With 14 active disciplines, the Council has been under pressure to deliver high quality coaching in addition to assisting at the national level. Happily there has been an improvement in the academic and professional performance among the coaching staff. This has been the result of the desire on the part of the staff to improve themselves and to avail themselves of scholarships. Added to this, there has been an improvement in staff training.

Interestingly, too, is the International Sports Administrators Course which was held in Atlanta in 2003. Participants in order to qualify had to have an administrative sports degree. Fifty-five participants were chosen - they had to be chosen, they could not just go, from all over the world - to take part in the course. There were only four from the Caribbean. Adrian Donovan from Barbados was among them and he emerged top of the class with 95.5 per cent.

During the past year table tennis was expanded by the appointment of two coaches after the retirement of the person who has held the post, so more children are being exposed and working very closely with the Barbados Table Tennis Association. This I found of particular interest when I did my research.

For the first time there is a coach for women football at both the primary and secondary level. The training section started in October 2002 with about 30 females between the ages of six and 30. The numbers have now increased to 65 and continues to grow, such is the popularity of the sports and the enthusiasm of the participants.

This augurs well for the players since there are opportunities of obtaining scholarships all over North America. These players are preparing to make their first official visit to Trinidad and Tobago this year. A female basketball competition was also held for the first time and 11 secondary schools entered. Coleridge and Parry defeated the Garrison Secondary to take the title.

Mr. President, eight Cubans are on contract and have been assigned to the National Sports Council to coach in swimming, boxing, hockey, volleyball, table tennis and track and field. I understand that they are doing a good job training not only the students at the primary and secondary schools but are working with the elite athletes through the national association.

During the period April 1, 2002 to March 31, 2003, fourteen associations used the services of the secretariat. In addition, 26 associations were given special grants to assist them in sending teams to participate in regional and international events. The total sum was \$462 956.00 and

the sum of \$864 602.00 was received from 21 companies - I am sure Senator Fields and Senator Sir John Goddard would be pleased to hear that - who sponsor either events or provided financial assistance for programmes. The National Sports Council also received donations from a number of companies for the Women's 10K.

Mr. President, among the National Sports Council's plan for 2004 is to improve the skills and quality of athletes by intensifying coaching at the primary level, carrying out capital works programmes within the budget allocated, providing funding for the dominoes and whisk world championships in July this year, the Olympics in Athens in August, the Pan American Hockey Club in April and continuing the promotion of road tennis development.

The National Sports Council plans to complete the following activities during this financial year:- the construction of hard courts at Bridgefield, the Ignatius Byer School, Seaview, Ruby and Indian Ground and the resurfacing of the hard courts at Jackson, Blenheim, St. Christopher and the Police Boys' Club. In addition, a number of lights will be installed on a number of existing hard courts and playing fields throughout the island.

Senate 12 Sequence 39

6.20 p.m.

Monday, March 22, 2004

Her Honour SENATOR Dame Patricia SYMMONDS: . . .

Mr. President, pavilions will also be constructed at the following places: Boscobel, Archer's Bay, Glebe, Foster Hall, Green's and Rices. Playing fields will be developed in Green's, Gemswick, Yearwood Road, Foster Hall, Arsenal and Cane Vale.

Mr. President, the resurfaced playing field at Dover, Christ Church, is of particular importance at this time. It was recently handed over by the Urban Development Commission to the National Sports Council. It is important because, as is generally known, it is a venue used by many foreign sporting teams to practise and to train.

In addition, it is going to be the place where Cricket Fest, which is supposed to be a big one-day event taking place on March, 31, 2004, the day before the Test Series in Barbados, will be held. It has primarily been organised to attract the estimated number of visitors who will be arriving.

There will be documentaries of past West Indies teams, and this present team will be making a guest appearance. The Fest is also going to be a mixture of

cricket, the performing arts and education, and has the support of the National Sports Council.

Mr. President, the National Sports Council has celebrated its 25th Anniversary last year and owes much to its directors, chairmen, board members and staff, over the years.

Mr. President, in conclusion, I wish to utter words of praise. Under the heading of Public Sector Reform, which, of course, I am going to leave to Senator Williams, but since this is something that touches me, I want to mention it. Sir, the Accountant-General deserves much praise for the initiative, reasonableness and sensitivity, which she has shown in reducing the amount of life certificates that pensioners and retirees have to sign. Sir, perhaps sterner penalties might have to be introduced for anyone who tries to beat the system but, I am sure, there are many retired persons in my age group and below, who are very grateful to the Accountant-General for this innovation.

Mr. President, I also wish to laud the staff at the

National Insurance Office. They have recently had a big problem with the changing over of the system. I know it was very difficult because I too suffered somewhat during this change-over but I must say that from all I have seen and heard, the Staff took it in the manner in which good civil servants should behave. I would, therefore, like to commend one lady in particular with whom I dealt, Mrs. Vivian Nurse, for her courtesy, patience and cooperation.

