
THE SENATE DEBATES

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2003 – 2008

THE SENATE

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

RESUMPTION

Mr. PRESIDENT: This Sitting is resumed.

Senator Miss P.E. PARRIS: Mr. President, I treasure this opportunity to serve in this Honourable Chamber as a Government Senator and to make a contribution in this my first Estimates Debate, and to lend my support to the Appropriation Bill.

I would like to congratulate the Leader of Government Business for the eloquent manner in which he presented the Bill yesterday. In reviewing the Estimates it is clearly seen that these were prepared to assist with the social upliftment of all Barbadians and at the same time give them the opportunity to be part of the development of this country. I would like to laud the efforts of this Government as it continues to provide a better life for the people of this country through the many programmes outlined in the Estimates.

Mr. President, during the last year, I was working in some of the neighbouring Caribbean islands and one could not help but feel proud to be a Barbadian, after hearing the same sentiments echoed over and over again as it relates to the good governance of this Administration and the development of this country. Sir, this achievement is a result of the prudent management of this country's economy, under the astute leadership of the Right Honourable O. S. Arthur.

Mr. President, this is in contrast to the mortification I felt during 1992 and 1993 while working in these same countries. It was during this period that this country's economic situation was the laughing stock of these persons. Mr. President, it was worse yet, when one tried to exchange Barbadian currency. This was during the Democratic

Labour Party's management, or should I say mismanagement of this country's economy. It affected all Barbadians. How could we forget the 8 per cent pay cut, the layoffs and the many persons that lost their homes, as a result of this? Oh, the pain and grief that were caused to Barbadians.

Senate 12, sequence 48,

10.10 a.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR Miss P. E. PARRIS: In the last financial year, Barbados, like so many other countries, was faced with economic challenges, yet we were able to reduce our unemployment figures.

Sir, the Ministry of Education recognises the importance of training and would be conducting workshops for the benefits of teachers and parents. Mr. President, the adolescent period of a child is a very difficult one. Therefore, parents and teachers should be able to support the children when they are going through this period and not just dismiss them and say they are disgusting as we oftentimes hear. I have witnessed many a parent with a child at this stage becoming very frustrated and saying that they do not know what to do with the child and pleading with teachers for support. Sir, the parent is very often not aware that this child is at a very difficult stage in its life and all he or she needs is love, attention and all of the support possible.

Mr. President, we see some children becoming very violent and aggressive. We also see some who are withdrawn and just want to be left alone. The Ministry of Education is cognisant of this and would be conducting behaviour disorder workshops for both parents and teachers. Sir, I am sure that at the end of those workshops we would have teachers and parents who would be in a better position to deal with these children as they would be

able to detect any problems they are encountering. Mr. President, I am quite sure that this type of care will help children in the transition period to adulthood.

Mr. President, we have witnessed many changes in our society. One such change that readily comes to mind is that parents no longer prepare lunches for their children to take to school. A parent with a child at a primary school readily gives the child \$1.00 a week which allows the child to have lunch every day at a low cost through the Ministry of Education's school meals programme. Sir, these lunches are of high nutritional value, but the Ministry of Education is not stopping there. In these Estimates they are seeking to further enhance the nutritional value of these lunches. This enhancement would be of benefit to the local market as well since 60 per cent of the foods used would either be locally grown or produced. Four of the island's primary schools, St. David's Primary, Vauxhall Primary, Hindsbury Primary and St. George Primary will be provided with flavoured pasteurised milk. We are all aware of the importance of milk in our diet especially in the diet of children. These are just some of the benefits to be derived as a result of the implementation of an enhanced nutritional plan being undertaken by the Ministry of Education.

Mr. President, I had the opportunity to visit one of these centres where I witnessed the preparation of a day's meal. Sir, the preparation of these lunches was done with the highest health standards being adhered to and the best quality foods being used. During this financial year every effort will be made by the Ministry of Education to ensure that the lunches are delivered to the schools early. Classes are disrupted and valuable teaching time is lost when the lunches are late, not to mention the fact that the children are hungry. The Ministry of Education is making every effort to ensure that the delivery of late lunches does not exceed five per cent.

Mr. President, we are living in an ever-changing world. The training of staff in the School Meals Department is ongoing thus giving them the opportunity to be updated with the latest food preparation and food handling skills and with an opportunity to enhance their knowledge and skills.

Sir, occupational health and safety standards are of paramount importance to this Government. The Ministry of Education is concerned with the number of falls within this department annually. In this fiscal year the staff of this department would benefit from training in occupational health and safety standards. Again these are the actions of a caring Barbados Labour Party Government. I would like to implore the staff of this department to take this training seriously and to make full use of the safety equipment given which is done for their own safety.

Sir, I would like to commend the management and staff of the School Meals Department and the school meal centres for the good job they are doing in making sure that the children across the length and breadth of this country are provided with quality lunches. In order to achieve this, some of them have to be at work from as early as 4.00 a.m.

Mr. President, the Ministry of Education believes that each one matters. However, they cannot achieve all these programmes without the assistance of both the parent and the child. Parents have a part to play in their child's school life and development. A child's school life does not begin and end with the 11 Plus Examination. Parents must sit with their children and ensure that they do their homework. Parents are to attend form level meetings where they can ask about the progress of their children. Parents need to become active members in the schools' Parent Teachers Association. We often hear some very poor excuses as to why parents do not attend Parent Teachers meetings. You hear things like "I have my house work to do", "they say the same thing over and over at the meeting" or "we are only going there to hear about fundraising". I want to say to parents that this is an opportunity for them to make a difference at that PTA meeting. They should go to the meetings and make their input. They have to make sacrifices for their child's development and not leave everything to the Ministry of Education or to the teachers. In any given day most of the child's waking hours are spent at school, and if parents have no contact with their child, how do they expect to know what is happening to the child?

Mr. President, as a former deputy chairman of a secondary school, I am deeply concerned with the acts of vandalism and lawlessness done on the school's property by students. Parents need to educate their children from a very early age that the school furniture should not be vandalised. They need to tell them that when they destroy the furniture it is the taxpayers' hard earned money, and as parents they are taxpayers. We are all aware that if Government has to be constantly replacing furniture, light fittings, desk and chairs that are destroyed by these acts that the money would have to come from somewhere.

Senate 12 Sequence 49

10.20 a.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR Miss P. E. PARRIS: Sir, I now turn my attention to the issue of Social Transformation. On page 55 of the Barbados Labour Party's (BLP) Manifesto "Every Bajan a Winner", which is a document of this Honourable Chamber, in the section "Eradicating Poverty through Social Transformation", this Government has pledged to

provide computer training and access for low income communities.

The Community Technology Programme is doing this. Sir, to date, 10 Community Resource Centres are in operation across Barbados, providing a 13-week training programme. This module teaches Introduction to Windows, Introduction to Word Processing, and Introduction to the Internet.

It is not every home that could afford to purchase a computer and this gives the children who are living in these homes, the opportunity to visit these centres. It would also assist them in preparing their homework projects. Access to these Resource Centres is between the hours of 9.30 a.m. to 9.30 p.m. Monday to Saturday. One could not want better, Sir.

Mr. President, since the introduction of this programme in July 2002, approximately 1 121 persons have been trained but of this total, 833 or 74.3 per cent were females and 288 or a meagre 25.7 were males. We are constantly hearing that females are given more opportunities than males but Sir, here is an excellent opportunity for both sexes. However, the males are not embracing it. This is an opportunity for young men to become computer literate and to become gainfully employed. Young gentlemen, this could be your moment in time, grab it! When you enroll in this programme at a Community Centre in your area, you are doing yourself the world of good and are making yourself marketable.

Almost all job vacancies require computer skills. Sir, this is quite evident in the number of persons who enrolled in this programme in 2003. Of the 1 121 persons trained, 702 or 62.6 per cent, were either full-time or part-time employees. They have realised that computer skills are vital to one's survival in the world of work. To be a telephone receptionist, one must have some knowledge of the computer; something as simple as mixing paint is now done with the assistance of a computer.

This Government, through the Ministry of Social Transformation, is coming on the doorsteps of citizens in this country, in an effort at providing them with these skills. Young men do not be left out, get on board!

It should be noted that we also had an 83-year-old female pensioner who has graduated from this programme. Mr. President, this clearly shows there is no age limit to enrolling in this programme. This is an opportunity to all those persons who did not have the good fortune of the EduTech to become enrolled in the programme.

Our senior citizens have made an invaluable contribution to this society and the Ministry of Social Transformation is cognisant of this. That is why it

continues to provide for them through its many programmes. Mr. President, the Ministry of Social Transformation operates 13 activity centres across this country, giving senior citizens an opportunity to interact with their peers and to reminisce about old times. One only has to visit any of these centres on any given day and it becomes an educational experience as one listens to the stories told by these senior citizens.

Mr. President, with regard to the items of craft that are produced by these persons at these centres, the quality is very high. This year's Estimates would see an expansion to the introduction of computer courses to the elderly and the opening of two additional centres which would be of benefit to more senior citizens. I do not believe that as one gets old, one should be put aside or should be made to go in a corner to spend the rest of one's life.

Sir, I am rather confused as to how the Opposition views the Manifesto. We have heard them saying that it is not a social contract but as recently as last week, we heard an Opposition Member in the Other Place contending that a Manifesto is a social contract between the party and the people.

Mr. President, a Manifesto is viewed as a social contract between the Party and the people when it is convenient to the Opposition but then, why am I surprised? Sir, in taking a look at the cover of the Democratic Labour Party's (DLP) 2003 Manifesto, I thought that I was looking at a "Calvin and Hobbes" magazine. Sir, it had a bunch of mock-looking people on the cover. I was not inclined to go any further, as I believe the contents were like the cover, nothing appealing or nothing catering to the masses or to the development of the people.

Sir, this is not the case with the Barbados Labour Party. We take our Manifesto pledges seriously. In this year's Estimates, we will be fulfilling our Manifesto pledges in the area of health. Rehabilitation services will be upgraded at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH). There will be a decentralisation of the ambulance service and an increase in the number of nurses to be trained.

Sir, these are but a few of the Manifesto pledges that the Ministry of Health would be honouring as pledged in its Manifesto, "Every Bajan a Winner".

Sir, at present, the hospital is encountering problems in relation to the late delivery of meals to patients. In this year's Estimates, the Ministry of Health would be refurbishing the kitchen facilities. It is hoped that when this is done, patients would benefit by receiving their meals on time. The equipment and the refurbished facilities cannot function on their own and, therefore, the workers of this department have a role to play, to ensure that patients

would receive their meals on time. They should also look at these patients as one of their very own.

Mr. President, the Ministry of Health and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital continue to be attacked when patients are told that there are no available beds. Sir, one of the reasons for this is that we have persons who take their older relatives there and would abandon them, not even giving them the pleasure of a weekly visit, or who would only visit them at the hospital to get that pensioner's National Insurance cheque signed.

Senate No.12 (50)

10.30 a.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2003

SENATOR Miss P. E. PARRIS: They should not even be benefiting from the monies from the National Insurance because they are not caring for these pensioners. After these persons have recuperated and reached a stage where they can be cared for by their loved ones at home, the hospital staff cannot put them on the street but must continue to care for them. During this time, someone who is in need of surgery or some other form of medical attention requiring constant nursing care is in need of this bed.

Mr. President, this is a passionate plea for family members to go to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and bring their abandoned relatives back to their care. These persons need your care and attention so do not say you cannot be bothered with them because they assisted you and nurtured you in your early days. It is now your turn to repay them for what they have done for you and give the hospital that much needed bed space.

Earlier I spoke about the Ministry of Social Transformation's recreational activities centres and these elderly persons can be enrolled at one of these centres and give them an opportunity to enjoy the benefit of their labour.

Sir, in this year's Estimates we see improvement to the emergency ambulance service programme. I welcome the commencement of the decentralisation programme of this service with the pilot project starting at the Arch Hall Fire Station. With the implementation of this service no longer will someone living in St. Thomas or St. James have to wait until an ambulance comes from Bridgetown to take them back to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Sir, I look forward to the decentralisation of the ambulance service at the District Police Station in St. Joseph as well.

Mr. President, Senator Stuart spoke yesterday about the low staff morale at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital but

may I remind Senator Stuart that there would be some percentage of low staff morale in any working environment. Even in a political party there will be low staff morale and I believe that Senator Stuart is in a position to speak to this.

Sir, if the morale is as low as the Senator says it is, nurses would not be volunteering to work with the management of the Hospital in an effort at alleviating some of the problems being experienced as a result of staff shortages. Mr. President, these nurses are committed to patient care and I want to commend them for the good job they are doing.

Sir, in driving around this country I took a look at our signage and minor roads and I was shocked to see the number of signs on one pole advertising businesses. Sir, I have seen as many as nine signs on one pole and it did not include the legitimate Ministry of Public Works' sign that told you where to go. These signs are being erected in any form and fashion and is very confusing to road users especially if you are travelling and depending on them to give directions.

We need some uniformity and specification if this method is to be used by businesses as a form of advertising. Businesses should not be allowed to erect signs on poles to obstruct the vision of legitimate road users or the sign erected by the Ministry of Public Works. I am used to driving in this country and it confuses me so I am sure that visitors are more than confused.

Mr. President, it appears to me that these signs are being erected without the authority of the Ministry of Public Works and I am calling on the Honourable Minister of Public Works and his staff to undertake a clean-up programme to remove the overgrown bush from around these signs. I am also appealing to all those businesses which erect these signs to first seek permission from the Ministry of Public Works. I believe that the erection of these signs should be done under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Works at a cost to the businesses.

Mr. President, over the years we have seen a number of video stores being operated in this country. I am aware that these video shops provide employment for person and I would not want to deprive persons from receiving this income that supports their family. However, I am deeply concerned that there are no guidelines in place governing the operations of these video shops. They are accountable to nobody and a child can walk into a video shop and rent any tape and proceed to watch it. I am reminding these video shop operators that they have a duty to the society and that they should not rent X-rated or violent movies to minors because it is defeating the efforts of the Ministry of Culture and the Film Censorship Board.

Mr. President, the Ministry of Home Affairs is concerned with the high incidence of passports being lost both in Barbados and when people travel overseas. Sir, passport holders are not securing their documents and this has resulted in them falling into the hands of unscrupulous persons.

The Ministry had computerised the process and this would minimise the incidence of forgery. This will be completed during the next financial year at a cost of \$1.4 million. Passport scanning would increase border security at ports of entry.

S12/Sequence 51

10.40 a.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR Miss P. E. PARRIS: .. This is on schedule at the seaport, and would be completed at the Airport on the completion of the airport expansion project, at an estimated cost of \$1 326 388.

Sir, with these words, I wholeheartedly support this Bill and I am urging all Honourable Senators to do the same.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Deputy President will take the Chair at this time.

MADAM DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Fields.

SENATOR A. C. FIELDS: I thank you, Madam President. It is a great honour and a privilege for me to be able to stand in this Senate for the first time, and participate in the debates in these Estimates.

In the business community, one usually pays a lot of attention to the economic statement made by the Prime Minister which in past times used to accompany these Estimates. Therefore, I really never took the time or the trouble to dig into the Estimates before, as I have done this year. It is quite amazing really to think that for the Government to collect revenue of almost \$2 billion, it literally means that every man, woman and child in Barbados contributes \$10 000 each. It is an awesome responsibility to ensure that this money is used wisely and here I would like to touch on the Auditor General's Report. It was well ventilated yesterday so I am not going to go into great detail, except to say that if there are some \$300 million shown by the Government, as receivable for monies not collected, I just wonder how much of that is a genuine receivable, and how much is uncollectible.

I say that, Madam President, because as a member of the National Insurance Board some 11 years, I am aware that monies which cannot be collected, cannot be written off, not even the Minister of Finance and Prime Minister of this country can agree to write off debt owed to National Insurance. It has to be done by Parliament.

I do not know if this obtains in Land Tax, I do not know if this obtains to the Commission of Inland Revenue but I think it is something that is worthy of note because I wonder honestly, of that \$300 million, despite the best efforts of the officials in this country how much is really collectible and how much is there as a false sum that will never be collected.

Madam President, I would like to touch on some areas that really, in a very practical and pragmatic way, reflect on the ability of this country to grow its economy. The GDP is predicted to grow at 3.1 per cent and for those persons in this community who think that we have not had an economic recovery, I think it is clearly evidenced by the listed companies which are required by law to publish their results in the newspapers.

Over the last several months, we would have seen most of the listed companies publish those results and we would have seen a dramatic improvement in the performance of those companies, including tourism. I know there is one individual who seems, on a daily basis, to try and pull down the results of the increase in economic activity in the tourist market in Barbados. Let me say that I can speak from empirical evidence in my business capacity in my association with two hotels in Barbados, they have had the best two years that they have ever enjoyed since we started them.

While it is true that after September 11th 2001, a lot of hotels had to reduce their rate to continue to attract customers to this shore. It is also true that you do not think you would have found that the restaurants, the vendors, the hair braiders or the jet ski operators reduce their rates, and those of you who may want to go to a restaurant, either on the South Coast or the West Coast, would have found out that you cannot phone up at 4.00 p.m. and say, "I want to come there tonight," so Barbados has experienced a rebounding of the economy without any question or doubt.

Madam President, I would like to touch on some matters that are very dear to my heart and I will start with the Fair Trading Commission. I wonder if such a complex institution as this is, with such a challenge ahead of it, was started on the right foot. I wonder, if in Barbados, we are trying to invent the wheel, on this occasion.

Those of us who have a long memory, will remember a guy called Rudolph Crook, and another gentleman called Mr. Tintun, I think he was a Burmese,

who came to Barbados and set up our Central Bank and ran it in its formative years and the likes of the Kurleigh Kings and the Courtney Blackmans, the Calvin Springers, the Winston Coxes and the Marion Williamses, carrying on a tradition that is enviable in this entire region. It is one of the better run institutions in this region.

I wonder if you would remember that there was an Englishman, I think his name was Jeff Shepherd, who came here and set up the BIDC which has also had an enviable track record in Barbados' with developing institutions and developing companies, and providing space for manufacturers, especially in the 1960s, to operate.

I wonder if you would remember the guy from India who came up here and set up the ICB, despite the fact that this insurance company started with a captive market, with all of the Government's business, an institution that is now so envied that you cannot even buy shares in it.

I wonder if as complex a thing as the Fair Trading Commission (FTC) is really designed to cover the Utilities Regulation Act, the Fair Competition Act and the Consumer Protection Act? I just wonder if we have the right person with the right skills or if it were not better, if it had been properly set up with people with the knowledge that could hand over to those well-qualified Barbadians, who could work with them and come behind them, and create an institution of which both the consumers and the business persons can all be proud.

As I understand it, this entity is supposed to be a fair trading commission, and is supposed to treat to both fairness for the consumer and fairness for the business. In addition to that, I think it came into its own, at a time when it was immediately thrust into utilities regulation. I honestly wonder if the public discussion, and conducting their affairs in the Press with such open public discussion, is the right thing to do. I wonder if it does not place an unfair psychological burden on the Commissioners, themselves, in reaching their verdict on matters that have come before it, with the Utilities Regulation Act. As far as the Fair Competition Act is concerned, they talk about monopolies. They are suggesting that if anyone has more than 40 per cent of the market, it is a monopoly.

My understanding of a monopoly, Madam President, is that there are two in Barbados, the Barbados Water Authority and the Barbados Light and Power Company. I am not aware of any legislation that precludes anybody else from setting up businesses to compete with existing business, other than the two of them.

Since 1994, the Prime Minister of this country has been urging the business community to prepare for an open market, globalisation, and liberalisation, and to do so we have to get the necessary economies of scale. We can only

do so by merging, acquisitions and strategic alliances. It is all very well to say that in an open market, even with just the CSME, we have the possibility of having 10 million consumers.

We must remember that other countries in the CSME, are also being told that when the market opens, they have 10 million consumers. The pie is not any bigger, it is 10 million consumers and if every country is going after those 10 million consumers, in truth and in fact, the market is not going to be any bigger than the market we enjoy today, unless we can grow by acquisition, mergers and strategic alliances.

I fear that the perception out there is that the Fair Trading Commission, under the Fair Competition Act and possibly under the Consumer Protection Act, would see events that have businesses participating in growing their businesses to get economies of scale, are detrimental to the consumer, and that those businesses should be punished in some way. I am not saying that was the reason it was set up. Certainly, I know the Minister does not think so, but it is a perception that there is some tool to hamper businesses and to help consumers.

Senate 12, sequence 52,

10.50 a.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR A. C. FIELDS: I think they have made a step in the right direction by going into the schools, but I wonder if they are giving them the appropriate message. In telling the people that businesses must refund them their money if the item is faulty or shoddy, I am wondering if they are also telling them that they have to keep their receipt as proof of purchase.

In a large company you do not give a lot of flexibility to the staff that the customer interacts with, you have policies and procedures. Often someone would come and say that they bought an item in the store yesterday but because they do not have the proof of purchase, a staff member cannot necessarily make a refund, so the education has to be on both sides.

Madam Deputy President, having said that, I must repeat that the Fair Trading Commission is a powerful tool and it is certainly something that Barbados needs. However, it should make sure that it understands that it has to perform various functions. In my opinion, when it is acting as a regulatory body it should not be out there in the public domain, a big part of it should be in camera. I do not think it is fair to the commissioners to be exposed to the call-in programmes and all of the other pressure on them to come to a verdict that an ill-informed public which is not

legally trained seems to think is the right decision to come to.

Madam Deputy President, I would like to turn to the Barbados National Standards Institute, but I would not like the Minister of Consumer Affairs to think that I am focussing on her Ministry only. I would like to support a lot of what she said yesterday. I am happy to see that an additional \$169 360.00 is being voted for the department because the Barbados National Standards Institute is of critical importance to Barbados and our way forward. It is there as a bulwark to protect consumers from shoddy, harmful and faulty imports. It is there to ensure that appropriate mandatory standards are in place. In a liberalised open market it is certainly going to have a huge impact on the goods that can and should come in here and it has in a way to protect us in this market.

Madam Deputy President, yesterday I was inclined to believe that the Minister was on the payroll of the Pine Hill Dairy and I did not know it. When she was talking about Eastmond Limited and the guavas and the picture not on the juice, that is a very real experience. The Pine Hill Dairy attempted to export a fruit punch to a country to the south of us and one of the items on the photograph was not among the ingredients and the whole container load was completely rejected by that country.

Madam Deputy President, I would also like to share another story with you. In the early 1990s when I was more closely associated with Banks Brewery Limited than I am today, we attempted to export Banks beer to New York. Because we were not allowed to export Banks beer outside of the English-speaking Caribbean, we had to develop a new brand called Bajan Beer. We had to be introduced to the Alcohol, Firearms and Tobacco Agency (AFT) which is the National Standards Institute of the United States of America. We sent up the bottle with a label on it but it was rejected because the font on the script was not of the right size. We corrected the font and sent it back up and again it was rejected because we did not have the deposit for Mississippi. We had the deposits that were legally obliged to be honoured on other States but we left out that one. It went up and it came back again with yet another fault. Madam Deputy President, that happened seven times over nine months. The last time it was rejected was because we had the average content as 33ml. They came back and told us that ml was a scientific designation not an abbreviation and that it required no punctuation mark after it, and it took us nine months to get that label approved.

Madam Deputy President, we in Barbados would accept anything that is packaged in North America and sent here if it is not on the restricted list, it does not matter what it is, what the language is or what the package looks like. Having 44 or 45 mandatory standards are only the tip of the iceberg. At one time the Barbados National Standards

Institute was far more well-supported by the private sector in Barbados than it is today. The private sector used to make significant contributions to the Barbados National Standards Institute but I do not think that those contributions are made in the same manner today as they were many years ago. I think the private sector became disillusioned, not with the staff of the Barbados National Standards Institute because they do very good work, but because the process does not come to a definite conclusion.

When goods come in here that should not be coming in here and you complain to the Barbados National Standards Institute, if it is appropriate, they would agree with you that those goods should not be here. You would go to Customs and Customs can be told by the Barbados National Standards Institute that they should not be here but there is only one individual in the Ministry who has the ability or the authority to police these goods and that individual is a very busy individual who has other work to do. What we need in this country is the ability to police the mandatory standards to see that they are being adhered to.

Madam Deputy President, I welcome the fact that there is more money in the Estimates and hopefully that money would be used to employ more people so that these mandatory standards which protect us can be enforced because up until now it is not being done. I honestly believe that the will is there, I believe people know what they have to do but the Ministry is woefully lacking in the number of people to police these standards that would be crucial to this community as we go forward whether it is in the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, the World Trade Organisation or the Free Trade Area of the Americas. I also believe that if that happens, the circle would be complete. If you have the mandatory standards that are agreed and legislated and you have the ability to police them, I believe you would see a renewed interest in the Barbados National Standards Institute, and seeing that appropriate standards are in place I believe you would see a renewed interest with the private sector in supporting the Barbados National Standards Institute.

Madam Deputy President, I would now like to turn very briefly to some aspects of agriculture. First of all I would like to commend the Leader of Government Business in this House, the Honourable Erskine Griffith, for the wonderful presentation he made at the start yesterday, but more importantly for his obvious excitement and enthusiasm in bringing fresh wind into the Ministry of Agriculture. I would like particularly to commend him for the work they have done in engaging the private sector in getting together to have vertical integration in the cotton industry. The evidence over the last two or three years has shown that Barbados can make good money from cotton. I would also like at this stage to commend Senator Francis Chandler for the voluntary work she has done in this industry. Many people do not know the amount of work

she has put in to getting us here even in our embryonic stage with the cotton industry.

Madam Deputy President, year before last we had a good crop which was very encouraging. Last year we had a disaster, because the seeds were of very poor quality and they did not germinate properly. The Barbadian farmers planted cotton three times in Castle, St. Lucy. Senator Chandler has taken it upon herself, voluntarily to monitor the cotton from field, to gin, to seeds, and I am hoping that this year we would have a better crop. In fact, there is evidence that we are going to have a better crop this year. The problem with cotton this year is that the early morning showers make it impossible to pick the cotton when it is due to be picked because one may appreciate that cotton has to be absolutely bone dry before it can be picked.

Madam Deputy President, I applaud the Government's initiative. I am happy to say that the private sector oversubscribed the amount of money that was required in capital to get it off the ground. Management is being found and put in place and I look forward to the day when we will have not only a viable cotton industry in the context of growing cotton where Barbados is concerned, but in the context of turning it into a finished garment which I understand can fetch as much as \$700 and \$800 for a shirt in other parts of the world.

Madam Deputy President, over the last five years in my capacity as chairman of the private sector agency I became very involved in a lot of the aspects of business in Barbados more so in agriculture in the wider sense of the word, so when I talk about agriculture, I am talking about fish, about rearing pigs, cattle and poultry. Madam Deputy President, I was very happy to hear the Minister say yesterday that more was being put in place to protect the poultry industry.

Madam Deputy President, we live in a small island way out in the Caribbean where we are not even able to see another shore from our island. If we have a situation with the foot-and-mouth disease in one country, Creutzfeld/Jacob or mad cow disease in another country and the Asian bird flu or the avian flu in another country, where would we get our food from?

Senate 12 Sequence 53

11.00 a.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR A. C. FIELDS: I think it is vitally important that every country, especially small island states like ours, protect the right to feed our people insofar as possible with our limited resources. Let us not for one moment believe that if this market were opened to cheaper

imports, that we would benefit in the long term. In the short term, the consumer might get a cheaper price on the imported meat but in the long term it would be devastating. Not only would thousands of small farmer be out of work but we would also leave ourselves very vulnerable to any impediment of how to attract business to our shores to feed our people. In addition, I would say that in a very short space of time those very cheap goods would increase in price.

Madam Deputy President, I think it is vitally important that despite whatever agreements we may have, whether it is the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the Free Trade Area of the Americas or Caribbean Single Market and Economy, we recognise the importance of agriculture in this country, as it has been recognised in Europe and in North America, where subsidies of over \$1 billion per day is given to the United States of America agricultural community, which, of course, we do not have the wherewithal to give. Were we to give the subsidies to our farmers like those that are given to farmers in other countries, this current revenue would have to be multiplied by millions of dollars.

Agriculture also employs the small farmer. It is very easy and is not capital intensive to become involved. The Land for the Landless Programme has helped a lot in this area but these people are not re-trainable to work computers. To do this would take decades to change an agriculture-based country into a service-oriented one, and while we have many bright, young persons coming out of the University of the West Indies (UWI) who can fall into these service areas with some alacrity and professionalism, we have to be conscious of the fact that we do have many persons over 40 years old who are working the land and who might find it far more challenging to become part of the service industry in such a short space of time. We need that time, we need that change.

Madam Deputy President, within the past several weeks, there was a concern that we might have to stop bringing hatching eggs from the United States of America because of the avian flu. Where were we to get them from then? We were scrambling all over. I believe that resource was found in Holland but it is not something that could happen overnight and if that could have happened to us with hatching eggs, imagine what could happen to us with the wider agricultural industry.

Madam Deputy President, I would now like to turn to Public Sector Reform. In my 40-odd years in business, managing change of one kind or other has been the most difficult task that I have ever undertaken, whether it is managing changing technology, managing change in the way we do business, managing change from one type of business to another but worst of all was managing a change in culture.

Madam Deputy President, I would say that culture is not in bricks and mortar, nor in the desks and walls of the business, it is something that is inculcated into a person. A person comes into a company and after it is generally recognised that within 18 months to one year, that person becomes part of the culture of that company. Therefore, to change a culture from the inside is an almost impossible task because we are talking about changing the way in which people think and about the psyche of the individual.

I would say that while Public Sector Reform is a laudable effort and that much progress has been made, it has been made almost impossible by the fact that people are asked to change themselves with little outside force. If one were to ask persons who want to change their culture themselves, it would never happen or it would take an inordinately long time.

As one interacts with the public sector on a daily basis, one could see that there is a huge discrepancy in the quality of service that is rendered. One could go to the same department twice on the same day and would meet two different people who are offering the same service but who are completely at variance with each other in how that service could be offered. They might even be at variance with each other with what you are entitled to receive. As I said, it is fresh in my memory where I had to interact with a department of the Public Service. There, one individual wanted a lot of information and had made it almost impossible for me to get what I had wanted. Going back one hour later, I met another individual who satisfied my wants immediately.

Madam Deputy President, there are a lot of good people in the Public Service who go the extra mile to make sure that what has to be done is done, but there is a great need to reinforce and to speed up the Public Sector Reform which was started several years ago.

Because one does not criticise a person for what he or she has done the day before, I think we have to understand that people tend to come to work every day and to do exactly what they had done the day before. They would think that they had done a good job yesterday and would come to work today to do the same thing as they had done yesterday.

Madam Deputy President, we are living in times of rapid change and the only way we are going to achieve change is if we are prepared to do something different today. If the normal individual who comes to work and watches a clock, and is only there for a pay cheque at the end of the month, would come to work and would be satisfied that what he did yesterday was acceptable, then the danger is that when he comes to work tomorrow, he will do the same things over and over again. That is why there is such a great challenge in the Public Sector Reform

and I would urge Government to recognise this challenge and do whatever it takes to ensure that the reform goes apace.

Madam Deputy President, I would like to commend the Honourable Prime Minister for the initiative he has taken in offering not only the \$250 000 to strengthen the public sector trade team which, incidentally, the private sector matches, but also to commend him for the \$100 000 he has offered to strengthen the Private Sector Secretariat. I am not sure in what form that money is going to come, whether it would be cash or in kind, but the move is welcomed.

Madam Deputy President, in another forum I recently had to say how embarrassing it was for me to have recognised that only 1 per cent of the private sector makes any contribution to help themselves. There are over 23 000 registered businesses in Barbados and only 1 per cent or 200 business belong to any organised structured private sector association, whether it is the Small Business Association (SBA), the Barbados Tourism Association, the Manufacturers Association or the Employers Confederation. Of that 1 per cent, only 10 per cent or 0.1 per cent of the 23 000 ever put their hands into their pockets to support any initiatives that need support.

Therefore, I would like to use this forum to call on the wider private sector to support the initiatives of the private sector so that it could be better informed, so that it would give a better and stronger voice in all of the negotiations that are so germane to our future in this country. If more people would put their hands into their pockets, there would be less asked of the few that contribute. The few who contribute are becoming frustrated and have reached the end of their rope because everybody expects them to give, whether it is to charities, to associations, to organisations or to putting research in place so that the Government could be better informed of the private sector's needs. They are coming to the end of their tether and need support from the rest of the private sector.

Madam Deputy President, once again I want to commend the Prime Minister for supporting the private sector trade team and for going further and offering the \$100 000 to strengthen the Private Sector Secretariat. What I would say though, is that all is not doom and gloom. I still think, in the context of the Caribbean, that Barbados is probably better placed to respond to the Government's requirements, to understand the private sector through two initiatives which are the social compact between labour, capital and Government, and the mere fact that we have taken the initiative. We do have a trade team, even if it is not properly financed or staffed. At least the genesis is there and we in Barbados are trying to do what is right. Therefore, I think that we all should be congratulated on that.

Madam Deputy President, in passing I would like to mention the National Productivity Council and the good work that it is doing. I would also like to encourage unions and businesses not to pay lip service to performance-related pay increases but to do more.

S:No.12(54)

11:10 a.m.

SENATOR A. C. FIELDS: I would like to encourage employers to open up their books to the unions in good faith. I would like them genuinely to make an effort to understand and use the benefit of the National Productivity Council to start measuring the work that employees put out so that they can be appropriately awarded.

It is easy in the context of manufacturing to measure output in arriving at a pay award suitable for the increase output. It is not so easy in a clerical context but it can be done and there are people in Barbados who can do it. The National Productivity Council has come a long way in this arena and I encourage unions and businesses to stop paying lip service to performance-based awards, make it a norm and this would prove hugely beneficial to this country.

I was privileged to be asked to sit on the Commission of Law, Order and Justice currently chaired by Sir Roy Marshall. Madam Deputy President, it was an eye-opener. At every town-hall meeting two things were obvious. People in the room wanted hanging to come back and more discipline in school children, especially those who took mini buses and ZR vans to school. When you hear the deviant music that is played on these vehicles, it is unbelievable that in a society like Barbados it could be going on and blessed by the law. I understand there is a loophole in the Road Traffic Act which allows them to get away with it.

I well remember that three or four years ago an attempt was made by the Licensing Authority not to issue a licence to a mini bus or ZR van if it had an instrument in it to play music but it was overturned and, to this day, it is still going on. These school children get off the bus with this deviant music in their heads to go into the classroom to do work in school. This is absolutely amazing and should come to an end as soon as humanly possible. Madam Deputy President, the Commission had a lot of encouragement to try and stop this behaviour.

Finally, a lot has been said about the boys on the block and programmes for these boys but I wonder why we never see girls on the block. Madam President, are you aware that the average student going to university in Barbados is a 26 year old unwed mother? It is almost impossible to get into the University after four o'clock in

the evening and an analysis should be done to find out why only boys are on the block, why there are no girls on the block, what could be done to get the boys off the block and into a more productive capacity.

I was heartened yesterday to hear that there are programmes for the boys on the block and hope there would succeed in making these boys productive persons in our society.

Madam Deputy President, I am much obliged to you.

Senator Ms. S.C.V. HUSBANDS: Madam Deputy President, as a citizen of Barbados I am extremely pleased to participate in these deliberations to examine the philosophy that informs the Appropriation Bill which we are discussing and looking at the strategic planning which has gone into the preparation of these documents.