Mr. President, with those remarks, I support this Bill.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss L. V. EASTMOND: Mr. President, I rise to speak in what is my first Estimates debate in this Honourable Chamber. The matter before us is the Appropriation Bill, 2004, and we are considering the Estimates for the period 2004-2005.

Mr. President, I would first like to congratulate Senator Griffith, Leader of Government Business, for the presentation he has made this morning.

Mr. President, in response to Senator Stuart, I would like to say that in looking at the Estimates as a whole, one must recognise that the entire document not only focusses on economic development but also on social programmes. Indeed, the good Senator was the one who went on to point out, as Senator Griffith had done previously, that the largest allocation had been made to education and health, those two areas being the areas that would ensure our human resources capacity remains at the level that it is today.

Mr. President, in terms of economic development, this results in jobs for more people, which means that

increase in spending capacity for them and their families. It also results in Government and businesses being able to earn more revenues, which Government then is able to tax. When that happens, it means that the Government can collect more revenues in order to support its social programmes, some to which other Honourable Senators have already spoken.

Mr. President, therefore, I do not believe that it is a fair assessment to suggest that on the Government's side, our focus is only on economic development. It is a critical part of everything that we do in Barbados because at the end of the day, we do need to make money in order to support the programmes that are put in place, whether they are of an economic, political or social nature.

Mr. President, I would wish to put my presentation into a broader context. We have heard some reference made to globalisation, for example. This period of globalisation to which we are now referring has been fuelled in large part, by the technological revolution in which we are now participating. Sir, this technological revolution brings with it many challenges but it is my submission that it also brings opportunities. The technological revolution that is before us allows us to do many things. It certainly allows the world to communicate in a more effective and rapid fashion than was previously done.

Mr. President, with that it also brings issues such as financial contagion, and we have all heard about the ageing crises and how these crises are no longer limited to any one country but can move from country to country. We have also heard that because individuals are able to travel more efficiently and cheaply than before, that we can also have the transportation of diseases around the world in a more efficient manner.

Mr. President, similarly with respect to diseases that affect our livestock or poultry, we have had experiences with those, and because the world is now more interdependent than it was before, all of the developments in communication have allowed us to carry these various matters, whether they are good or bad, around the world more quickly, more effectively and more efficiently than previously. Therefore, there are challenges but all of that efficiency also brings with it opportunities.

Mr. President, it is within that context that I would argue that the developed world saw opportunities for encouraging the rest of us to engage in a process of trade liberalisation, which is also one of the other major effects. Another major challenge in which we are now engaged, is the process of trade liberalisation which we are encountering at several different levels in Barbados.

Senate No.12 (40)6.30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR the Hon. Miss L.V. EASTMOND: in fact, within the CARICOM communities our countries are probably engaged in the most intensive set of negotiations. This is because negotiations at the WTO are going on at the same time as those at the FTAA, as we negotiate new arrangements with the European Union and as we seek to implement the Caribbean Single Market and Economy.

I believe within our history we have not been engaged in such intensive negotiations previously certainly within the context of the entire world. I believe CARICOM countries should acknowledge that what they are engaged in is a feat of magnificent proportions that most countries are not engaged in and we should give ourselves credit for it.

I would like to focus on the Caribbean Single Market and Economy within the context of its negotiations. Obviously, much could be said about all of the other negotiations but we have always regarded the negotiations at the level of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy as being extremely critical because we believe that the creation of a single market will position CARICOM countries in such a way that will make us more ready to compete at the hemispheric level and at the world level. I believe this theory is still sound.

However, in more recent times, there has been some concern about the future of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy because of the dispute over fishing. I believe that our concern might have to do with the fact that our relationships within the Caribbean Single Market and Economy must be now regarded in a more formal way than previously.

While it is true that in the Caribbean context, we are used to an informal way of life, the truth is that within the WTO, FTAA and EU context, a formal way of doing business will be the order of the day but it will not be the informal way that I believe is fundamental to the culture of the Caribbean. I believe that relating to each other within the context of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy provides us with an opportunity to start learning and paying attention to these formalities so that we do not find ourselves at a disadvantage when we start to operate within the context of the WTO and FTAA.

Sir, the Caribbean Single Market and Economy is seen as more than a trade arrangement. In an ideal world within CARICOM, there should be no difference between how St. Lucia operates with Barbados or how, for example, someone from St. Michael operates with someone from Christ Church so that even though one lives in St. Michael, he is free to set up a business in Christ Church within any

borders. In order to do that, a lot still has to be done within the context of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy.

Sir, the fact that the Treaty of Chaguaramas, in my view, includes an elaborate dispute mechanism should suggest that disputes were anticipated. I would like for us to promise that we view all disputes with a level head because in any relationship there will be dispute and that is why there is such an elaborate dispute mechanism within the Treaty of Chaguaramas itself.

Sir, we have globalisation. We know that communication is easier, that there are opportunities and challenges, that we are negotiating trade arrangements and I would not like us to underestimate the importance of negotiating the appropriate trade agreements. Sir, negotiating trade agreements is not a sexy topic and nobody wants to discuss how you negotiate trade and many people consider it too boring. You can spend an entire day discussing one paragraph or negotiating one sentence, but the implications that one or two sentences can have on an entire economy is so far-reaching that it is worth the amount of time spent in those negotiations.

Sir, some people wonder why the Senior Minister and the official from the Ministry of State are always travelling but these negotiations do not take place in Barbados and in order to negotiate a text to preserve our interest, we must be there at the table to ensure that a comma does not go where we do not want it to go, as it would make a big difference to our economic circumstances.

Sir, the Government of Barbados has encouraged the private sector to also ensure that it follows these negotiations. A private sector trade team has been established and if you look at the Estimates you will see that the private sector trade team has been allocated \$250 000 in order to ensure that they are ready to participate in those negotiations.

Sir, one of the stated positions of this Government is that it expects the service economy to continue to drive the Barbados economy. There are some individuals who criticise this position without recognising that the Government's programme does not actually discriminate against any of the larger sectors, but supports services, agriculture and manufacturing. The fact of the matter is that if you look at our statistics, you would see that services already drive the Barbados economy.

S12/18:40

Sequence 41

Monday, 22 March, 2004

SENATOR Hon. L.V. EASTMOND: And from what we can see down the road, they will continue to do so, in tourism, international business and financial services and we expect to see the growth and development of other services such as professional services.

Mr. President, some of the other services that I am sure will come onstream as well are services in agriculture and the enhancement of manufacturing, which we do not pay any attention to. In terms of the expertise in agriculture, to say that we can actually develop a cadre of individuals that can provide services in Barbados, the region and the rest of the world in agriculture, I believe is not farfetched.

Mr. President, that is part of the services economy as well because the truth is, there many areas - even in environment services. Sir, when we were doing our research with respect to the services sector in the Barbados economy, we were surprised at the number of professionals, resident in Barbados, that provide environmental services around the region and even in North America.

The services sector is actually a big and active sector. Unfortunately, we do not have the statistics we would like in order to identify the specific services that are actually bringing foreign exchange into Barbados.

In order to help support this, this Government, in collaboration with the private sector, has seen the development of the Barbados coalition of service industries. If you look at the Estimates with respect to the Ministry of Industry and International Business, you will see that Government has allocated \$500 000 to that particular enterprise. I believe that this is an extremely important initiative.

Sir, one of the areas in which Barbados can be competitive from the perspective of exporting services is in those professional services areas, in construction, engineering, architecture, dentistry, medicine, nurses and legal services. We would see that Barbadians already provides these services throughout the region. They have been doing that for many years, and some of them are also providing these services further afield within the hemisphere and internationally.

Sir, one of the problems that businesses face is that they tend to be small. There has to be a facility for doing marketing and promotion of services, seeking out contractual agreements in other territories, while at the same time doing your business at home. Regarding architectural firms, there would simply be one architect. There may be an assistant and a secretary or you might have two architects working together. The truth is, it is very difficult for them to get on a plane and travel to a

promotional tour or to countries in order to seek out new contracts. We expect that the Barbados Coalition of Service Industries will help to facilitate that.

There are a number of similar agencies that come from Europe and North America to Barbados, and the Caribbean, and meet with the private sector and Government, and it never crosses our minds to think why is it that they would come to a country of this size to get contracts for companies in England. Sir, this is because they go all over the world and if they can pick up one or two contracts in Barbados, one in St. Lucia and one in Dominica, it means that they would have achieved what they want by getting contracts for their people in the United Kingdom or the United States of America. We believe that this is what the Barbados Coalition of Service Industries should be able to do for our service providers in Barbados.

Sir, I would also say that within the context of the development of international business and financial services, Government now sees that even though it is recognised that it is a specialty area, we recognise that Barbados must reach the stage where it is seen as a full-fledged service centre.

There is absolutely no reason why Barbados cannot provide the full range of services that we see in other countries and large cities, such as the United Kingdom and New York. For example, when you go to London and you look at the range of services being provided there, yes, they provide international business services and financial services.

There are many who argue stridently that they provide offshore financial services in London but they also provide educational services, for example, the University of London. They provide medical, entertainment, culture and the arts, museums and historical sights. They provide almost every service that you can think of within that small geographical space called London. Therefore, that economy is exceptionally vibrant and that is why they are able to charge high prices as well.

Mr. President, it is exceptionally vibrant and everybody wants to go there. I do not see that it is beyond Barbados to also seek to achieve similarly where we would have a wide selection of services being provided in Barbados both for the domestic and foreign markets. That is why this Government is also focussing on developing culture, cultural services and the arts. I am sure that Senator Williams will speak on that particular point. That is all part of the development of the services economy in Barbados.