Madam Deputy President, the average Barbadian does not always understand why certain things are being done and with all the change they hear about, they are confused about what it means and what are the implications to their lives. They hear buzz words like globalisation and trade liberalisation, the Caribbean Single Market and Economy and so on and the average Barbadian is not aware of the implications or what response he or she may need to make as an individual. I see this inability to respond not only in individuals but in businesses as well where they are not aware of what to do.

I must say that I was surprised to hear my colleague, Senator Stuart involved in the confusion as well because he expressed the views that in the discussion on the fiscal policy and initiatives to build the economy, foreign reserves and keeping the debt down, that he saw a direct disconnect between that and the everyday life of Barbadians. At first I thought he was politicking but later I realised there was a reason for it. When he spoke about education, he expressed the view that EduTech had accomplished nothing so far, that he saw it as a failure and that it had consumed a great deal of money. I realised he did not have the necessary information and was therefore not able to make a clear assessment of the role of EduTech.

Madam Deputy President, in the 60s and 70s many Barbadians were not aware of the performance of the economy and what it meant to their daily lives. The early 1990s taught Barbadians much when they experience the tragedy during the Democratic Labour Party Administration. They learnt quickly about low foreign reserves and a high national debt and connected it to homelessness, joblessness and not being able to advance their lives. Today, Barbadians are much more cognisant of the relationship between those seemingly abstract positions and what it means to their everyday life. I would not like Senator Stuart to be confused.

S12/Sequence 55

11:20

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR Ms. S.C.V. HUSBANDS: I would want him to be aware of those connections so that when next he is talking to the citizens of Barbados, he can assure them that all is well.

I want, primarily, to help the citizens of Barbados to understand what is the background of the initiatives in the Appropriations Bill. Yesterday, the Minister of Commerce very eloquently spoke about many discussions, dialogues and negotiations that are taking place, and the initiatives in terms of intellectual property. Barbadians need to understand why we have to respond in the way that we do.

When Barbados became independent in 1966, what we achieved then was political independence, which was prompted by some visionary sons of the soil coming together and looking at the way forward for Barbados. They presented that thought to the population. The population was in agreement, and then these sons and daughters of the soil went forward and crafted Independence. It was a political independence. They then set in place the institutions to help run, govern and manage the country and this was very important in our history.

Independence took place during the period of the Cold War which was the time when the communist and capitalist systems were competing against each other across the world for supremacy and for control over the markets of the world. And so, the foreign policy coming out of the Cold War during the time when the Caribbean was becoming independent, was targeted at encouraging countries to adopt a particular ideology.

The position that the Capitalists took towards the Caribbean was that these countries are becoming independent but in truth and in fact, they do not have the wherewithal to take care of their economies themselves. If we allow them to go under, it is going to create the kind of social unrest that will lay the ground for political unrest which will give birth to communism. They shaped a foreign policy that was aimed at every time our economies began to bottom out, they would make an interjection and it would cause the economy to turn and come upwards.

Some of the ways in which this was done were that these small Third World Countries were given access to loans so that, for example, if you were having serious unemployment, you could go and get a loan and start a programme, such as building roads, schools, airports, hospitals, what have you. This would create employment which would allow people to earn. The earning then would

flow through the economy, causing business to gain profit and the Government to be able to get taxation. Therefore, every time the economy bottomed down, you would go and get a loan to try to get it to come back.

It was relatively easy to access these loans. Unlike commercial banks today, to qualify you had to be in need. Without radically changing the way in which we do business, without radically changing the way in which we manage our economies, without radically changing how we behave as citizens, managers, workers, consumers, the economy could turn and come back up, without us doing anything differently. And so, the Barbadians built up a disconnect between the quality of life that they experience every day with their behaviours every day and there was no need to make any change.

Not only were we given easy loans, but they were also provided with technical assistance when required. Also, under the trade agreements with LOME, these countries were guaranteed the ability to earn foreign exchange. In truth and in fact, these nations did not have the economic independence where they were able to develop goods and services that were competitive on their own in the international market and able to attract foreign exchange in their own right.

Therefore, the policy was, whatever we produce, regardless of quality, regardless of whether they needed it or not, they would guarantee that they would absorb those things into their markets at no duty being imposed. This was how we earned income, from year to year, allowing us to purchase the goods and services, with that foreign exchange, to build the economy, to provide the roads, schools, to bring in medicine, clothing, bicycles for our children, et cetera.

In addition, there was an immigration policy which allowed the excess labour that could not be absorbed, where people could not find work, they could then emigrate to the USA, London or Canada and find work. When they got there, they could bring a brother, sister, aunt, uncle, father, mother, which eased the social pressure from these economies during that period of the Cold War. This was the era in which Barbados had Independence.

We had political independence, but in truth and in fact, we were not ready or able to carry our own economic independence. Now what has happened, since that time in 1966, as we come into the late 1980s and 1990s what occurred in world history, was that the Cold War ended. Communism no longer was a threat to the capitalist countries and hence, those countries no longer saw the need to prop up or to lift up these economies when they got into trouble.

We then saw a change that then ushered in a new world order that was now going to be governed by the World Trade Organisation rules that now said we could no longer enjoy a privileged position, in having guaranteed access to their market, but we now had to come in and compete on the same basis as anybody else, that we would not be able to access loans, unless we could demonstrate the capacity to pay back. Our people could no longer move as freely in obtaining visas, and permission to move abroad, and to be able to live abroad, in a way that they had enjoyed before.

What this meant for these small countries, was that it was no longer business as usual. It meant that every Third World Economy was now faced with the massive challenge of changing the basis on which its economy operated and performed. This change required more than the Government putting structures and programmes in place. This change towards economic independence needs the active and full participation of every single citizen to make it work, because the change has to go all the way down to the level as to how we behave as citizens, down to littering on the streets.

These change in policy, then cause governments to look at how they were going to craft a way forward, an economic strategy that is going to allow us to provide meaningful lives for our citizens and to allow them the opportunity to grow and develop. Along with that whole change in the trade policy, a whole set of regulations came down governing things like taxation, and governing things like Government procurement, movement of labour, movement of capital, changing the whole way in which we do business. This is the dilemma that countries found themselves in needing to craft a new way forward to be able to build their economies in a different way.

It means that:

1. There has to be a serious transformation of the economy, and to do that, economies would have to look at developing a mix of economic activity that would be competitive at the local, regional and international levels.
2. You would need to change the fundamentals of business practice in Barbados.
3. You would have to change the critical structures that support economic activity, and this includes Government departments and statutory corporations. It also includes labour attitudes and labour practice.

They are some of the things that are required, if we are going to be competitive.

How are we going to achieve this objective? If we look at the Appropriation Bill, and if we look at the

strategies outlined there, we would see the effort being made to deal with all of those elements necessary for repositioning the economy. To change the mix of economic activity, is going to be critical to identify activities for which there is demand and for which we have some level of competitive advantage.

We also need to look at providing high quality produce and service at the lowest cost commensurate with the quality.

Senate 12, sequence 56,

11.30 a.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR Ms. S.C.V. HUSBANDS: We need to aggressively secure local markets and then thrust into the regional and international markets, the Caribbean Single Market and Economy and the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

We have to broaden the entrepreneurship participation of Barbadians and deepen the growth of those enterprises to an optimum size for sustainability and involve as many Barbadians as possible because this new world environment is not going to be necessarily labour-friendly. This new world environment is calling for people to find their entrepreneurial skill to understand that jobs are not guaranteed and that if capital is going to find the best possible conditions to maximise profit they are not going to be necessarily concern with maintaining employment and so on.

They want to be able to come and set up in Barbados but if they hear things are better in Asia they will pack up tomorrow morning and go without regard to the foreign reserves, to employment and to the social dislocation that results behind because nobody is going to be looking out to see if we are going to get lunch, we have to look out for that ourselves. So you have to broaden the participation of the Barbadian into their economy through entrepreneurship and self-employment where possible to help deepen and strengthen the economy.

Madam Deputy President, I propose to go through some of the major things that will be done under the various heads as opposed to focussing on any one in detail so that we can get an understanding as to why we are doing the things that we are doing and why we have to do them the way in which they are being done. In developing activities that have a demand, the Government has taken a position to look at the transformation of existing traditional activities, things that we have done before but we need to do in a different way. The second thing is to identify new

activities, things that we have not thought of but which we have the capacity to approach.

Madam Deputy President, under the heading of Transformation of Existing Traditional Activities, we heard the Minister of Agriculture speak so eloquently yesterday about the various initiatives taking place in that traditional sector. He looked at cotton, sugarcane, vegetable crops, the black belly sheep, pork production and arboriculture in the Scotland District. We see that a lot of support is going into the manufacturing sector to try to help it to become competitive. One of those initiatives is the establishment of an industry research unit which aims to fashion policy to help grow the competitiveness of our manufacturers, because as you know, Sir, we are not as competitive as we should be as things cost too much in Barbados. It would take a really long time to explain why that is so but a lot of it has to do with the speed at which we work. We have not been able to communicate to people that the longer they take to execute a function the more expensive it is. Therefore, the expense of Barbados has to do with inefficiency as opposed to quality. This is something that can only be addressed by changing the work attitudes and practices of labour and changing the managerial effectiveness of business owners and managers.

Madam Deputy President, the industry research unit also has to seek to protect the local market until transformation comes. Yesterday the Minister shared that one of the ways to do that is how you use and apply your standards. The third aim of this unit is to improve product quality. Now this is not the only initiative in manufacturing. The Barbados Industrial Development Corporation has set up a technical assistance programme and an incentive for export programme which was capitalised with some \$15 million with the aim of targeting manufacturing concerns that have the capability for export and to give them access to the technical assistance that they need whether it was technical capacity in terms of production, accounting skills or human resource or marketing skills so that they can improve their businesses and become much more competitive. To date some 101 manufacturers have benefited from this particular programme. A decision has been taken to extend this technical assistance and incentive for export programme to include services. This would be consistent with the policy of Government that is seeing services as one of the areas that we have competitive advantage.

Madam Deputy President, the Industrial Investment and Employment Fund was established to provide financing for the retooling of the manufacturing sector so that those sectors can become competitive. This support programme was put in place by the Government to help the manufacturing industry to retool and to get new equipment. What is critical is support for marketing. Marketing is probably one of the greatest challenges businesses in

Barbados have. Having enough capital to sustain marketing to be able to put a highly developed marketing strategy out to attract more business is one of the weaknesses you would find in both the small business sector and in the larger businesses.

Madam Deputy President, there is a private/public sector initiative taking place to establish a trade and marketing company to promote Barbadian products. I cannot tell you how important that is. From the Small Business Association perspective, I know that is one of the challenges that we have. To be able to get support in marketing is going to be vital, and I really want to commend Government for this public/private sector initiative which is going to be funded by the Public Enterprise Investment Fund. To go a step further, they are planning to have two seminars in which they are going to be inviting small businesses and large businesses to look at participation in the export market.

Madam Deputy President, one of the things I have noted in the business sector is that there is a tremendous need for retraining and for awareness programmes for business people. Most business people get caught up in the everyday management of their businesses and do not take the time to get the necessary information and the continuous training that they need in order to do better business. If one thinks back to maybe 15 or 20 years ago they would recognise that governments had a tendency to put some loans into a fund and to say come and borrow the money and do what you have to do, but without the technical assistance and without training, those loans did not benefit those small businesses and just created another noose around their necks. So I am very happy today to see that more of the financing institutions and Government policy is reflecting the need for technical assistance and training to help those people to build better capacity in terms of their skills in managing their business, which really is to be commended.

Madam Deputy President, the international business and financial services sector is another sector which has been growing at a steady pace. It has its ups and downs, but it represents something close to 40 per cent of the tax intake of Barbados, so you can understand how important it is that we continue to grow there. Part of the Government's recognition of the importance of the financial services sector is demonstrated in the fact that they have just appointed someone in North America whose job would be to go and actively seek and promote the financial services sector of Barbados to gain more exempt insurance business for the country, which is going to be important to our earnings.

Madam Deputy President, we already heard from both the Minister and Senator Fields about the Barbados Coalition of Services and on Barbados' private sector trade

team, so I do not necessarily need to spend a lot of time on them. I just want to say that part of what needs to happen in Barbados is that as businesses we need to grow up and there has to be a maturing in the business practices in Barbados. The establishment of that private sector trade team is a demonstration of that growth because as businesses we can no longer sit and expect that Government is going to do everything, that Government will work on the Free Trade Area of the Americas, that Government would deal with the World Trade Organisation and that Government would do X and Y.

Madam Deputy President, part of our maturing and coming into genuine independence is being able to rise up and take responsibility and to participate and play our part in what we need to do for ourselves to ensure that we are able to build strong businesses. We not only need that maturing among labour, that maturing must come within the business community. The establishment of the Barbados private sector trade team is one such example of our beginning to come into that level of maturity. Sometimes people find it difficult to understand the initiatives that Government is putting in place in terms of understanding why you are doing this.

Senate 12 Sequence 57

11.40 a.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR Ms. S.C.V. HUSBANDS: Madam Deputy President, part of the implication of the World Trade Organisation rules and the changing environment around us, is that Government is going to be forced to lower taxes and to establish a level playing field in terms of taxation. This would mean that the current high level of taxes in Barbados have to come down, to allow the economy to be more competitive and to interact with other economies.

Madam Deputy President, the implication of this is that if we continue to do business in the way we are doing, Government's intake is going to be less. If Government's intake is less, then Government cannot support the size of the public sector. Government will not have revenue to put into activities to stimulate employment and economic activity. If Government's intake is less, it would result in unemployment, and unemployment in the private sector is going to trigger unemployment in the public sector because the public sector servants would not have money to shop, which would mean that those other businesses would suffer and would have to lay people off.

It means that any sensible, thinking and caring Government, is going to put in place a policy that seeks early to safeguard its revenue base for the benefit of the

nation, and to safeguard the job creation opportunities and to stimulate that policy. A small nation like Barbados with such limited resources - and bear in mind a very small window of opportunity in which to make this transition - would, therefore, have some critical decisions to make as to where one applies one's resources at this time.

Madam Deputy President, there are going to be social, physical and economic needs within any society and, therefore, when acting wisely and being faced with a situation, it would become imperative for Government to allocate a significant portion of its resources into such activities that would stimulate and build economic activities so that its tax intake could rise and it would have the revenue to respond to the social needs of housing, roads, education, social transformation, et cetera.

Government must also protect the availability of jobs and multiply that availability so that people could earn. Therefore, Government's tax revenue would increase so that it could take care of those marginalised and vulnerable persons.

Madam Deputy President, this is a very delicate balancing act and what Government has sought to do in trying to safeguard its revenue and to offset the loss that it would incur when it has to change its taxation policy, is that Government has been giving, and continues to give its support to tourism, to keep its revenues up. It has also looked at investing in a number of activities that would allow Government to increase its revenues.

Madam Deputy President, Barbados' private sector tends to be relatively conservative and our banking system tends to be extremely conservative as it relates to investments, et cetera. Therefore, it means that where there is a deficit in the economy, it has to be made up by Government and would require investment to make it work. Therefore, because of that, Government would have made some investments into some very critical tourism projects, to shore up some weaknesses within the tourism industry. The aim of that investment would be to position that sector so that it is able to increase its foreign exchange earnings which is critical to the nation. Therefore, the Government has stepped in and played that role.

Madam Deputy President, some initiatives work well and some work less than well because Government has no greater protection than a private enterprise engaging in business. Business is always a risk. Government would also be challenged in having to release certain functions in which it now engages as a part of its commitment to the society. Therefore, Government has begun to look at activities in which it is currently engaged, those activities that are less injurious to the population but which have commercial potential Government has sought to

commercialise those activities, to create profits and to reduce operating costs.

Government will still earn revenues from its commercial activities such as the Post Offices, the Airport, the Seaport and in health services, while looking at the formulated policies for health management enterprises, retirement villages, et cetera, and using those health services as a means of developing revenue.

We also have, for example, another area in which Government is making that kind of initiative which is in education. Education has commercial value. Our exercise of going through the EduTech Programme means that we are going to build consulting capacity to be able to help other nations to implement similar programmes. Therefore, our teachers now can start to look at the possibility of getting into private enterprises or engaging in commercial activities through Government, in offering EduTech consulting services to other nations.

Madam Deputy President, all of these initiatives are important. When Government has an enterprise that is doing well that is earning revenue and has limited resources, Government might sometimes shed some activities that can stand on their own, simply because Government will receive revenue from its profitability. Government would then take those resources that were put into that enterprise and shift it into something else that urgently needs attention. These are some of the strategies that we see taking place and which are designed to help the nation to transition onto new economic activities.

Madam Deputy President, in relation to changing the fundamentals of business practice, because traditionally we tend to be conservative and in Third World countries, Government tends to take the lead in terms of economic activity as opposed to the private sector driving that as it does in First World countries, some of our businesses tend to be inward-looking or conservative and the evolution of businesses in Barbados under a cold war policy did not help to change that.

In many businesses, there was little focus on efficiency and cost of operations because if the product was an export one, such as sugar or rum, one was guaranteed to get a market for it and, therefore, it was not a big problem. If Government got revenue, was able to keep the population going, people got money, and there was a small market in which people had limited options and limited choice, a business did not have to focus on giving value for money, et cetera. Therefore, this impacted on how we do business. Not only was there little focus on efficiency and cost of operations but poor customer service was a problem. There was little innovation and creativity, poor business and competitive practices, and very weak human relations management. Even our most successful

businesses in Barbados, without some major change in how they do everyday business, would find it difficult to be competitive. If we took some of our most successful businesses and put them, for example, in Atlanta or New York, they would have a difficulty being competitive without making radical changes to the way in which they do business.

Therefore, Government has sought to stimulate a change in the fundamentals of business practice by some of the legislation that they have put in place to seek to regulate how we do things. A basic one is the legislation that is being put in place to manage the credit unions. At these institutions people are controlling hundreds of millions of dollars and therefore Government has stepped in to make sure that these unions are properly regulated so that they could properly carry out their functions in a practical and safe manner.