Sir, all of this is being facilitated by this Government through a number of initiatives. This is why I am encouraging us to look at the Estimates within that broader context. Sir, when we look at the programmes within the

Estimates document we will see that they are all working towards a goal of enhancing the economic development outlook of Barbados as well as the social and political outlook.

There are other initiatives that Government has taken which should be viewed within this context. Usually we hear them being discussed separately but there are all going towards that end.

For example, the reduction in corporation tax that is to facilitate business, also ensuring that we have the appropriate intellectual property legislation on our books which will help to facilitate business as well, so that Barbados is fully compliant with the trade related aspects of intellectual property agreement, the World Trade Organisation agreement.

Mr. President, all of these measures which provide assistance to business development are being put in place to help reposition the Barbados economy so that the economy can take on the challenges that it will be faced with through more liberalised markets. Also, it must not be an economy where we are always in a survivalist position. We wish to move to a position of prosperity, to a position where wealth creation is something that we speak about every day.

I believe that in the same way that individuals can agree that a whole nation can share in poverty, I believe that an entire nation can share its wealth if we all work together. Government has put these policies in place, for example, the financial initiatives that have been taken with respect to the Enterprise Growth Fund, the implementation of the Special Developments Act and the Small Business Development Act. All of these initiatives are focused on enhancing the Barbados economy.

Sir, Government has done its part and we know that all of the initiatives taken by Government have not all worked well at the outset.

18.50 p.m.

Sequence 42

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR the Hon. Miss L.V. EASTMOND: The Government is also in a position where it is prepared to listen to any suggestions that come from the general public, or from the individuals that we wish to target who would benefit from these initiatives, to advise us, if there is anything that we can do better. Sir, that is the context within which the work of my Ministry is framed.

Mr. President, my Ministry has the responsibility for overseeing what is clearly a transformative period in our country and more narrowly, our economy. I believe that the main reason we are here is to carry the initiatives taken by our Government to work towards improving the quality of life for Barbadians and this is part of the mission of my Ministry, through the facilitation of commerce, entrepreneurship and the protection of consumers.

Sir, if you look at your Estimates, you would see that my Ministry has been allocated \$13 276 740 to do quite a lot of work. The areas that fall within my Ministry include, science and technology, promotion and development, information communications technology, utilities' regulation, insuring standards, price and quality, the promotion, setting and enforcement of product standards, oversight of matters concerning insolvencies and bankruptcies, business development, especially the provision of technical assistance for persons that are suffering from HIV/AIDS, in the development of their own businesses.

We are also responsible for cooperatives and the regulation and development of cooperatives and credit unions, and also with respect to monitoring import licensing, betting and gaming. This is quite a lot, Mr. President, and obviously my Ministry is extremely efficient to get all of that done.

Mr. President, I would like to start by looking at the cooperatives and credit unions, which have been allocated approximately \$791 000 for the regulation and development of the cooperative movement in Barbados. There are some 39 active credit unions in Barbados. We have four farming, one fishing, and four transportation cooperatives.

With respect to the credit union movement, I was having a discussion with one of my colleagues and I was pointing out that the credit union movement in Barbados is very much an unheralded success story for Barbadians of all walks of life. I believe that it is not as readily acknowledged as it should be. This is an enterprise that has seen success which has been developed where its progress has been monitored by ordinary Barbadians.

The credit union movement can now argue its success in real statistics, having some 109 401 members. In Barbados the population is approximately 265 000, so you understand the high percentages that you are talking about. The workforce in Barbados is about 180 000, so the success of the credit union movement in Barbados is absolutely remarkable.

I believe in this age, when we are talking about challenges, when we are believing somehow that we cannot succeed in this new world of economic order, I think that

we can look to credit unions and we can say well, if ordinary Barbadians have achieved this, what then of those of us who consider ourselves to be a little bit more than ordinary.

What it said is that Barbados, if it puts its mind to anything, it can achieve it and the credit union movement has done this very quietly. It now has assets in excess of \$644.3 million.

Now I had the opportunity to speak at the launching of the Barbados Workers' Union Cooperative Credit Union Branch in Speightstown in St. Peter recently. It was a very enjoyable occasion and part of the discussion we had there had to do with the fact that out of all the cooperatives, the credit unions have been successful but what about the other cooperatives that have not been as successful.

One of the things that my Ministry would wish to do is to try to determine what has driven the success of the credit unions and to see if we can transform this or translate this over to the other cooperatives. I believe that the cooperatives' solution is a good one for the situation we now find ourselves in, with respect to small business development.

Often small businesses do need to collaborate with each other, but it is also the case that within the Barbados business culture, especially at the small business level, small business people do not like to enter into partnerships or form companies with other individuals.