There is the Fair Trading Commission legislation, which was already spoken to in terms of consumer protection and fair competition. These pieces of legislation actually force businesses to grow in terms of their practice. I have seen the effects in the small business sector, of how some of our members have taken the time, for example, to change their policies, to look at how they do their refunds, to be more focussed on how they do quality control, et cetera, and it has helped them. It may be challenging or difficult but it has helped them to mature in terms of their practice.

The Intellectual Property legislation is another piece of legislation to help us to grow and to do business in a more effective way.

S:No. 12(58)

11.50 a.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2003

Senator Ms. S.C.V. HUSBANDS: I want to commend Government on that initiative in terms of encouraging us to change the fundamentals of practice.

Madam Deputy President, on the issue of broadening participation and entrepreneurship, any growth in jobs in this economy is going to come from the small business sector because large businesses already have a structure that they can easily absorb an additional three or four hundred thousand dollars in business without having to increase significantly their staff complement. Madam, an increase in a small business of 50 000 will of necessity force that person to hire two or three more persons so any real meaningful expansion of the job base is going to come from small businesses.

Madam Deputy President, I want to say that in a small economy like Barbados, small businesses are important to large businesses and this inter-dependence needs to be understood by the wider Barbadian population. Small businesses not only hire people but purchase goods and supplies in their own rights as businesses and as individuals. Small businesses are the customers of big businesses and, therefore, the survival of small businesses is also critical to the survival of the larger businesses. If there is the closure of 50 small businesses, it will shake down the economy in a significant way and we need to work together in strategic alliances that allow us to maximise what is happening in Barbados that gives us the footing to be able to penetrate into the wider markets of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy and the FTAA.

If we are going to broaden participation in entrepreneurship then certain critical things need to be done. This is reflected in the Appropriation Bill and this is why I feel proud of what this Government is doing because it shows thought, understanding, courage and the ability to see what needs to be done and to do it. As I said, it is important for Barbadians to understand what is informing that policy so that they know what to do in response to it.

Sir, there is more participation in the creative, technological and professional services and so on and we are seeing a growth in the number of persons engaging in entrepreneurship. I want to state that traditionally Barbadians take up entrepreneurship because of need. Barbadians became self-employed because things were hard and this is still reflected in the trade services today and because of this, Barbadians have been reluctant entrepreneurs and some are simply focussed on making a dollar for the moment and not necessarily on how to grow the business.

I went to a fish fry recently and those people could not fry the fish fast enough to meet the demands of the persons who were there to buy but the accommodation for the customers was appalling. Although the person was operating there for years yet he had not seen it necessary to create a more congenial and attractive environment for his customers. Madam, he was making a dollar so building the business to another level to make it successful in the long term was irrelevant to him. These are some of the attitudes that people bring into entrepreneurship and it must be changed.

I have noticed over the past five years that more persons are coming into entrepreneurship by choice. Many persons have left lucrative jobs or retired early to get the opportunity to express their entrepreneurial creativity because they feel that before they die, this is what they have to do. We have a growing group of potential entrepreneurs who want to engage meaningfully in this economy and Government has the responsibility to broaden

the participation and ensure that people can contribute to the development of this country. Therefore, the initiatives that have been put in are helpful. The Government will continue in 2004/2005 to create a generation of new entrepreneurs:

Sir, I am extremely proud of the Youth Entrepreneurial Scheme because the officers work hard and long and are able to stimulate young people between 18 to 30 years old. These young people are given such supports that if it were available ten years ago, many businesses would be more developed. They receive technical assistance with marketing, accounting, legal problems et cetera and there is a mentor, someone who has done well in business to work with them in this area to encourage and guide them. There is also a business development officer who helps with business from one stage to the other and there is assistance for them to obtain loans.

I have seen young people graduate from that programme and take their businesses to another level and are today members of the Small Business Association. I am proud of the fact that they were able to make it thus far and that they have the commitment to build a business.

Two other initiatives which helped to generate new entrepreneurs is the Rural Development Commission and the Urban Development Commission which have assisted small entrepreneurs in obtaining loans. These are people who do not have security or collateral but have business ideas and they assist them in getting small loans to take their businesses forward. Sir, they have helped several hundred Barbadians. The Rural Development Commission processed 87 loans in entrepreneurial. They have also engaged in providing the training necessary to help those entrepreneurs do good business in association with the Small Business Association to provide training in business startup, cost management, marketing, computers et cetera.

Having stimulated and created opportunities to motivate people to get into entrepreneurship the next step would be support for that growth through the access to finance.

S12/Sequence 59

12:00 noon

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

12:00 Noon

Senator Miss S.C.V. HUSBANDS: This was always a bug-bear for small businesses, being able to access finance because they are often turned down by the financial banks because they do not have collateral. What the Government has done through the various Funds that it has

in the institutions of Fund Access, EGFL, et cetera, is make available close to \$50 million for entrepreneurial lending, whether via equity or for loan financing and you can find a Fund that will suit you.

One of the things that would make it very difficult for businesses to obtain capital, is the issue of security and collateral. In Barbados, banks want to have something tangible that they can pick up and cash in, if you should default on the loan, the bank operates on the principle that you are going to default, so I am going to make sure that I have something that I can get back my money.

This is very different from the procedure used by American banks. American banks are not so much interested in collateral. They are interested in cash flow. If you can present a business plan that demonstrates that you can create sufficient cash flow to pay back your loan, then that bank is willing to take a risk with you and support you.

The banking system and the investment enterprises in North America tend to be much more of a partner for the development of their businesses. This is why their small business groups grow so much and are able to provide serious employment in North America, but the methodology used in Barbados actively discourages entrepreneurship.

The truth is, Madam President, you can go to a bank today and get a loan to buy a living room suite for \$3 000 and if you wanted to borrow \$2 000 to start a business, you would have difficulty getting that \$2 000 loan. This is the reality that happens in Barbados and it is something that has to change.

The Government has made an attempt in not only putting the funds in place but in seeking to work with the reality of the banking system, Government has put in place the Small Business Credit Guarantee Scheme. Now this Guarantee Scheme allows entrepreneurs to go to a finance institution, present a good business plan and if they do not have enough security to secure the loan, they are able to have it backed by the credit guarantee scheme up to 90 per cent.

Now, for years, the banking system refused to use the Scheme. So, that meant that small businesses were still locked out from access to capital. They complained that the procedures were too involved, too long, it took them too long to recover their money and they do not want all of the headaches with the paper work and the backwards and forwards. They want to be able to have situations where they can access their money quickly.

To the credit of the Central Bank, the Governor mandated the agency to look at making it easier, revamping how the Credit Guarantee Scheme is used, and making it

more friendly for the bank to operate. I cannot say that there has been a huge rush by the commercial banks to use this method. What I can say is that the Central Bank then extended the ability to use the Credit Guarantee Scheme to the credit unions and that is a wonderful thing.

It means that where a commercial bank may refuse you, small businesses can go to the credit unions and get their business loan, and have it backed by the Credit Guarantee Scheme. I am telling you that in a few years down the road, that is going to make all the difference to our small businesses being able to be capitalised in the way that they need to be successful.

In the Small Business Association, we have struck up a strategic alliance with the Public Workers Credit Union to be able to offer business loans to small businesses and to have it backed by the Credit Guarantee Scheme. I really have to commend the credit union for its vision, foresight and commitment to the genuine development of small people in Barbados.

The Public Workers Credit Union has not only come forward but, right now, we are completing a Memorandum of Understanding with a commercial bank which has also expressed willingness to use that Credit Guarantee Scheme. The reason why both were necessary is that we have a number of members, who are limited liability companies, who do not necessarily want to borrow money in their personal name, which is what they would have to do if they got the loan through the credit union. They prefer to be able to borrow on the name of their company, so that they have the protection of incorporation. This is why it is necessary to have both instruments available to small businesses.

I am telling you that in five years time, you will see a major difference to small business development in Barbados, because businesses will have access to capital backed by the Credit Guarantee Scheme.

The Government has also been extremely supportive of the Small Business Association and its initiatives. As a result of its financial support and the partnerships that we have engaged in towards strengthening the small business sector, a number of things have happened. We have been able to develop some institutional strengthening so that we can develop research capability to be able to access what is going on in the sector.

Right now, our membership stands at about 450 members, Madam Deputy President, and we have three group associations with an additional 300 members. What we have been able to do through the institutional strengthening provided by the Government, is to be able to build our membership base. We have divided that membership base into sectorial groups. Those sectorial groups come together for three major reasons:

1. To be able to identify the problems that they are experiencing in that sector.
2. To be able to sit and brainstorm on what is needed.
3. To be able to provide solutions to deal with those problems. Some of those solutions help to inform Government policy and we are able to pass that on to Government in the shape of policy.

Those sectorial groups also provide an opportunity for bench marking and for learning from each other. The groups are looking at things like bulk purchasing and joint marketing. Right now, I am very excited about what is happening in our construction group because they have started training to look at improving quality. We are going to be doing research on establishing some building standards that we want everybody to operate by, thus being able to raise the quality and the speed of construction in Barbados so that we can control cost.

Through the support of the Government, we have been able to establish our Professional Business Advisory Service. Unfortunately, the service is not free because they are all professionals who are offering a service, but they are able to offer it at below market cost. They have been able to help about 32 of our members, who had problems with debt management, who needed refinancing, who needed professional services, and this has been a great boon to the Small Business members through Professional Business Advisory Service (PBAS).

The SBA, has also been working on establishing some financial services. Those are not completed yet but there are just a couple that I would like to mention that we have in place, which would assist the development of small businesses. We have a programme where we can do discounting. This is a problem that the Government needs to address. Small businesses have cash flow problems, and when the Government takes too long to pay a small business person, very often his business is jeopardised. First of all, if he has to pay VAT, he cannot pay his VAT and he incurs a penalty at the VAT level, despite the fact that it is the Government who owes him, because he does not have the cash flow to cover the VAT.

They are not able to pay their rent, or make their bank payments because the Government owes them and there is low cash flow. If the Government delays by two or three months, in the interim they may have to send home people, they may have to give up a vehicle, they may lose the rental on their place. All kinds of things happen when the Government takes too long to pay small businesses. This is something that public sector reform needs to address urgently, because it retards the development of the economy, and the economy cannot afford it in this new globalised environment.

What the SBA has done though, is set up a relationship with a financial institution where if our members have an invoice that they presented to Government and it is taking too long for them to get their cash, we are able to take that Bill and advance them the cash that they need, through this financial institution at a discounted rate. This allows that small business to get on with what it has to do, and that finance institution will collect the monies later.

We also have been able to assist our small businesses who bid for Government contracts, who ever often need performance bonds and security bonds. We have been able to put a facility in place that they can obtain performance and security bonds to enable them to be able to access Government contracts, et cetera. We also have equity financing.

Another institution that I need to mention in terms of its commitment and fight to aid small businesses, is the BIDC. I mentioned them earlier but I want to mention them here again. The BIDC offers tremendous support to small businesses in Barbados. They have a technical assistance programme, an incubator programme, and free business services, and they provide training and support to small businesses to show that the Government is deeply committed to the broadening of participation of entrepreneurship and to supporting those businesses.

Senate 12, sequence 60,

12.10 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR Miss S. C. V. HUSBANDS: I would like to commend the Government for its provision in this year's Estimates of \$1 million to help the people who are living with HIV/AIDS into becoming self-employed to be able to create their own work. Madam Deputy President, when I attended the HIV/AIDS consultation I was moved as I listened to the plight of HIV/AIDS sufferers and the level of poverty that they experienced as a result of the disease. The Government's programme of the anti-retroviral drugs has done a lot in terms of extending their lives, but we have brought them back alive to a life in which they are ostracised and a life in which they cannot get employment which creates its own stresses as people try to cope with the isolation, the loneliness, the fear and the poverty that they now face knowing that they are no longer going to die, so how do they cope with this. Listening to that presentation really moved me and I am so happy that Government has taken this step to be able to provide \$1 million to help put in place a programme to help them to re-engage in economic activity, which is to be highly commended.

Madam Deputy President, as my time is passing, I want to move to changing the critical sports structures.

MADAM DEPUTY PRESIDENT: You have three minutes in which to do that.

SENATOR Ms. S. C. V. HUSBANDS: I will endeavour to do that, but the truth is I can speak for quite a long time.

When I started my contribution I said that 1966 was the year of political independence, but the 21st century brings us to a stage where we now have to craft economic independence. Political independence was something a committed team of persons went forward and was able to craft with just the passive assent of the general Barbadian population; but economic independence is difference. For these initiatives to take shape and to have life and meaning and for our businesses to change and become competitive, it is going to require from management back down to the person sweeping the floor to change their attitudes toward their work and to think about continuously improving their processes and thinking about profitability. Profitability is everybody's business.

Madam Deputy President, a story has been sent across the Internet about a problem on an Intensive Care Unit ward of a hospital where at a particular time the patients on a particular bed would die and they could not understand what was causing the problem. It seemed like something supernatural was happening, why would people on a particular bed at a particular time die. When investigations were carried out, what they observed was that the part-time janitor working on the ward would come in and needing a plug to plug in the vacuum cleaner, he would unplug the life support system, plug in his vacuum cleaner, vacuum the ward and then plug back in the life support system and leave the ward and soon after that the patient would collapse.

Madam Deputy President, when I look at that story I thought it was so eloquent of what is happening to us in our nation that in truth and in fact as Barbadians we are not aware of how our everyday behaviour affect the entire structure that makes up the economy. We do not make the connection between being late, not producing, high absenteeism, poor customer service practice and theft. We have not made the connection between that behaviour and the impact that it has on the economy. Therefore, if we are going to be successful in transitioning the economy, the Barbadian population has to engage deliberately and actively in this process, otherwise it will not work.

Madam Deputy President, as I end, I want to quote Paul Robson who said:

"We realise that our future lies chiefly in our own hands. We know that neither institution nor friends can make a race stand unless it has strength within its own foundation. In order to succeed, it must practise the virtues of self-reliance, self-respect, industry and perseverance."

Madam Deputy President, I cannot think of a better quote to exemplify what is needed in Barbados in terms of the change in the labour force.

MADAM DEPUTY PRESIDENT: And a fitting way to end.

SENATOR Ms. S. C. V. HUSBANDS: Thank you so much, Madam Deputy President.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Madam Deputy President, I rise to make my contribution to this debate on behalf of the Opposition, the Democratic Labour Party, and certainly on behalf of the people of Barbados who I am sure as the Honourable Prime Minister made his presentation would have had a number of questions and a number of issues that they would have hoped would have been articulated further by the Members of both Houses.

Madam Deputy President, I have for a long time observed this exercise from a distance pondering at times if I would ever have the opportunity to participate in such. I consider this moment of participation to be a mere transition point to another place and I have every endeavour to continue my pursuit on behalf of the good people of Barbados in general, but specifically of the good people of the constituency of Christ Church East. I speak not as the representative of that area as yet, but, Madam Deputy President, I assure you that with the inspiration I am gleaned from this exercise it must come to past one day.

Madam Deputy President, the Estimates debate is an exercise provided for through the Constitution of Barbados and it is the time when the leader of our great nation seeks to inform the public how he and his Government propose to spend our money. As one who would sit by quietly or actively and listen to the Estimates debate, I am quite sure that questions must arise. There must be the question as to why Government would choose to spend our money the way it chooses. There must be the question of how would the Government spend the money we give it approval to spend. There must be the question of where would this money be focussed and there must be the question of what would be the result of these expenditures. The question of what would be the result of these expenditures is a pivotal question because you would discover, Madam Deputy President, that in all of these exercises Government does not choose to bring a comprehensive report card to the people telling the people how the previous term of expenditures were accomplished.

Madam Deputy President, I have heard some of the Honourable Senators of this Chamber speak about manifestoes and about the difference in the covering of the manifestoes of both political parties. I am always amused because those who only choose to use the cover to judge the content of a document speak to perhaps the depth of which they choose to go into the heart of the matter. It is important that Government takes the time to tell us whether or not the targets it sets are being met by the expenditures it offers in those areas.

It is important in any enterprise that at the end of the fiscal period the reporting process reveals the accomplishments obtained by the activities, that the reporting process reveals the shortfalls in any of the critical areas and that the reporting process suggests efforts to remediate the deficit in the process.

Senate 12 Sequence 61

12.20 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Madam Deputy President, I want to suggest efforts to remedy the deficits in the process. I want to begin by suggesting to this Honourable Chamber that the exercise of the Estimates must be one where the Government takes the time to encourage the masses at all levels of the society. I would want to suggest that the confidence we place in the Government must be associated with the Government's disposition to give us every opportunity to understand, not only where we are going, not only what we will accomplish but how our lives would be changed for the better.

I heard an Honourable Member say that the Estimates is about political outlook, social transformation, and the improvement of the quality of life. Sir, in the Other Place, I recall that in the spreading of the Estimates, it was noted that there were two pivotal tenets that should be related with understanding the Estimates, they are stabilisation and social transformation.

Madam Deputy President, I would expect the Honourable Minister and Leader of Government Business to elucidate in closing but my understanding of stabilisation is that it is a moment where one seeks to reintroduce normalcy. For example, if a patient is picked up along the way as a result of an emergency, it is the responsibility of the emergency unit to try to stabilise that patient until he or she could reach a position where the transition to normalcy is attained. Prolonged stabilisation has some kind of dysfunction attached to it, I would suggest. I would believe that once one has been stabilised, then the next step would be to restructure, so as to ensure

that those areas that are expandable are expanded, and those areas that must be curbed are curbed.

I would also suggest that Government go through a re-engineering process of the economy which allows it to maximise its opportunity to ensure that individuals in the country would feel the impact of what the Government intends to achieve in their lives.

Madam Deputy President, I, therefore, would want the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Leader of Government Business to help me to understand. I do not profess in any great shape or form to have any great grasp on matters of economics. I am just shedding my moments of lack of clarity on the matter and I want to know specifically, and I am quite sure others would wish to know whether or not the Government, now nine years old, is still in a mode of stabilisation or if they have moved onto the stage of restructuring.

Asides.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Madam Deputy President, I hear people on the other side whispering. I expect that to be the case. They have just come into a moment of illumination, and that is the reaction to that moment. Therefore, the exercise of Government in this particular activity is about safeguarding the economic, physical, social, psycho-social, cognitive and spirited well-being of every Barbadian. I understand that it must use its economic base to feed this root instinctiveness of man to ensure that at the end of the day every individual could recognise or could realise the full blessings of what this great nation has to offer.

Madam Deputy President, another endeavour associated with this activity would be to craft an economic environment where every penny spent in this country is accounted for, and that it also achieves maximum social benefit for all. Eight years later, we still find citizens who would have lived and toiled for many years still living in sheep pens. Eight years later, we still find individuals earning at the very bottom of the pay scale because Government has not seen it fit to date to introduce minimum wage legislation.

Madam Deputy President, nine years later into the Administration of this Government, we are still finding that there are individuals who find it extremely difficult to live day after day because while some of us, perhaps those of us who engineer policies, have been blessed sufficiently to have escaped the scourge of poverty. There are those who now sit in the enclaves of poverty, who find it difficult to raise their children and to put food on the table. Therefore, I am asking that the Government of this great country to understand that what might have escaped those who make

the policies have not escaped those who must live by those policies.

Madam Deputy President, out of this economic environment must flow policies and programmes that protect and promote the economy of Barbados but perhaps most importantly, must promote the children, the adolescents, the young adults and the elderly of the society. It does not matter how air-tight a country's economic policies are, if there is a society in disorder, Government would find it difficult to maximise the benefits of that economic standard. Therefore, it is my humble opinion that we need to be able to understand, in the most clear ways, that if the system is going to work, Government must guarantee us that the system will function at a level of efficiency that is second-to-none.

Madam Deputy President, I remember so very clearly when, in 1994, this Government went to the people asking them to divest their interest in the Democratic Labour Party because this Government had, at the time, rendered the Democratic Labour Party not fit to govern the country. This Government had insisted that they would have offered an alternative that would have been guided by fiscal prudence. As a matter of fact, one of the critical planks of their platform at the time was that they were going to root out the evils of fiscal management of this country and would have put in place, as though it had descended from above, this magnificent rule that would have ensured that this country would have fiscal management, undergirded by prudence. Madam, I am waiting until the other Honourable Senators on that side rise to the occasion and answer some important questions that 23 others in the Other Place have not answered.

Madam Deputy President, if the sun sets on this most wonderful occasion and the question that still bother the minds of the masses are not answered, something that borders on the rim of injustice may well have occurred.

Madam Deputy President, on the economic side, Government must focus on engaging in a comprehensive analysis of all key sectors, so as to determine the level of efficiency, productivity and competitiveness that is associated with the same. I must admit that whenever I hear the Honourable Minister of Agriculture speak to matters of agriculture, I feel a sense of hope that something is going to occur.

We on this side have no difficulty in applauding the State for the things it does well, for after all, it is only moral and decent so to do.

S:No. 12(62)

12.30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2003

SENATOR Dr. D.S. LOWE: Madam Deputy President, I do not feel obliged to come in this place and repeat what is said to the Other Place giving flight to my own sense of conscience. I accept that governments do good things and some do not but when good is being done on either side, it should be applauded. There are reasons for us to antagonise the presentation of the State to ensure that we ferret out those issues that the average man on the street would ask us about because it is my obligation as an Honourable Senator in this Chamber to ensure when I leave this Chamber that I can give answers based on the fact that Honourable Members on the Other Side have chosen to respond to those issues.

Madam, the protection and advancement of industry is an important activity. We have gone through a period in this country where there has been more industrial unrest than ever seen before with the exception of 1937. Madam Deputy President, we know that the industrial unrest in this country at present has the capacity to hurt the industry they represent because if the environment for workers is such that they cannot enjoy a good quality of work life, it will impact upon productivity. If workers feel that coming to the job is drudgery and only represents an opportunity for pay, then it must impact negatively upon the sector they represent.

I hope in all of Government's spending that it takes time to contemplate the need to address the labour relation issues in the public sector where day after day there is an element of unrest in the sector. If things are going so well and the Government has so much money to spend I expect that the things that happened in the 1990s should not happen now.

Madam Deputy President, the full development and protection of wealth creation that accommodates the aspiration and dreams of all Barbadians is important. I cannot boast of coming from a wealthy family or from what we would call a well-to-do family in the country. I am proud of my heritage which includes some difficult circumstances. The circumstances were so difficult that I had to forfeit part of my formal education to help support my brother and sisters, ten of us.

My grandfather worked hard in what was then called the Road Board. I remember very well in those days they would tar the road without wearing shoes and would come home with soles blackened by the activity of their labour. Before he passed, he said to me that he worked hard because when the day came for him to move on, he hoped to leave a path that would allow me to escape from this type of labour that I must now go through.

Madam Deputy President, my father is now in his late sixties and he is still working as hard as my grandfather. I cannot boast that my life is so far removed from that struggle although I consider myself to be a man well-educated, a progressive thinker and a master in my profession.

I want to make this point about education again. There is an element of classism attached to the reality of making your move in this society where the distance between what you can dream and what you can attain in that dream is still wide for many of us.

I want to make the point that this Government came into office with every intent to shed those struggles and to create the concept that everyone should be a winner. I hope and pray that at the end of the day those of us who float the concept that everyone should be a winner when you go into the area that you have an interest in, that there are no losers in there. If you happen to find people at the bottom of the ladder, I hope to the good God Almighty that a way will be found to return them to the successes that this country has offered for others. The economic environment must involve the promotion of optimum productivity and must be unrelenting in benchmarking standards of human and organisational efficiency.

The public service of this country is demonstrating an inability at this stage to offer services at the capacity level of the workers. The Honourable Member who spoke before made the point that if you go into any public sector office, you would encounter a level of service providing that unless you have a real need for the service, you would turn away from that office. I must say truthfully that it happens in some private sector areas as well. I had an opportunity to work in the banking system for a brief period and some of the worst service you could get in this country is when you walk into commercial banks. It is not just the public sector but we have these issues in the private sector although they have been able to engineer mechanisms to minimise those types of deficits to better ensure that customers get the best benefit of what they have to offer.

Most of us do business in the public sector, whether to pay land taxes or go to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital for health care and the service quality needs to be looked at. You cannot achieve efficiency when the service quality is mediocre. The Honourable Member who is involved in tourism is probably chomping at the bit to get up and make his representation on the issues but I want to say that people come to this country as a destination to enjoy themselves. I hope and pray that with all the injection going into tourism that we understand that the real clincher to a tourist returning is the quality of service he receives. I will get to tourism a little later.

MADAM DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Lowe, I am sorry to interrupt you. I do not think you mean me when you used the word “you”, and I know you cannot speak directly to another member so please try and either rephrase it, address the Chair or be more impersonal. Thank you.

SENATOR Dr. D.S. LOWE: Madam President, thank you, I am obliged for your ruling.

Madam Deputy President, I hope that the Honourable Senator would take heed to some of the pointers I will give to him on the matter of tourism.

S12/Sequence 63

12.40 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

12.40 p.m.

Senator Dr. D.S. LOWE: When we look therefore at the economic side, we must then move on to what the Prime Minister referred to in the Other Place, as social transformation. I want to make the distinction here, that there is difference between achieving social transformation and social comfort.

Social comfort is where the Government put mechanisms in place that match the conditions of those persons in their social locations. For example, what creates social comfort for those at the top is going to be very different, in proportion to what creates social comfort for those at the bottom, because all that the bottom perceives to be needing is a toilet, a well dug.

I heard the Social Transformation Minister walked around and boasted about the things that it is doing to create social transformation, but he is creating social comfort because one's state of life only becomes transformed when that individual has the capacity, through empowerment and enablement, to transform those circumstances himself. It is the concept of giving an individual the hand up. Once you get a hand up and you are given the appropriate support, you can move on and then accomplish whatever level of social transformation, or transforming you need.

I believe that if you look carefully at the mandate of the Ministry of Social Transformation, you are going to find that there is no clear representation of a philosophy of social transformation. What we have basically done is create another social welfare arm in this country. I want to make it very clear, that we do not hold the Minister of Social Transformation responsible. We hold the framers

responsible for that, those who would have engineered the concept.

If we are not alleviating poverty, and there can be no measures to suggest that it has been alleviated in the lives of those who have made contact with the Ministry, and there is no report to suggest that in the year 1994, there were x number of poor people in this country, and in the year 2004 there has been a dramatic decline, what is the threshold that you are using? We want a report. We want results or else, we are going to have a hand-out Ministry that enables people to what they call, "learned helplessness". We want to move from that stage in this country. We have to make the distinction between social comfort and social transformation. On the social side, the Government must fix its gaze on working to improve the life chances of others.

I remember the time, and I heard my colleague make the point that before the current political climate, when there was the late Right Excellent Sir Grantley Adams and the late Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, those men understood moving a society, not creating comfort.

When people get comfortable where they are, chances are they will stay there, but those men understood the importance of creating a platform where the masses of people of this country could see a path to get from point A to point B. Kudos to the late Sir Grantley Adams for starting the process and the late Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow for continuing.

I am saying if that could have been accomplished then, what is the road map that we have now and where is it leading us and how can we be guaranteed that our destinations would be fixed sufficiently where we can realise self-actualisation in this life in terms of where we are going. I want to say that before you can assemble any social programme, you have to understand what the key tenet of a social care programme is all about.

Number one is education. I heard Senator Husbands and others speak glowingly about education. Let me say that Barbados has boasted one of the best systems of education the world over. Now, education is one of the major consumption of the Government monies and I want to spend some time on education. Madam Deputy President, education is the engine to achieve:

1. The economic good.
2. The social good.

I want to focus on the social good, because it is my view, it is my contention that as long as we understand the connection between education and social progress, we will be able to carve out an economic path to accommodate the needs associated with such, and of all the money spent on

education, \$30 million more is being injected into EduTech.

Now, let me say this very clearly. The Democratic Labour Party has never condemned the concept of EduTech. It is a fantastic concept. We have never denied that, what we have suggested is that the current path of EduTech will not permit it to accomplish its maximum social benefit to this country and we want to reiterate that in this debate.

When it came on stream, everyone understood it to be a technologically driven endeavour to put technology in schools. As a matter of fact, there was a big shebang made about the influx of laptops. If after \$300 million and the only thing I could boast about as a substantive measurable outcome is putting laptops in the hands of children, then I must ask myself if I have maximised the benefit. We are refurbishing schools, and that must be associated with the maximum social benefit of the project.

I believe that someone is suggesting also, either in This Place or the Other Place, that part of the offshoot of this concept, is putting the technology resource centres. Wow! Have you gone to a resource centre since the opening? Have you measured the extent to which the resource centres can link with schools to accomplish the objective of the EduTech programme? I would like to know the link, because there is no interconnectedness in terms of the technology. They are stand-alone sites, I am sure, and I speak under correction. If any teachers from the various schools that those resource centres represent are in those resource centres, complementing what the schools are doing to make sure that there is continuity in the learning, I am wondering.

MADAM DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Please, could I have silence. Dr. Lowe, I like your rhetorical style but this is not a question and answer session. Please continue, Senator Lowe.

SENATOR Dr. D.S. LOWE: I am much obliged.

I want to know whether or not, with the injection of this \$30 million that the public can be assured there will be a comprehensive progress report as to what is being attained at this time, as to what targets have been met, and about the projections for the completion. I would like to think, and I do not boast to be any master of technology in any way, shape or form, that the generations of technological platforms are short lived.

Senate 12, sequence 64,

12.50 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: If you are going to tell me that it is going to take an entire decade to accomplish this objective, by the time it is accomplished whatever platforms were put in place at the beginning would now become obsolete. As far as I understand there is no attachment to the programme that really teaches any individual how to create the software or how to repair the hardware. These are important elements that would buttress the success of the programme because we do not only want our children to be users of the technology, we want them to be part of the building of the technology, that is the point I wish to make in that regard.

Madam Deputy President, let me move on. I accept the advice that this is not a question and answer session. While we are busy trying to elevate the greatness about education, I want to make the point - and one of the Honourable Senators made the point earlier - that right now many of the schools of this country are becoming the flagship for disorder, for violence - we are talking about education and its relationship for the social good - drugs, chronic performance problems and a declining international literacy rating. Let me throw in there that if the statistics on HIV/AIDS are true, and I believe they are, they are now becoming a suppository for HIV infected persons, that relationship is logically formed.

Madam Deputy President, let me throw in there what an Honourable Senator talked about in terms of the relationship between the transportation to and from school and the behaviour of our school children. Madam Deputy President, we have to focus some of our attention on seeking to alleviate these problems. There has been much discussion in this society about the problems facing schools, but I have not heard a modicum of explanation out of the Honourable Minister of Education, so we are waiting for the Minister of Education to come forward and tell us what the Ministry plans to do to arrest these social viruses that are having a negative impact on the result of learning in the school system.

Madam Deputy President, perhaps part of that \$30 million need to be spent on trying to put systems in place that would not only be preventative in nature but would be interventionist because there are things that now exist in which we must intervene and there are things we do not want to occur. There are teachers in the school system who are afraid for their well-being because of the kinds of violent and out-of-control behaviour expressed by children in the schools. That is a fact of life. So while we go around trying to flaunt an EduTech Programme and trying to achieve a goal that seems to be elusive, our school grounds have now become the playgrounds of rebels.

Madam Deputy President, I am a Barbadian and I have travelled and Barbadians all over the world have been recognised for their intellect, their manners and their

deportment, a tradition that I never want to see go. Therefore, I am saying that in all of the platitudes around education, we have not really penetrated the real issues and we need to go and get to the heart of it. If all of us are conscious Barbadians and we are not bound by political partisanship, we must therefore rise up and join hands and try to save our next generation.

Madam Deputy President, teachers in Barbados have taught for years at salaries much more meagre than what they are getting now and they were proud to be a part of the profession, but all of a sudden they do not wish to be and are leaving the country to go to other places to work, even though some proclaimed it to be an international trend. I want answers on that. I had hoped that the Honourable Leader of Government Business in this Honourable Chamber would have at least paid a courtesy call on those issues.

How much more time do I have, Madam Deputy President?

MADAM DEPUTY PRESIDENT: You have 20 more minutes.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Oh, lovely! I have a lot to talk about.

There is a connection between the economic good and the social good. In looking at education as one of the connectors of that social good, it must be able to allow us to instil in our children the values of our culture, self development, understanding who they are, where they are going and healthy living so that they can promote healthy lifestyles and take on board some of the cautions given by people in the medical profession and in law enforcement because at the end of the day an unhealthy next generation would put more struggle on the Queen Elizabeth Hospital which has been in labour for some time and it has not been able to deliver. I do not know if it is pre-labour pains or post-labour pains, but it just cannot deliver. One would expect that any ease in delivery would perhaps occur best within the confines of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, but it cannot.

Madam Deputy President, we need to understand that once we promote or raise the bar of self-worth among our young ones out there - I interact with them all the time. I travel frequently throughout my area and other areas and I understand that a lot of young people out there are in great struggle. Part of the resentment they have is not toward individuals as much as it is toward the system because they feel there is a distance between what the system has promised and what it has delivered to them, that is why they are waiting on Project OASIS. Believe you me, Madam Deputy President, we have a lot of young men on the block in my area.

Asides.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: What is my area? Thanks for asking Senator Eastmond, my area is...

MADAM DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Silence, please, may I have silence. Please continue, Senator Lowe.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: There are a number of young men and young women out there who are on the block. I would hope that this programme has the capacity because of its vision to penetrate the real issues that underlie the disconnection between the formal system of the society and these young people. They are not bad people, they need focus, support and the ability to be able to connect to the system other Barbadians are connected to. They need to feel as though they have a fair chance to survive in this society. They need to know that the system their forefathers and their fathers have endorsed as a democracy is a system that is fair to them. Therefore, I implore the Government to spend time thinking through the paradigm of Project OASIS because Project OASIS is only responding to a need created under present circumstances. If we get a grasp on what is happening between the system and these young people who have somehow fallen off the system I believe we would be able to make a significant impact on that. Education teaches us responsibility and accountability.

Madam Deputy President, I want to know when will the Government of the day respond to the issues raised on the St. Leonard's School. I do not intend to spend a protracted amount of time there but it deserves a stop off. I have the greatest regard for every single member in this Chamber and I know that at the end of the day they would rise to the occasion and they would help the country understand why should such questions be left unanswered. If you are asking the young men on the block to be responsible and accountable, they will take their lead from those who lead.

Senate 12 Sequence 65

1.00 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Therefore, it would mean that after all, they would expect those who give advice to live by the same advice given.

Madam Deputy President, we have seen this document entitled the Auditor-General's Report, and so far what I have surmised is that here we have a case where the Government sets rules of engagement relative to the tendering and the awarding of contracts. Madam, the same Government who sets those rules is the leading culprit in

the breaking of these rules because individuals were given contracts and some of the important measures that were to be put in place to ensure that the Government receives service for pay, were not in place.

As we all know, the contract was awarded to an individual who makes no bones about his political allegiance. We also know that individual had to be dragged off the project and the project had to be rescued...

SENATOR G. P. B. NICHOLLS: On a point of order. Madam Deputy President, the Honourable Senator is misleading this Chamber. The contract at the St. Leonard's School was not awarded to an individual. The Auditor-General's Report speaks to the contract being awarded to a limited liability company.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: A corporate person, therefore, an individual.

SENATOR G. P. B. NICHOLLS: Well, if it speaks to a corporate person, a corporate person cannot be dragged off the premises of a work site. A corporate person is a legal fiction.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Madam Deputy President, I regret that the Honourable Member does not fancy hyperboles, perhaps he would... Madam Deputy President, let me move on.