It is my view that the cooperatives' legislation, certainly provides a facility where individual companies or enterprises can get together in a cooperative movement, determine the areas in which they can collaborate, maybe in terms of identifying inputs for their business, sourcing inputs at reduced cost because they will be able to buy in bulk, certainly they will be able to do marketing and research as a group, and provide facilities by which they can market and, indeed, sell their goods or services more effectively through that collaborative process.

Therefore, one of the things that we would like to see is for that success to be translated into the other cooperatives and I know that the transport co-ops and farming co-ops have been working, or they have shown a renewed interest, certainly when we met with them, in terms of looking to see where they might have failed in the past, and looking to enhance their efforts.

With respect to the cooperatives and credit union movement, my Ministry will also be working on a new piece of legislation in order to essentially ensure that the regulation of the industry is as effective as it should be.

In terms of our discussions, we have met with the Barbados Cooperative Credit Union League on more than one occasion, because I believe, it was felt that this piece of legislation would be extremely contentious and that a resolution could be brought to the issue. The truth of the matter is that the credit unions in Barbados did have some concerns about the legislation and the other truth is that it was a draft.

Senate 12, sequence 43, 19:00:14

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR the Hon. Miss L. V. EASTMOND: What the Barbados Cooperative Credit Union League did was to present Government with a document where it went through the draft legislation, highlighted the sections with which it had a concern and identified their alternative position to the Ministry. Therefore, we were able to have very sensible discussions about what our views were as a Ministry and what their views were as cooperatives.

At the moment we are still in consultations with other ministries but what I would say is that we have been able to develop a good relationship with the League, especially since this was one of the first projects I was involved in when I came to office. It does not mean that the members of the credit union movement are necessarily happy with all of the positions of the Ministry. What it means is that we have come to an understanding where we recognise that dialogue is the key to resolving many of the issues which, no doubt, we will face in the future and I hope this this new piece of legislation can come before this Honourable Senate very soon.

Mr. President, I wish to go on to speak about business development. However, I will not say too much on it because I believe that one of my other colleagues may also wish to speak on it, so I will just point out that Government has allocated a subvention of \$350 000 to the Small Business Association which we have done in the past and \$1 million with respect to the special project for the HIVAIDS initiative.

We in Government are concerned that some of the individuals who are HIVAIDS positive have suffered from discrimination in the workplace and one of the ways that we are seeking to address this is to ensure that they can have a role in terms of setting up their own businesses, so the Ministry in association with the Small Business Association is going to work towards putting that particular initiative in place.

I move on now to look at the other aspect of my Ministry dealing with insolvency and bankruptcy. As I said before, my Ministry has been mandated with the oversight of a number of new initiatives in Barbados. The

establishment of the Office of Supervisor of Insolvency is not one that gets very much attention, but I cannot say that I am unhappy about that. It is good not to have a contentious department in your Ministry so people can just get on with their work. However, when this department was going to be established, there were some who wondered if the individual would have enough work to do, but believe me the person does have enough work to do.

As you know, Mr. President, there is a matter going on at the moment where this piece of legislation is being used for the very first time. Our Supervisor of Insolvency is Miss Greenidge, which I am sure every lawyer of my vintage would know as she was a long-standing institution at the Corporate Affairs Department. I must commend her for doing a really excellent job under sometimes trying circumstances because often what happens in Government is that we establish the post, we employ somebody and then we find where we would put them to sit, that probably happened in her situation. She has worked very hard and very well. She has had to be the person guiding this whole process because this legislation is new for everyone. It is new for the attorneys and the judges involved, therefore she has had to do quite a lot of work.

Mr. President, this piece of legislation is important because it seeks to ensure that there is an environment where a company can effectively make an arrangement with all of its creditors and hopefully, providing that the circumstances are right, can actually trade itself out of the insolvency which is similar to what is obtained in the United States of America Under Chapter 11, so this is really an innovative piece of legislation that Government has put in place. It was put in place under the last set of Estimates not this one in case people may be thinking about getting a report card. A lot of these matters would have been implemented under the previous Estimates provision or the current one we are now in.

Mr. President, I will go on to look at the promotion and enforcement of product standards. The two departments in my Ministry that deal with this particular issue are the Barbados National Standards Institution and the Department of Commerce. The Barbados National Standards Institution has been allocated just over \$1.5 million to deal with the matter of standards. The issue of standards I believe is one of the most important issues that we would have to contend with in this new environment, from two perspectives.

One of them has to do with the entry into Barbados of goods and services because the Barbados National Standards Institute would not only be responsible for standards with respect to goods but also with standards with respect to services. From the one perspective there is the entry of goods into Barbados and from the other perspective there is the desire of Barbadian producers of

goods and services to sell their goods and services in the foreign markets.

Those foreign markets would definitely have standards especially if they are within developed country markets. I believe this area to be one of the most important because it is going to be used for two purposes really. In its less sinister guise, it is going to help regulate and protect your market and your consumers, and in its most sinister guise it would be used as a trade barrier.