Madam PRESIDENT: I think it would be better for you to do so, Senator Lowe.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: The individual who represents a corporate entity, who received the contract, had to be asked to move on, as you have so honourably asked me, and the company which has now moved in to rescue the project, has recently been dragged through the coals.

This company was able to go and pick up the pieces of a lagging, lingering, limping and loosely-managed situation, to bring life, hope and conclusion to the project. Therefore, let us not allow the sun to set on this debate, having gone through 23 Honourable Members of the Other Place, and let us go through this Place, without one of the Honourable Members getting up and responding to the Auditor-General's statement. I believe in the context of trying to suggest that we should give the Government every opportunity to spend our money. We should also demand that Government give a detailed account of how that money has been spent.

Madam Deputy President, I want to suggest another tenet of the structure of achieving that social good through our economic policies would be that of health. Madam, my colleague has made a very explicit contention about health,

suggesting that it should be shifted from the “medico-centric” model, to one that is now more holistic in being, one that takes into account that health care is not simply about the absence of diseases but about creating an environment where individuals in the country can come into contact with the best total wellness concepts and practices. That is why the contention that physical education... I do not know why we are pulling ourselves off to what is mandatory and what is not. The fact is that most medical experts in this country who deal with pediatric care have been advising that we pay attention, not only to the dietary practices of kids but also to the recreational routines of those kids.

Therefore, in looking at it from a holistic perspective, it is our contention that any restructuring or reforming of health care must take into account from the cradle to the grave. We have to look at neonatal care, at prenatal care, at pediatric care, at adolescent care, et cetera, because that is important in helping the country to curb the need to respond to so many preventable illnesses. As soon as those systems are put in place, it would help to curb the occurrence of sicknesses in those areas.

Madam Deputy President, in 1997, I have had the privilege of being a consultant in the Ministry of Health at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, where I was providing people management services in the area of stress management, et cetera.

Asides.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: I will swipe that glee away. Madam Deputy President, after going through the process, there was a litany of explanations by nurses, orderlies and ancillary persons as to why the conditions of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital existed. At the heart of those explanations was the incapacity of the institution to pay strict attention to good human relations and good people management services and practices.

Madam Deputy President, whenever we talk about health care, we talk about what is or is not working but I am saying that one of the reasons why services will dip in their quality is when the persons who provide the service have lost contact with the satisfaction of practising their profession. This is something to which we have to pay attention so that those who manage, or the Board that is now in place to manage or proposes to manage the institution, must understand that it is not a bureaucracy they are managing, it is a place that is defined by constant human interactions and other dynamics. They must understand that at the end of the day what would cause it to rise above its extended labour is the fact that we must collectively take people into consideration, and that there is no social class in the system where doctors feel that they are better than anybody else. Those persons who are

responsible for human relation management must also understand that they need to put the kind of systems in place to change the culture of the institution because the culture of the institution is at the heart of what obtains in the practice of that institution.

Madam Deputy President, we also need to do the necessary research to understand what is happening that is causing nurses and other practitioners to be leaving the system. We have to stop speculating and do the definitive research, empirical study and otherwise, that would allow us to understand the connection between the disconnection of the people from the system.

Madam Deputy President, the health care system in this country used to stand as a beacon in this region or in the hemisphere.

Asides.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Do I need to ask for protection, Madam Deputy President?

Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Just continue, Senator Lowe.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Madam Deputy President, one cannot expect to speculate on the reasons why people are leaving. I am saying that there is much speculation in this country. We are hiring high-powered consultants to do everything and at the end of the day, they are not producing the kinds of results that could be definitively represented in the public's domain.

Therefore, I wish to make the point that the Government needs to do a comprehensive research analysis of the system. Government needs to look at the systems of the health-care providing institutions, to see what is working and what is not working. They need to look at the changing of the profiles of the patients of the institutions to see what new demands are being placed on the health care system. They need to look at those persons who are coming in to provide services and they need to look at their options for treatment.

S:No. 12(66)

1.10 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2003

SENATOR Dr. D.S. LOWE: I need to make the point that because our view is a holistic one, they perhaps need to begin looking carefully at alternative medicine as one of the modalities at the institution. At the end of the day, we must do whatever is necessary to ensure that those persons who have given their sweat and blood for this

country's survival must not die in subhuman conditions, that they must have every single opportunity to access services that are responsive to their concerns so that they will be able to enjoy in their latter years, the best possible quality of life.

Madam Deputy President, all of us are journeying toward those latter years and the systems we put in place now will serve us later. I want to suggest that whatever we do, let us do it with a good conscience so that twenty years from now we can look back and say we did the right thing.

MADAM DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Honourable Member, you have five more minutes before the sun sets on your presentation.

SENATOR Dr. D.S. LOWE: Madam Deputy President, as I bring this presentation to a reluctant closure, I want to say that I believe, at the end of day, that we are all working towards a common good. No man or woman in this country should be penalised for their ideas, opportunities or wealth. This country should be a place where anyone can pursue his or her dream and have the grand assurance that every decision made by the State is made with his or her interest in focus. I want to suggest to all honourable men and women in this Chamber that whatever we do, we should make sure that we build a betterment for the next generation as well as for ourselves as we journey to the end.

I am much obliged.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

SENATOR THE HON. E.R. GRIFFITH: Madam Deputy President, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 2.20 p.m. today.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to and Madam Deputy President suspended the Sitting accordingly.

Sequence 67

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

RESUMPTION

Mr. PRESIDENT: This Sitting is resumed.

SENATOR THE HON. J.E.D. WILLIAMS: Mr. President, I believe this is the tenth occasion that I have had the privilege and good fortune to reply to an Appropriation Bill in this Chamber. I must admit that this is one of a number of things which make me feel very proud as a Barbadian to be able to speak to these Estimates.

Let me begin, like all the other Honourable Senator who did so to heartily congratulate the Leader of Government Business in the Senate for the eloquent way in which he presented the Estimates. I believe, certainly for me, over that ten-year experience, it has been one of the most outstanding that I have ever observed.

Mr. President, we also heard the response from the spokesman of the Democratic Labour Party, Senator Stuart, and the only thing I can say is that in his presentation, he drifted far and wide. Sir, he drifted so much that he even drifted into the Tobago waters. I am not quite sure what he caught there, but it is the one and only thing that I can remember in terms of his presentation. It is remarkable that not ever for a second, did he collide with the Estimates. I believe that we were all taken up by the philosophical constructs and so on and maybe at some point in time, some people may be able to extrapolate them, but I had a certain difficulty.

I really could say the same for his colleague Senator Lowe. He waxed warm, Sir, and from time to time he sought to put the best political spin he could on matters that would best suit the position that the Democratic Labour Party would want to take with respect to the matters before us. Nobody can envy him for that, so I may say that he spoke tangentially to the Estimates.

Sir, in furthering my presentation, I will just make reference to one or two other contributions. One particularly from Senator Sir John Goddard, where he made reference to the Pan African Commission, and I believe, it behooves me if I have the time to speak to that in some detail and to Senator Fields, who, in his presentation also commented on the question of public sector reform, as he saw it. Again, as you know, Sir, it is an effort that falls under the Office of the Prime Minister and so, I do have some responsibility for that.

Sir, I started my presentation by saying that I felt good as a Barbadian when I listened to, certainly the Leader of Government Business, as he presented the Bill, and to recognise the sorts of achievements that we realised during 2003-2004. It has been nothing but a remarkable performance on the part of this Administration, through very difficult circumstances.

I believe if we had a similar level of performance in 1991-1992, everyone within the Democratic Labour Party would have been hailing the praises of their then Leader. Sir, that was not to be, and what is also interesting is that what we had undergone between 2001 in particular, and 2002, was significantly more difficult from the 1991 period from an economic perspective. Yet, the result that we have in 2003, has been one that is very outstanding and we must be honest with ourselves to say so.

When you can set targets for yourself, and then exceed those targets, those things just do not happen by happenstance. They happen because of hard work. You are talking about an Administration that said to itself at the beginning of the current financial year that we would have recorded a deficit in the region of 4.6 per cent.

We recognise that the economic stability of this country is paramount and we, as the Barbados Labour Party Government, will do nothing to undermine that long term stability of our country. We recognise that deficits of the order of 4 per cent and 5 per cent cannot be sustained, and what did we do?

We sought to show fiscal prudence, so much so that rather than recording deficits to the level of 4.6 per cent, we expect that at the end of the current financial year, we will be talking about 2.6 per cent or 2.7 per cent, a remarkable performance and one that must not go unnoticed.

May I also say to you, Mr. President, the performance of this Administration is one that is clearly understood by the people of Barbados. We failed, sometimes we forget that only last year we had an election, and, believe you me, what we had was a vote of confidence by the public of Barbados in this Administration. It virtually said, "you took us through difficult times and we believe you deserve yet another term".

This confidence was well placed, Mr. President, that is why the public can now be the beneficiary of the kind of report card that speaks to a deficit now of 2.6 per cent, and 2.7 per cent.

It is not our intention to sit on our laurels and remain there. May I say to you that we will continue to do the right thing. We will continue to make sure that there is always a delicate balance between our fiscal stability and the economic transformation and re-engineering of our economy.

Much has been said, Mr. President, about the growth that we had in the economy for 2003, 2004 which I believe will come in the region of 2.1 per cent. This, of course falls below what we believe is desirable in the region of 3.5 per cent. We are happy to note that both tourism and international business continue to perform well during the year. I, like Senator Fields, am also happy to note that in the area of manufacturing, we are already seeing the benefits of our efforts. As you know, a tremendous amount of effort has been made to put some of our companies in a position to compete both in the regional and international marketplace.

The Government continues to have confidence. We have been giving on a yearly basis, some \$5 million though

the BIDC and I believe this year, that has been increased. We are confident that once those companies are able to re-engineer, and change their processes, they can compete within the region and beyond.

Mr. President, I have to comment that some weeks ago, I believe I heard Senator Stuart speaking about the Standard and Poor's report and the report card.

Senate 12, sequence 69,

2.30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 24, 2004

SENATOR THE HON. J. E. D. WILLIAMS: I can say to him today that we were satisfied then that Standard and Poor's was not using the kind of information that would have led them to the right conclusions when they put out their most recent pronouncements, but certainly the Institutional Investor has got it right now, and I am satisfied that by the next time they have to make a comment on Barbados' current position, they would find favour with the way things have been going.

Mr. President, unemployment in our country in many respects has stabilised around 10 per cent and continues to move in the right direction. During the very difficult period of 2002-2003 we saw some increase, but it certainly was nowhere in the region of that which we saw back in the early 90s when we went through a period of recession. Ours was a case of making sure that the people of this country were kept in employment. That is both a credit to the Government, to the private sector and to the social partners because the unions were part and parcel of this as well. It is a credit to the unions that we have set up for ourselves the social partnership and have been able to achieve what we have achieved, which cannot be taken lightly and must be underscored because the Government could not have done it alone, so they all must be congratulated.

Mr. President, our unemployment level in Barbados is about 10 per cent, and the big industrialised country Germany is at 9.5 per cent, so may I say that we are doing well, but we want to see that figure come down even further. Mr. President, I just want us to understand how much we have been able to achieve when we compare ourselves with others. I spoke earlier about the whole question of the deficit which stands at about 2.6 or 2.7 per cent but when we look at other industrialized countries, the United States of America has 4.4 per cent of Gross Domestic Product, the United Kingdom 3.5 per cent of Gross Domestic Product, France 4.2 per cent of Gross Domestic Product and Germany 3.9 per cent of Gross Domestic Product, you can see and understand that our achievement has been significant and has to be

underscored. Mr. President, we are satisfied based on the Estimates before us that we will continue to see growth in the coming financial year, providing all things remain equal, there is nothing which we cannot anticipate coming around the corner. We can expect to see growth in the next year as well.

Mr. President, the achievement of our country over the last year is the report card to which Senator Lowe refers, and as far as the management of our economy is concerned, we would have to be given a high grade for our performance in 2003-2004.

Mr. President, I turn quickly to look at some of the areas that fall under my responsibility in the Prime Minister's Office. I want to speak a bit on subprogram: 70 which looks at activities like compensation to churches, the Community Independence Celebrations Secretariat and the 375th Anniversary Celebrations of the City of Bridgetown. With respect to compensation to the churches, I have had occasion recently to speak to a settlement after much discussion with respect to the Moravian and Anglican churches. For the benefit of fellow Senators the compensation to churches has to do with the repairing of properties which were formerly used as school buildings which are now handed back to the churches. As one would expect, one would have to hand back those buildings to the churches in a state of proper repair after having used them for such a long time. This meant having discussions with the Moravian, the Anglican and the Methodist churches to arrive at satisfactory settlements. We have been able to bring closure to the buildings belonging to the Moravian Church and hopefully Cabinet would take a final decision to bring closure to the others. There are only two remaining with respect to the Anglican Church and we are hoping to address those in the coming financial year. There are also two remaining with respect to the Methodist Church that are being considered for compensation and we will continue to have discussion with them at least to bring this whole issue of repairs to the buildings that were used as schools to a closure.

Mr. President, since the 375th Anniversary Celebrations of the City of Bridgetown started in July of last year with an official launch, we have been having a number of monthly concerts where we were able to recognise a number of outstanding Barbadian artistes from as far back as the early 60s and 70s. At this time, Mr. President, I would like to take this opportunity to thank corporate Barbados for the assistance they have given to us to make these events possible. We are hoping that the closing event in early July of this year would be befitting the City of Bridgetown and the importance and the significance of the 375 years of celebrations in terms of the City.

Mr. President, may I say that this event will also require the assistance of the public particularly corporate Barbados. Senator Fields said this morning that there are only a few agents of corporate Barbados who would be willing to be involved in helping with such activities. That is true, Mr. President, because we seem to be going back to the same people all the time, but that is the way things are. However, I am still asking corporate Barbados to help us to have a tasteful climax to these activities.

Mr. President, there are a number of activities that we are going to continue in terms of our community independence celebrations. The upcoming year will see us having more training with respect to the committees as well as the parish ambassadors committees. There will be the official launch of the community Independence celebrations, our parish and talent shows and our Lighting Ceremony.

Senate 12 Sequence 70

2.40 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR THE HON. J. E. D. WILLIAMS: Mr. President, with respect to the Lighting Ceremony, we are hoping to extend it to include places such as Speightstown, Six Roads, Oistins and Holetown, to provide a visible representation of our nationhood. It is important that we take that Lighting Ceremony from the City and move it to such places. It is a question that our Independence becomes a mind set that pervades all Barbadians. We want to do these things, not only at Independence but throughout the year. Our focus must be on all areas in terms of promoting these things for them to happen both at the community and national levels.

Mr. President, this year will also see us looking at acquiring the services of an events coordinator who can plan key events. That, in a sense, will free up a lot of the field officers for them to be able to go out and work with the communities. It will allow them to have a greater focus for the community support programme.

Mr. President, we will look at restructuring the Parish Ambassador's Programme. We are hoping that we can see that starting as early as February. This would allow the Parish Ambassador not only to be seen as a contest at the end of the year but that greater emphasis would be placed on the project associated with that programme.

Mr. President, the Mini Parks Programme has so far been an outstanding one. It is our hope that we would be able to carry that programme into every parish in Barbados. This would be done through the Parish Independence Committees and other Government agencies such as the

National Conservation Commission, the Ministry of the Environment, et cetera.

Mr. President, the Community Independence Celebrations Secretariat, as I said, will continue to focus on ensuring that the importance of Independence is something that is understood and appreciated by every Barbadian.

Sir, within the Department of Culture, recognising that the management of our cultural development is an extremely sensitive thing, and that culture is becoming more and more prominent in the 21st Century, the cultural section has now been restructured and very shortly, we would be seeing a cadre of persons who will have a full understanding of all the issues that drive culture and who are able to coordinate, research and plan, to be able to advise us as a Ministry and as Government, as to the appropriate action which should be taken on a number of current issues.

Mr. President, the new cultural section will primarily focus on policy and research but it will also take into account the mandate for the cultural section in terms of advising and formulating our strategies. These, of course, will be aimed at promoting cultural diversity.

We have to work with other countries in a way to ensure that when we talk about our cultural products and services, that they are kept in a way that we do not see cultural goods and service being treated in the same way as other goods and services. Therefore, we will continue to attend those international fora where we will make sure that the cultural products of Barbados and other developing countries, are not viewed in a way that would see an influx of other goods coming into the country in a way that would impact negatively on our own.

Mr. President, we will continue to focus on the management of issues relating to culture and trade with respect to the treatment of those cultural goods, both at the regional and international levels. We will continue to protect Barbados' tangible and intangible heritage and, certainly, we have to ensure that we are able to tap on the institutional memory of the older persons who have stories to tell in terms of our history and our past.

Mr. President, we will make sure that we understand the very important relationship between culture and sustainable development. What I am basically saying is that the remit and mandate of the new cultural division is a very important and critical one as we seek to ensure that we are able to establish an industry that in itself could support and complement the other sectors such as tourism, manufacturing, agricultural and others.

There are some countries that paid absolutely no attention to the development of the cultural industries, but

having done so, they are indeed reaping the benefits. Sir, I can point to Canada, where their cultural goods and services bring in billions of dollars each year. We believe we have the potential to have a good, sound and sustainable cultural industry in Barbados and we are prepared to put our money and investment in the area of developing cultures in this country.

Mr. President, we are hoping to be able to address the question of the Rock Hall Monument. As you know, Sir, during last year, we were able to complete the design of that monument to commemorate the first free village in Barbados. We have been able to award a 1st prize to the person whose design was accepted. Now it is a question of erecting the monument. Again, some provision is made in this financial year to erect that monument.

Mr. President, last year there was \$1.498 million voted for the HIV/AIDS Commission. This year it has been increased to \$1.67 million, an 11 per cent increase.

The HIV/AIDS Commission is responsible for our multi-sectoral expanded programme, which ensures that all Barbadians are empowered to respond effectively to the threat posed by HIV/AIDS. The Commission also has the responsibility for strengthening and coordination, capacity building activities, as well as monitoring and evaluation, which is one area to which we have to give particular attention.