Mr. President, there are a number of practices that many of the developed countries have become well schooled in over time. For example, if you want to send a product to a foreign country, you would be told what the standards are, so you would have your label in English and Spanish and what the contents are, and as far as you are concerned you have followed all the standards that they have asked you to follow, but then they may come back to you and say, for example, say it is fruit juice, that you have a picture of a guava on the label, but when they look at the contents, you do not have any guava juice in that particular product.

Now you have already sent off 20 containers and when the standards inspectors inspect your label, he or she would say that they do not see in your contents that you have a guava but you have a picture of a guava on your label.

The other thing that they might say to you is that you have written on the label "Eastmond Juices" and when they looked at the label it may have "Eastmond" in lower case letters and juices in capital letters, and they would say to you that all of it must be in capital letters, so you find yourself in a situation where they may send back the goods to you or if they do not do that, you would have to spend a considerable amount of time proving to them that under their legislation you do not have to have "Eastmond Juices" all in capital letters, or that it does not matter if you do not have guava juice in the particular product as long as you have not stated it on the label.

Senate 12 Sequence 44

7.10 p.m.

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR the Hon. Miss L. V. EASTMOND: Mr. President, at the end of the day, some might be able to prove that they were right but this might be after six months. Sir, there are some countries which practise this art very well. What usually happens is that they would be able to frustrate smaller suppliers because an individual cannot afford to have a container load of juices somewhere where he or she is not able to sell them in order to have the

business going. Even though we might be big in Barbados, we are small within the global context, therefore, we have to ensure that we are always on the frontline in terms of standards because of the myriad of things that one might have wanted to do.

Sir, if it might reach a stage where our entry into foreign markets is going to be frustrated, then we might have to reciprocate as well but one has to have the legislative framework in order to provide oneself with the facility.

Sir, I am not and will never advocate that Barbados breaches the rules. We do not believe in that but there is something call reciprocity and Barbados would certainly believe that if it is carrying out its best endeavours to ensure that we facilitate trade, the same thing would be done for us.

Mr. President, we come to one of the issues with which I know many members of the business community are concerned, which has to do with not only the establishment of standards but their enforcement. Sir, the the Economic Statement of the Honourable Prime Minister did refer to the fact that Barbados has to put in place an enforcement agency.

At the moment, the Department of Commerce is involved in the enforcement and policing of standards to some degree but obviously there is a lot more that we need to do. Therefore, my Ministry will be working on a proposal to ensure that we put the appropriate policy framework in place, to ensure that there is not only the establishment or enforcement of standards which the Barbados National Standards Institute (BNSI) has been doing well for a number of years. There are 44 mandatory standards in place but we also have to ensure that the standards are enforced and policed.

Mr. President, in addition to establishing that particular entity that would be involved in the enforcement and policing, we must also recognise that at this point in time, there is a great need for significant upgrade of the Barbados National Standards Institute (BNSI), which was established around 1973, both in terms of its physical circumstances and its human resource capacity.

Sir, when speaking to its physical structure, not just the accommodation for staff but when dealing with standards and measurements there are certain types of laboratories that are needed, in order to ensure that the work can be carried out in a sterile and effective environment, and in a productive manner.

Mr. President, this is what some of that funding will do. We have already had discussions with the Inter-American Development Bank with respect to this project

and are hoping that very soon we will be able to get approval, so that we could move ahead with enhancing the Barbados National Standards Institute (BNSI).

Mr. President, one of the other initiatives will be the enactment of what is called a Legal Metrology Act. Sir, there is a Weights and Measures Act but the Legal Metrology Act is a much needed piece of legislation which seeks to deal with all aspects of measurement. Sir, as one would have recognised, measurement is not defined only to weighing salt or sugar but there are other things that require measuring, for example, there is a piece of equipment that measures one's blood pressure.

Mr. President, what the Barbados National Standards Institute (BNSI) does, is that during inspection, officers go around Barbados and ensure that the scales that weigh people's goods are accurate. Their work tend to be limited to that area but, as I said, there are other kinds of measurements.

Mr. President, under the Legal Metrology Act, we want to ensure that all equipment which is used for measuring, that there is a piece of legislation that mandates either the Barbados National Standards Institute (BNSI) or some other enforcement agency, to go around and ensure that those pieces of equipment meet the required standard.

Mr. President, I would invite any Honourable Senator to pay a visit to the Barbados National Standards Institute (BNSI) because it would be quite interesting. They keep and safeguard the measurements for the country. These measurements are taken off other measures in other countries where the standard is set. When taking up this portfolio, I saw it when I visited the Barbados National Standards Institute (BNSI).

Mr. President, much has been said about consumer protection and, as Honourable Senators know, the Fair Trading Commission has responsibility for consumer protection, along with the Office of Public Counsel.

Sir, a lot of good work is being done in this area and I think that one of the very significant and important steps that has been made is that many of the disputes are settled before they ever reach the consumer claims tribunal. We do have a consumer claims tribunal and I am pleased to advise that the decisions that so far have been made under the Consumer Claims Tribunal are posted on our website. Therefore, if Honourable Senators wish to read them, they can go to the Ministry of Commerce's website, www.commerce.gov.bb to see what decisions have so far been taken.

Mr. President, approximately \$4 million has been allocated to the Fair Trading Commission but since we have had quite an extensive debate on the Fair Trading

Commission previously, I would not go into it in any great detail, except to say that I believe the sum is justified, bearing in mind the type of work this institution has to do. It is one of the most important new institutions that has been created by this Administration.

Mr. President, I would also like to refer to the area of Information Communications Technology. There seems to be a debate as to who has done what between the private sector and Government. Sir, Government has implemented a number of initiatives such as the SmartStream System, work in the Customs and Excise Department, the Inland Revenue Department, the Land Tax Department, more Ministries now have websites, including this Parliament, where many of the Bills passed or debated are posted.

In the Corporate Affairs and Intellectual Property Department, technology has been implemented there. In the Ministry of Industry and International Business, there is the enabling environment for private sector investment projects, which has been going on for some time. There is the Community Outreach Programme under the Ministry of Social Transformation.

Senate No.12 (45)7.20 p.m.

Monday, March 22, 2004

SENATOR the Hon. Miss L.V. EASTMOND: My Ministry will seek to develop information communications technology (ICT) policy for Barbados. This policy will help to determine our actions at the national, regional and international level and what actions should be taken.

Unlike other areas, information communications technology, in my view, will not fall to any one Ministry as different Ministries will have different perspectives on what is important for them to implement at any given time. For example, my Ministry has no desire to take over the work that the Ministry of Social Transformation does but we feel it is important that there should be a comprehensive policy with respect to ICT initiatives and that will be the focus of our work.

There are a number of initiatives has been taken by Government in a number of different areas to ensure that these matters come to the public of Barbados. In housing, I am particularly happy with the programme Government has implemented which has allowed individuals to purchase units which they have been living in for a number of years. I believe that is fantastic and I would urge those individuals living in those units to find out the information they need in order to make sure they can purchase these properties.

Sir, we know the price of land is going up each day. I visited Palm Gardens in St. Philip recently and even

though they have questions, many of those persons are happy to purchase those units.

The Minister of Rural Development and MTW will do quite a lot of work in terms of roads in Barbados and I look forward to this because we had administrations before who did not think it was important that those people who live in tenancies needed roads. This Government, through the Rural Development Commission, has a perspective that will see those people not having to put plastic bags on their shoes to get to the bus stop to get to work in a clean manner. This is the wonderful thing about this Administration that we must not take for granted.

Finally, I want to speak briefly on some of the initiatives for the youth and for people who are at the risk of being excluded. I make no secret that I have a great interest in St. Philip West because I was born there and I have a responsibility to ensure that the constituents are looked after. Sir, there is a grave need for sporting and recreational facilities in St. Philip.

St. Martin's is a prime example of a place where lots of people go to watch games without the appropriate playing facilities. On Sunday there was the Anthony Wood cricket competition and there was a great response. There were many people watching that match without the appropriate playing facilities and they tell me that they have been waiting for some time.

Sir, I believe in a short period of time their request for a recreational facility will be granted by this Government through the good office of the Minister responsible for Sports. The Prime Minister said he would ensure that every community has an appropriate playing field. After that has been done, we can install the lights and the pavilion.

Sir, unlike members on the Other Side, people understand that they cannot get everything at one time but would be happy to get the basic facilities.

I believe that Project Oasis is an extremely important one. We say we want to see Barbados move forward and that we should all move forward together. Sir, there is a group of persons called "the boys on the block" but, personally, I am not happy with the term because it helps to marginalise them. Project Oasis has \$800 000 allocated to it which will help to provide training for those individuals in the areas of farming computer repairs, small engine repairs and bobcat operations. It is my understanding that the Ministry will be sending individuals into the various communities to visit youngsters who would be interested in these activities.

Mr. President, in closing, I would simply like to state that I certainly support the Appropriation Bill and the

Estimates laid before us and commend them to this Honourable House.

SUSPENSION

SENATOR the Hon. E.R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, I rise to move the suspension of this sitting. Before I do so, I wish to draw to the attention of Honourable Senators that this is a suspension and not an adjournment. This means that the Senate will start promptly at the time set and we will go straight to Public Business. All Honourable Senators are, therefore, expected to be on time so that we can have a quorum to proceed with our business.

I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 10.00 a.m. tomorrow.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to and Mr. PRESIDENT suspended the Sitting accordingly.