We believe we have achieved a lot by way of treatment and care. The evaluation is important because we have to ensure that the interventions that we use are appropriate and relevant. This is one thing that has come out of some of the review that were done in association with the World Bank.

Mr. President, as you know, the Commission also has responsibility for managing the World Bank project. Before I deal with that project, may I say in terms of statistics because it would be good to allow Barbadians to know what was the position in terms of the prevalence of HIV/AIDS. Sir, these figures were at the end of September, 2003.

S:No. 12(71)

2.50 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2003

SENATOR THE HON. J.E.D. WILLIAMS: The statistics for Barbados in terms of the adult prevalence is 1.8 per cent which we consider unacceptable. Since our first case back in 1984, between September 1984 and 2003, the total number of persons who tested positive for HIV/AIDS stood at 2 738 and the total number of reported

HIV/AIDS cases now stand at 1 699. Regrettably, 1 213 persons have died from the disease and this tells us that we have a lot of work to do. Prevention activity remains the mainstay of the programme over the year 2002/2003.

I am pleased to say that the highly active anti-retroviral therapy treatment has shown significant results and has encouraged persons to seek to understand what their status is because they recognise that they no longer think in terms of inevitability of an early death and more people are coming forward to be tested.

Of course, we need to continue to heighten our prevention campaigns because we recognise that once people understand they are not resiled to death because they can be treated that there is a tendency for complacency to step in and we have to guard against this.

Sir, the Speak Sister campaign was put on in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the Bureau of Gender Affairs as well as the National Organisation of Women. These groups came together and were able to come up with this programme which targeted women so that were able to understand how to address issues as they relate to women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. In our minds, the programme raised the level of awareness of women and allowed them to engage actively in the fight against HIV/AIDS and gave them the tools with which to protect themselves against the virus. During that period, the female condom was also launched and there were a number of multi media components to the programme and six workshops were held to address a number of things that affect women and to help them to understand the risk which they face.

Sir, last year with the assistance of the Ministry of Education, the Council for Substance Abuse and UNICEF a series of billboards were mounted at primary schools. These billboards sought to promote abstinence and the need for children to adopt positive values. We also recognise that depending on the circumstances, we use should include abstinence, behavioural change modification, communication and awareness and as part of the programme we promote the concept of using condoms and having safe sex.

In terms of 2004/2005, our main objective will continue to be 50 per cent reduction in HIV/AIDS mortality rate and also 50 per cent reduction in incidences of the disease in the next three years. Our focus will be three-pronged. It will be geared against prevention and control; care, treatment and support and management and institutional strengthening in order to enhance our effectiveness.

I want to comment briefly on the World Bank Project because our national response is supported through

a loan from the World Bank of US\$15.1 million and Government has agreed to contribute approximately \$17 million to complement that loan from the World Bank.

Sir, as I close in terms of contribution on HIV/AIDS, Senator Sir John Stanley made reference to encouraging the private sector to support the effort and suggested that we should come up with way to sensitise them so that they would want to contribute toward the effort. I understand the point he is making but may I say that it is not just a Government response. The Government has taken the lead and has so far carried all the funding of the effort. I want to say that the private sector draws its human resources from the society and it has a responsibility to be equally committed to the effort just as the Government. I do not believe that they should look at responding and contributing from a backdrop of incentives but simply recognise that it is the right thing to do.

I have read of the experiences of other jurisdictions. On Sunday, at the summit of young people here in Barbados, the consultant said that in some jurisdictions all the teachers were lost to HIV/AIDS. This is a pandemic that can have the most serious impact on the society. If people believe that they should sit back and wait on the Government, it is wrong because, at the end of the day, if we do not respond the way we ought to, we would have no society and there would be no people from which the private sector could draw in terms of the human resources they need to run their businesses.

H12/Sequence 72

3.15 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

3.00 p.m.

SENATOR THE HON. J.E.D. WILLIAMS: Yes, I understand that it would be good to have these incentives but they also have a commitment, just like the Government. I really believe, quite frankly, that they should be matching the efforts of the Government with or without incentives.

If I can quickly move, Sir, to the Ministry of the Civil Service, I believe that Honourable Senators would expect a comment on the job evaluation exercise. It is still ongoing. We have the report from the consultants, but it has not been reviewed by Cabinet, simply because it is still at the discussion stage with the unions. At such time as the unions are able to fully discuss it and make their recommendations, Cabinet would be in a position to make a final determination.

As a quick backdrop in terms of the exercise,. It was in 2000 that approval was given for a comprehensive job

evaluation exercise to be carried out for the public service. It was also felt that it should not just include central Government but, in truth and in fact, it should include the statutory boards that depend on the Consolidated Fund for their financing.

The exercise was done, Sir, in two phases. The purpose of the evaluation was to provide a rational basis for the design and maintenance of what is referred to as an equitable and defensive pay structure to help in the management of the relativities that exist between the various jobs in the public service, and more important, to provide consistent decisions with respect to the grading and rates of pay.

It is equally true to say that the last comprehensive job evaluation exercise was carried out in 1989. Prior to that we had one carried out in 1975, 1968 and one in 1948. There were a number of difficulties that were associated with the 1989 exercise, so much so that people were dissatisfied with the outcome. It was never universally accepted, and it was viewed by some with tremendous scepticism. The failure, of course, to gain acceptance, led to a situation where there were constant requests for adjustments to specific posts and, indeed, groups of posts in the service. Those requests came both from individuals, as well as from the unions.

May I say, Sir, that with the passage of time, the requests became louder and louder. On top of all that, there were a number of other posts being established but because there was always a skills efficiency with respect to the evaluation techniques, the placement of some of these new posts, within the opinion of some people, further eroded the confidence of the system. The Government therefore saw that there was need for a new job evaluation exercise, and sought to have external consultancy services to assist in completing that exercise.

I indicated earlier that it was done in two phases. The first phase was to understand the causes associated with the dissatisfaction of most of the stakeholders. During the first phase the intention was to make recommendations for the appropriate methodology to be used when we were conducting the exercise in Phase 2.

A number of interviews, workshops and contextual research were done to ensure that whatever we were able to use in the second phase really related to the situation that faced us in the service.

Phase 2, of course, Sir, related to the actual evaluation of the jobs themselves. It was done in a most systematic and professional way. There was a Steering Committee that was chaired by the Head of the Civil Service, to give strategic direction to the process. They had oversight of the entire process from a strategic perspective.

The Steering Committee also saw representatives from the Ministry of the Civil Service, the Ministry of Finance, the Chief Personnel Officer, a representative from the Office of Public Sector Reform, CTUSAB and NUPW.

Then, there was the Evaluation Committee, which was made up of five representatives from CTUSAB, four members from the General Civil Service and four members from the Ministry of the Civil Service. The Committee underwent extensive training in the theory and practice of job evaluation methodologies because we wanted to be sure that we got it right. We wanted the people who were actually going through the exercise to be able to understand what it is that they were doing to make sure that at the end of the day what we got bore clear relationship to what existed in the service. There were a number of universal factors that were used in accessing each job.

We are hoping, Sir, that in the shortest possible time, the final review could be completed with the unions and the Ministry of the Civil Service, and that Cabinet could be the beneficiaries of the final set of recommendations. We are also hoping that a lot of what would have found the disfavour of people in the past, would be something of the past, because we have been very careful in our approach. We tried to get it right on this occasion.

As I said, from my own experience with job evaluation exercises, at the end of the day, you will not satisfy 100 per cent of the people. That is a reality of a job evaluation exercise; but we are hoping that the process, methodology and things of that nature would be something that people would be able to accept. We tried to do it in the most transparent way that we possibly could have done, and as I said, we made sure that all the stakeholders involved and affected, were part of the process.

Sir, with respect to the public service, we are hoping that the enactment of a new Public Service Act would become a reality during the first half of the coming financial year. One of the aims, of course of that new Act would be to improve the management of discipline within the public service itself to ensure that any system of discipline is swift, fair and transparent.

The document is presently with the Attorney General and we are hoping that this new legislation will be one that would cover what is expected in a public service for the next 20 years or more. Indeed, it should be drafted, and it was our intention that it is drafted in the context of a vision for the public service. It is long overdue and outstanding, and we believe that if we are to have well-managed, trained and motivated people, then it is important that we have the kind of new Public Service Act that would make this a reality.

The last point I would want to make, with respect to the civil service, has to do with the conversion of casual workers to public officers

Senate 12, sequence 73,

3.10 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR the Hon. J. E. D. WILLIAMS: To my mind, the greatest achievement in the improvement of conditions of service to Government employees under this present Administration has to do with the converting of casual workers to public officers. These persons are no longer considered second class employees who only work when there is work to be done. These persons are now guaranteed year round employment. Their security of tenure has all been enhanced which is something that would allow them to be able to get credit and to buy homes and so on, something that was strictly difficult prior to achieving that status. Their retirement benefits in most instances would have doubled. These are individuals who in the past if they retired at age 60 would have had to wait until they reached age 65 to be able to receive a pension. Now, they are going to be able to get a pension at age 60.

Sir, thus far some 4 000 workers have received letters of appointments to the central service. This represents 99 per cent of those who are eligible to be transferred and be made permanent. An additional 106 posts would be included in the draft Civil Establishment General Order of 2004. I am also happy to report that some of the statutory corporations that are impacted by this decision of Government to have these people made permanent who were a little bit slow to get off the mark are now responding the way that they should.

Sir, much has been said with respect to public sector reform. The Office of Public Sector Reform undertook a number of key activities during the 2003-2004 financial year. They addressed things like developing strategic plans, conducting organisational reviews, reviewing and upgrading systems, and focus was also given to things like customer charters. I am pleased to say that the Land Tax Department launched their customer charter in 2003. There are a number of other departments like the Inland Revenue Department, the Registration Department, the Licensing Authority, the Immigration Department which we hope will come on board shortly, the Airport in terms of all services as well as the Corporate Affairs Department, which are involved and are supporting the effort. It is good that these departments of Government are willing to develop charters which tell the public the time in which they are going to respond to their needs. May I say that the success of the customer charter effort and programme depends on

strengthening the customer service sections within the different Government departments.

Mr. President, a lot has been said about the kind of service that you get within the public service. I have worked in the private sector and I have worked in Government and I think sometimes we are more than harsh when we seek to compare the level of customer service in the public sector with the private sector because we are drawing people from the same society. Someone mentioned this morning that when you go into some private sector companies that the level of customer service is far below what is expected. That, too, has been my own experience. It is true that it has all to do with changing the attitudes of people. This is why you would find that our focus going forward in terms of public sector reform will be on the individual, because it is all about individual behaviour.

Mr. President, my own experience in the private sector in terms of change has been one where it is difficult for people to move out of their comfort level and to do things differently. If that is true for the private sector, it would be also true for the public sector. We in the private sector believe that it can be done and it can also be done in the public sector. Someone also said this morning that sometimes you go into a department and you deal with two different people and you get two different responses, but that is equally true for the private sector. All I am saying is that the level of customer service in Barbados is something that has to be addressed at a national level. It is also true that there are ongoing efforts to deal with raising the level of customer service across the country. This is a clear recognition that something must be done not just for the public sector but for everybody. That is only taking place because it is that recognition that things are not as they used to be no matter where you go, but of course it is a reflection on the society itself.

Mr. President: I know that I would be encroaching on your good office but I just want to say, before I close, that Senator Sir John Goddard made reference to the Pan African Commission as an institution that does not have a programme going forward. I am basically paraphrasing him and if I take a wrong construction on what he said, he can so correct me. May I say that the Pan African Commission does indeed have a very challenging programme going forward and for 2004-2005 as part of its mandate which includes facilitating exchanges between personnel in Barbados and their counterparts in the African diaspora. These are things that we will continue to do.

I want just simply to say that last year through the efforts of the Pan African Commission we were able to send a local long distance runner to Kenya in order to give him exposure. Through the efforts of the Pan African Commission we also brought a top Ghanaian textile artiste here to help our local artistes. There is also work going on

with respect to the establishment of a Pan African trade centre. This is a collaborative approach between the Pan African Commission and the Barbados Industrial Development Corporation as well as the Caribbean African Association of Barbados which is a non-governmental organisation. Businessmen facilitated through the Pan African Commission continue to make contacts with persons on the African continents, and the list goes on.

Sir, I know that style and approach is equally as good as what you do. I know that some people may have a difficulty in terms of the style of persons associated with the Commission, but that is another matter. In terms of the what it is intended to do and what it has been doing, may I say that it has been doing a tremendous amount of good work. We have things like primary school quizzes. Books are donated to the schools and the questions for the quizzes come from the books themselves. The winners, through the City of Bridgetown Credit Union, are given saving accounts to allow them to understand what it is to save.

Senate 12 Sequence 74

3.20 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR THE HON. J. E. D. WILLIAMS: Mr. President, I wish that I had the opportunity to have spoken to the things that were going on within the Commission itself but another opportunity will present itself.

Mr. President, may I say to Senator Sir John, that the Commission has a mandate and certainly from where I sit, I will make sure that it follows that mandate and that, at the end of the day, I get good results.

Mr. President, I thank you for your kind facilitation. I am obliged to you.

SENATOR Dr. F. L. CHANDLER: Mr. President, before I turn to agriculture, I would like to make a few general comments on the Estimates.

There seems to be a need for improvement in the accuracy of the Estimates, based on the fairly large Supplementals that are requested at the end of each financial period. This continues year after year and now seems to be accepted as being the norm. The initial Estimates, therefore, do not give an accurate picture of what Government's spending would be in the coming year. In my opinion, Supplementals should only be required after natural disasters and other unforeseen events.

Mr. President, yesterday Senator Sir John Goddard mentioned that what one cannot measure, one cannot manage. I believe he was referring to inputs but I would

like to add to that the need for some measurable output to be identified for each item of expenditure so that it is clear what the benefit to the country has been from the expenditure incurred. This should also overcome the problem of the rush at the end of the year to spend unused monies, which often leads to a waste of funds on unnecessary and unjustifiable items.

Mr. President, with regard to agriculture, I share the enthusiasm and excitement of the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. After many years of talk, at last we are seeing some very positive actions.

It is heartening to note that the promotion of national food security has been identified as the objective of the work programme. Food security was deemed important during the two World Wars and it is no less important today. If we do not ensure that we can produce our food competitively, our agricultural industry would disappear and our food supply and prices would then be dictated by other countries.

Mr. President, the Government is to be congratulated for putting in place a number of incentives which should assist in taking the agricultural sector forward in its goal to achieve this objective. In order for the agricultural industry to develop and to achieve the stated objectives, there are a number of things that we need to be in place, the first being land. Therefore, every effort must be made to put a well defined land use policy in place, to ensure that a critical mass of good agricultural land remains in agriculture. The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development has assured us that this is being done.

Mr. President, water is another critical input into agriculture, to which the Minister had also alluded. We are an island and are surrounded by water, albeit salt water. However, as far as we all know, desalination of water is now a common practice. Although the cost might be higher than that from a more conventional source, efficient methods of irrigation should compensate for this increased cost. Sir, the use of new improved technology is essential to achieving competitiveness but advance technologies are usually very capital intensive.

I note that another objective of the plan for agriculture is the creation of a business environment conducive to investment in the sector. The sector is in dire need of investment in new technologies if it is to be competitive in this era of trade liberalisation.

In the non sugar sector, I am pleased to note that farmers are making use of the incentives offered by Government to put new technologies in place, example of this are production under greenhouse conditions.

With regard to cotton, a recently incorporated private sector-led, vertically integrated, sea island cotton company is another shining example of the private sector responding to the creation of a conducive business environment by Government. As we know in the past, our output from agriculture, including cotton, has been shipped overseas as raw material. The aim now of this company is ultimately to carry out all the operations along the value added line in Barbados so that the profits remain in the island. Again the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development is to be congratulated for the initiative taken in making this company a reality. I have stayed fairly close to its operations and would say that it is progressing very well.

Mr. President, good management and productive labour must go hand in hand with the investment in new technologies. It must be recognised that farming is a business as opposed to what many people think and therefore, farmers must be trained as managers, as well as in the technical aspects of growing crops. We must have productive labour if we are to be competitive.

The support of the Social Partnership is vital in this regard. Many farmers are finding that Barbadian labour is scarce or unresponsive and are replacing the local labour with imported labour. We must find out what will motivate local labour to produce.

Mr. President, with regard to sugar cane, the plans for the restructuring of the sugar cane industry should be welcomed by all involved. Although the Government has continued to support the industry over the years, for the first time in many years the support appears to be meaningful and sustainable. The country now seems to have a very focussed mission to look at a diversified sugar cane industry with many possibilities which could be systematically exploited. I look forward to the timely implementation of this plan since time has not been on our side.

It is worthy of note that although the sugar desk and the sugar task force have paved the way for the present action being taken in the sugar cane industry, the stimulus for action, in my opinion, appears to have originated from a call from one young farmer within the industry, who about two years ago was adamant that the industry could survive. This young farmer had put forward recommendations for reducing costs and increasing productivity in the industry.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development must be congratulated for taking the initiative to hire a private company to bring together all of the stakeholders in the industry at a strategic visionary retreat, the output of which was used to prepare the business plan which is now being pursued.

Mr. President, technical support is vital to the development of agriculture. This includes diagnostic services, research and extensions. When it is noted that about \$2.3 million is being spent this coming year for staff cost, food crop research and development, and extension services, the question must be asked: "Can we measure the output which is derived from this expenditure?"

While there might be pockets of research being done, in my opinion, not enough new information is being supplied to farmers. Farmers have complained that the Graeme Hall Station is not a research station. It is a grower of crops which competes, to some extent, with those private growers. Those farmers who could afford it seek professional help from universities and private consultants as well as source the Internet. Input suppliers are also a major source of information to farmers.

Mr. President, the budget for the information service is in the vicinity of \$1.5 million, which should be adequate to ensure that information reaches farmers. I would say that the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development needs to ensure that research, extension and information staff are more knowledgeable than farmers and should always be at least one step ahead of them. Staff must be encouraged to be as enthusiastic as the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development is about the development of agriculture.