H12/19:30

Sequence 46

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1. A Resolution to approve the guarantee by the Government of the payment by Needhams' Point Holdings Ltd. Of cost over-runs with respect to the construction of a resort hotel to an amount not exceeding US \$10 613 732.20; and the payment of debt service to an amount not exceeding US \$7 million annually.
2. A Resolution to approve in accordance of Section 5 of the Land Acquisition Act, Cap. 228, the compulsory acquisition by the Crown of the parcels of land situate at Drax Hall Green in the parish of St. George in this Island and more particularly described in the First and Second Schedules hereto for the public purposes of housing development and recreation respectively.

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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. Dates in the text. The source gives 'Wednesday, March 22, 2004' (22 March 2004 was a Monday). The weekday and date do not agree; printed as in the source.

Q3. Presentation of Papers. Under the heading 'PRESENTATION OF PAPERS' the Leader of the Senate gives notice of two Resolutions; no papers are laid. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Order No. 1, Senator the Hon. E. R. Griffith, take-slip about 12.10 p.m.. The sentence 'I am sure that at the end of the next fiscal year, the deficit will be well close to \$2.5 if not less' gives no unit; the Leader had earlier spoken of keeping the deficit 'in the vicinity of 2.5 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product'. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Order No. 1, speech labels. Some speech labels differ from the usual form: 'Sir John Stanley GODDARD' and 'SENATOR Sir JOHN Stanley GODDARD' (elsewhere 'SENATOR Sir John Stanley GODDARD'), and 'SENATOR Hon. L.V. EASTMOND' (elsewhere 'SENATOR the Hon. Miss L. V. EASTMOND'). Printed as in the source.

Q6. Suspension. The Senate was suspended, not adjourned, until 10.00 a.m. the next day; the closing take-slip reads 'H12/19:30', with an 'H' prefix, on a Senate record. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The Senate met in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings on Monday, 22nd March, 2004 at 11.00 a.m., with the President, His Honour Senator Sir Fred Gollop, in the Chair; prayers were led by Reverend Father E. Massiah. The President announced apologies from Senator Sir Roy Trotman, on trade union business, and Senator Barker, on Government business. The Leader of the Senate, Senator the Hon. E. R. Griffith, moved the suspension of Standing Order No. 45 (2) and gave notice of two Resolutions: a guarantee of cost over-runs of up to US \$10 613 732.20 and debt service of up to US \$7 million a year by Needhams' Point Holdings Ltd. on the construction of a

resort hotel, and the compulsory acquisition of land at Drax Hall Green, St. George for housing and recreation. The Appropriation Bill, 2004, as amended, was read a first time.

Moving the second reading, Senator Griffith said the amount appropriated was now \$1,186,870,380.00. Drawing on his years in the Ministry of Finance from 1973, he explained the Estimates for 2004-2005 and the Government's aim of keeping the deficit in the vicinity of 2.5 per cent of GDP, departed from to stabilise the economy by supporting tourism and increasing spending. He projected real GDP growth of 3.1 per cent and inflation of 1.9 per cent, said the Government did not intend to borrow on the capital market that year and aimed to bring debt down to about 60 per cent of GDP, and, as Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, spoke of a survey of some 684 unpaved access roads, non-sugar agriculture, Black belly sheep and a planned beef feed lot.

After the luncheon suspension, Senator F. J. Stuart, for the Opposition, said he had hoped for a report card on last year's spending rather than a lecture in economics, which led to a point of order from Senator Griffith. He noted provisions of \$242 686 007 for Health and \$241 931 936 for Education and asked whether the country was getting value for money, citing the Moyne Commission's finding that in 1938, 98 per cent of health spending was curative. He criticised a project that had 'gobbled up hundreds of millions of dollars', contracts of more than \$100 000 awarded without tender in breach of the Financial Administration and Audit Rules, damages unpaid to four dismissed persons, and the cost of phone cards.

After a further suspension, Senator Sir John Stanley Goddard commended the Leader's presentation, noted projected current revenue of \$1 940.65 million, 5.5 per cent above the revised 2003/2004 Estimates, and a national debt of 74.6 per cent of GDP, and applauded the aim of reducing it to 60 per cent; he referred to the Auditor-General's Report of 2003 on the Inland Revenue Department and was disappointed with programmes relating to Africa and the African Diaspora. The Deputy President, Her Honour Senator Dame Patricia Symmonds, praised the Minister of Finance, spoke on the elderly, gender inequality and HIV/AIDS, schools under the education programme and the National Sports Council's hard courts, pavilions and playing fields, including Dover ahead of Cricket Fest on March 31, 2004.

The Minister of Commerce, Consumer Affairs and Business Development, Senator the Hon. Miss L. V. Eastmond, in her first Estimates debate, spoke of simultaneous negotiations at the WTO, the FTAA, with the

European Union and on the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, consultation with the Barbados Cooperative Credit Union League on draft legislation, an ICT policy, and \$800 000 for Project Oasis to train young men in farming, computer and small engine repairs and bobcat operation.

Senator Griffith reminded Senators that the Sitting was being suspended rather than adjourned and that the Senate would go straight to Public Business, and the Sitting was suspended until 10.00 a.m. the next day.