S:No. 12(75)

3.30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2003

SENATOR Dr. F. L. CHANDLER: With regard to the onion industry, the research I did from my PhD thesis in 1995 resulted in the selection of a variety which would provide year round production. In my opinion, what is needed now is research on weed control and development work in the area of drying and storing onions which would give farmers more flexibility in marketing their crops. At the moment, the crop is at the mercy of the weather and in the wet season it creates a big problem.

A number of project documents have been prepared on the topic of drying and storing onions but I assume they are in their final resting place collecting dust. In the last few years, the dreaded blast disease which affected onions very severely appeared to be under control and the more efficient farmers have been producing outstanding yields which should put them in a position to compete with the imported onions for at least some time of the year.

Sir, with the advent of free trade in agricultural produce, we have seen an increase in the number of exotic pest affecting local groups. The strengthening of plant quarantine services is an important aspect of dealing with

this problem and staff must be properly trained to identify the new pest so that corrective action can be taken. Stiffer penalties must be put in place for those who are guilty of illegal vegetable and animal produce. The Honourable Minister stated yesterday that this was being dealt with and I am glad to hear this.

The provision of nutritious and safe food has been listed as an objective of the agriculture programme. This means that not only locally produced food but imported food must be tested for various characteristics including pesticide residue. It is imperative that testing of produce be done at both ports of entry. There is mention of this project in the Estimates and I trust that necessary staff and equipment would be put in place as a matter of urgency.

Sir, if local farmers are expected to compete with overseas farmers, they must have access to pest control measures and the playing field must at least seem to be level. We must ensure that the Pesticide Control Board performs efficiently and that farmers are able to access the new environmentally-friendly chemicals which are coming on the market.

The matter of the accuracy of published statistics on agricultural production has been a matter for concern for some time. I know that approximately \$200 000 has been budgeted for conduct of statistically sample surveys and commodity surveys and I trust that the outcome of this will correct that problem.

The age-old problem of praedial larceny continues and I look forward to the day when it will be dealt with in a serious way. Today, I saw in the newspaper that someone was put in prison for six months for stealing sugar cane and I assume that this might be a start to serious action being taken.

Sir, I have never understood the meaning of a landless farmer as this is equivalent to a surgeon operating without an operating theatre or a manufacturer without a factory. I am, therefore, pleased to see that the Land for the Landless programme is proceeding well. Sir, this is an exciting time for the agricultural industry and I trust there will be co-operation among all stakeholders to achieve success.

Mention has been made about road signs by more than one Senator and before closing, I would like to enquire whether the Ministry of Public Works follows up when road signs and lamp posts are destroyed during vehicular accidents and whether it makes sure that the signs are replaced at the expense of the insurance companies. I trust that the taxpayers do not have to pay for these replacements.

With regard to energy, I have heard but I do not know if it is true that neither the new Hilton nor the Grantley Adams International Airport will be using solar heating. I was wondering whether there is a good reason for this since I was under the impression that we were to achieve 40 per cent self-sufficiency renewable energy by the year 2010. If this is so, it would seem to be a giant step backward.

Mr. President, with those remarks, I would like to lend my full support to the Appropriation Bill before us.

SENATOR G.P.I. EDGHILL-GOODING: Mr. President, I rise to support the Bill before this Honourable Chamber. I want to say in opening that we should congratulate the Leader of Government Business, the Honourable Minister of Agriculture for his outstanding delivery of the introduction to this Honourable Senate.

It is clear that he has a good understanding not only of economic and fiscal matters but relating to his portfolio, agriculture, and like all other Honourable Senators, I believe he has a deep understanding of the matters facing agriculture. We are confident that he will continue to address these issues in the interest of all Barbadians as we seek to reposition the agriculture sector.

Sir, as a young person I remain confident that he will continue to do an outstanding job. It is indeed refreshing that we have someone, not trained in agriculture to the best of my knowledge, but trained in matters of finance who brings an understanding to the issues of the Ministry. We need not fear because it is clear that we have to restructure agriculture and make a number of important decisions in that Ministry in order to have it grow in the direction we want to see.

I also want to congratulate the Minister of Finance and his team for again taking the time out to prepare a comprehensive programme and package the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure in a concise form while staying close to the course and ensuring that Barbados maintains another record year of growth in this coming year.

Sir, it is without doubt that the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure represents the continuance of sound, economic, fiscal and social policies being pursued by the Barbados Labour Party Administration.

S12/Sequence 76

3.40 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR G.P.I. GOODING-EDGHILL: Indeed, they have been doing this since 1994, and with each

succeeding year, we have seen growth. We have seen a Leader, committed to the success of Barbados and committed to the economic development of Barbados, one who has been able, through a combination of confidence and credibility to guide Barbados successfully for close to ten years.

There is no doubt, Sir, that this Administration's policies are by far the most important determinant of its economic credibility. Governments all over the world and in the Caribbean are faced with challenges from time to time. In Dominica, there have been several challenges and they had to seek the assistance of Barbados and we, along with other CARICOM countries, kindly assisted them. Jamaica, with a Finance Minister like Omar Davies, who is well trained in Economics as well, also has challenges. Antigua and Barbuda, notwithstanding the small growth that they projected, the economies of St. Lucia and St. Vincent and of late, Trinidad and Tobago which in the last quarter, realised growth of 3 per cent compared to about 6.1 per cent in the previous year, also have challenges.

Sir, when we look through to the global economy, and we heard Senator Williams made the point not so long ago, that the economies of France, Germany, the United States and, indeed, the UK are being managed sometimes not so successfully, if you have to apply the economic indices to measure their growth.

When we in Barbados speak to the Estimates and the development of our country, all of us, regardless of our political persuasion should remain confident. We should be proud, Sir, that we have a Government led by somebody who understands finance, who understands economics, who understands the social agenda, somebody who has the vision to take Barbados from what it is today and set as a target, a goal that we should become a developed country.

We are fortunate, Sir, that we have a Prime Minister who is trained, who will never allow us to repeat the mistakes of the past but who would allow us to continue and go in a direction that all Barbadians can be proud of. We can rest assured, indeed, we can rest comfortably at night knowing that the country is safe in the hands of, not only of the Leader of the Barbados Labour Party, the Prime Minister, but all the Members of the Cabinet who contribute to the economic financial and social decisions of the day.

I made the point earlier that Governments will continue to be challenged, Sir, with issues of great and fundamental importance. What functions, for example, should the Government perform? How large a role should the Government play in a society? How much help should the Government give to the poor? These are all issues that this Government is addressing and they will continue to be the driving force and motivation of a Government which is

interested in its people, caring for its people and a Government which is prepared to do what is right, in the interest of the common good of all.

Sir, I have had the opportunity to go through the Estimates over time, and I also enjoy reading Hansard because it prepares us when we have sometimes to go back on the playing field, being out there, or in this Honourable Chamber when we have to speak, but there are some interesting components. Whenever you are looking at the post-1994 period, you can always tell that there is a well-thought out agenda and you can see it when you do a detailed review of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure.

We can see that this is a Government, indeed, an Administration interested in reform, in the face of global competition, making the Government more businesslike to improve efficiency, effectiveness in both process and operation. We have a Government that is leading a coordinated strategy to create economic expansion in Barbados.

We can see, Sir, that we have an Administration whose focus is on creating an entrepreneurial spirit, a Government interested in fiscal discipline, a Government that is prepared to align its spending to human capital development, and a Government that will not stray the course in terms of managing its carrying capacity. Sir, I will come back to some of these issues very shortly.

We can, Sir, from some of the components, and as we read the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, see what is emerging as an economic model and that is what the Government has been able to do through the leadership of the Prime Minister. He has essentially been creating an economic model, not only for Barbadians and students of economics and others who are interested in the study of politics to review, but those in the wider Caribbean.

It should not therefore surprise us, when we have leaders throughout the region, who will obviously look to our Prime Minister for his assistance or the Government's assistance in any way possible. Yet, Sir, we hear from the Opposition that they wanted to hear the Government's score card and they were not interested in statistical indices, and that the issue of growth and development should be examined, but I will come to some of those shortly.

Sir, the Estimates will also set out to do a number of things, as I said, maintain an effective human capital programme of high quality education, training in health care, and a programme to deal with the problems of the poor, which is very important and I will look at that relative to the issues of social transformation. I spoke about deficit reduction and we can see the fiscal discipline in operation.

The expansion of trade, as we heard Honourable Members speak about that, and what is becoming now a very liberalised trade environment, the implementation of a rational approach to matters of regulation, specifically the FTC, the restructure of agriculture that I spoke about earlier but, also to manufacturing and I will come back to that as well.

Sir, I believe the Estimates were set out to create a platform to reshape the Government. I talked about maintaining confidence and credibility, but not only that, Sir, we can see that there is a tourism expansion programme. We can see, Sir, that we have very good reserves, \$2 billion, \$1.5 billion in foreign reserves and another \$500 000 million in the banking sector.

Senate 12, sequence 77,

3.50 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR G.P.I. GOODING-EDGHILL: On top of that, we have been able to maintain low levels of employment which is good in a developing society. At the moment it is just under 10 per cent which is remarkable, but if one goes back a couple years one would notice that the Barbados Labour Party has been very successful in maintaining low levels of unemployment. We cannot say that for a period leading all the way through and concluding around 1994. We have had challenges and we should not take joy in the fact that another Administration had significant levels of unemployment because we should all recommit ourselves, regardless of political persuasion, to ensuring that we have and are able to maintain low levels of unemployment.

Mr. President, I want to respond to some of the charges made by the Opposition with reference to the Ministry of Health. For example, the question was asked if we are getting value for money for in his opinion nothing has changed at the hospital. Sir, I would be the first one to tell you, and I think all Honourable Senators would agree, that there has been leadership changes at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and in the Ministry of Health. We have a Minister of Health who is a trained surgeon. He understands the delivery of health care in Barbados and knows and understands the system well.

Sir, let me go through the facts before I come back to respond to this charge. The Ministry of Health has been allocated more money under a Barbados Labour Party Administration when compared to a Democratic Labour Party Administration. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital in particular has been the beneficiary of substantial increases when compared to the Democratic Labour Party. Sir, if you review the Estimates from the 1994-1995 fiscal year right

through to the 2002-2003 fiscal year, you would notice that the Government has spent approximately \$1.87 billion on current expenditure within the Ministry of Health. From the 1994-1995 fiscal year right through to the 2002-2003 fiscal year they spent \$408 million on capital expenditure. When we look at the provision in this year's Estimates you will notice, I believe it is at page 68, that there is an allocation of approximately \$115 million to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Reference was also made to the fact that there is a cap of \$115 million. This year we would spend \$31.7 million on the Barbados Drug Service.

Sir, in addressing the issue of a cap to the hospital of \$115 million we would have to go back and review the record of the Democratic Labour Party. In 1991 the Queen Elizabeth Hospital was allocated \$65.1 million; in 1991-1992 it fell to \$64.4 million; in 1992-1993 it fell to \$59.4 million; in 1993-1994 it rose to \$63.1 million and in 1994-1995 it rose to \$63.3 million. Thereafter, when the Barbados Labour Party was in full control of the Government it went to \$70.9 million. In 1996-1997 it rose to \$71.8 million; in 1997-1998 it rose to \$74.4 million and in 1998-1999 it rose to \$81.2 million. Today we are at \$115 million that is strictly on the basis of a transfer from the Government.

Sir, like I said, there is new leadership in the Ministry of Health. We have a dedicated and committed son who is capable of leading. He has demonstrated his leadership ability by leading the hospital through some very difficult periods. He has been able to create the hospital board which I believe is the most significant step in re-engineering operations at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in the strict interest of delivering health care in Barbados. There can be no doubt about that.

The delivery of health care is the first major step in re-engineering at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. The Board will bring corporate governance; it will bring accountability; it will bring a structure of a board of directors for its proper execution; it will bring an organisational structure and it will bring an executive management team with strict objectives of delivering health care in Barbados. When we look at it seriously, we can see that we are putting an executive management team in place, we can see that there is a board of directors in place and we can see that governance is already in operation.

Sir, I saw recently in the newspaper an advertisement for a director of engineering. I believe they have already appointed the human resource manager. When you look at the challenges and at the composition of the board, you can see that this is somebody who is serious and very interested in the delivery of health care to Barbadians. Sir, at the moment there is a consultant engaged to review an expansion or refurbishment of the hospital. There are

information technology developments and linkages are taking place with the polyclinics.

Sir, other Honourable Senators, particularly Senator Parris, spoke about the improvement in the delivery of the ambulance services and the fact that in the forthcoming financial year they are going to decentralise the ambulance service in Barbados starting in Arch Hall in St. Thomas, I believe. Sir, this is a Ministry that understands the delivery of health care because when a Minister who is in charge of health can come forward and say he will decentralise an ambulance service, that is somebody who is interested in saving lives so he will bring enormous benefits to all Barbadians who will have to use that service. There are also other improvements some of which have already started like the operating theatres, the installation of a new emergency generator to replace the one that was there, I believe, for the last 40 or 42 years and the installation of new dialysis machines. Mr. President, you no longer see long lines when you go to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital pharmacy because they have corrected that problem with the hiring of three pharmacists.

Sir, I made the point earlier that the Government is proposing to spend \$31.7 million in the coming financial year in the Barbados Drug Service. The Drug Service which has been a problem in Barbados for some time has been brought under control. The pharmacists in Barbados are no longer complaining about not being paid on time. I want to ask Honourable Senators when is the last time they heard anybody from the Pharmaceutical Association complaining that they have not been paid on time. They have been paid on time and the Minister did not have to bring any supplementaries to Parliament to support the Barbados Drug Service in this financial year - the Opposition can contradict me if I am wrong - and there has been no shortage of drugs as well. On top of that, people are getting quality drugs.

Senate 12 Sequence 78

4.00 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR G.P.I. GOODING-EDGHILL: We have a situation where there are new standard operating procedures being put in place to deal with the Drug Service. I believe in this coming fiscal year, for the first time in about 20 years, we would be having new contracts concluded.

Sir, in relation to the Barbados Drug Service, one of the most important things is that we do not have long lines in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital's pharmaceutical division. Government has paid attention to those issues, has

diagnosed some of the problems and has corrected them by putting systems in place.

Mr. President, the numbers for the training of nurses are being increased from 30 to 90. We then talked about further training in customer care for supervisors and managers, and persons would want to say that nothing has changed at the Hospital. Sir, the Hospital will not only get better but will move from strength to strength.

Sir, Government has been successful in ensuring that the appropriate services are offered at the polyclinics, to take some of the pressure off the Queen Elizabeth. Therefore, there would not be that need for someone to make an appointment at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital for something that could otherwise be dealt with at the polyclinic.

Mr. President, in relation to revenue collection, the Ministry has now put in place a revenue collection programme which is necessary. Sir, as a serious organisation, if we are going to go forward and deal with the issues at the hospital, we have to look at the issue of revenue collection.

Mr. President, my view is that we have several workers in Barbados who through negotiations with the unions and other institutions have benefit packages, for example, medical programmes which will cover room and board at the hospital, physician visits or surgical procedures, who would not utilise some of that medical benefit and assign such benefits to the hospital.

Mr. President, I believe the time has come that in politics we have to be serious about our roles and responsibilities. Sir, I am not saying that poor people should pay for hospital benefits but I am of the opinion that if there are persons who have medical insurance programmes that could easily assist them, for example, medical insurance coverage, that there is nothing wrong with persons using that medical coverage to help offset medical costs.

Asides.

MR. PRESIDENT: Please address the Chair, Senator.

SENATOR G.P.I. GOODING-EDGHILL: Sir, people talked about nothing being changed at the Hospital. I want to make it clear that on the few points I have mentioned, that there can be no divide on health because we are all beneficiaries of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital or the health care system of Barbados.

Mr. President, I want to make the point that from what I have said, we could see several benefits and changes

occurring at the Hospital, where all of us can feel proud and confident. Sir, I have every confidence in the Minister of Health, in ensuring the delivery of the provision of health care at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and throughout the health sector of Barbados. Sir, I do support all of the efforts at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and what is being done across the Ministry of Health.

Mr. President, I want to tie in on another point because when I talked about the components, I also talked about helping the poor and about social transformation. The Opposition said that we are treating Barbados like an economy and not like a society. Sir, when we sit and analyse, one would have recognised that there are a number of achievements taking place but in order for a society to enjoy the benefits or provision of social services, there must be a strong economy.

Sir, recently I have read a book written by a Mr. Reuben, a former Treasury Secretary under Bill Clinton's Administration entitled: "From Wall Street to Washington", a book which I would recommend to all Honourable Senators. When we read that book, we must understand that we have to have a strong economy. It makes no sense in having a weak economy because we would not be able to provide the level of social services for the benefit of the wider society. Therefore, if the Opposition would want to suggest that we are treating Barbados like an economy and not like a society, I respectfully differ because we are building an economy, we are putting it on a platform so that we can maintain social services in Barbados for the benefit of all Barbadians.

Mr. President, what are the facts? If we go to the Ministry of Social Transformation, one would recognise that in 1999-2000, the Government would have spent \$20.5 million; in the financial year 2001-2002, it was \$28 million; in the financial year 2002-2003, it was \$28.7 million and it is proposed in the financial year, 2004-2005, to spend \$76.6 million.

Mr. President, we are not spending money in social transformation because the Government wants to spend money. The Government is spending this money on a programme in the Ministry of Social Transformation because it is absolutely necessary that we maintain certain things for the benefit of those in our society, who are less fortunate and who are not in a position to acquire or to benefit from certain services in our community.

In the Ministry of Social Transformation there is a Community Development Programme, targeted to community arts career. There is a Community Technology Programme. There is a Night Shelter. Government is spending a lot of money to maintain efficient child care facilities in Barbados.

S:No. 12(79)

4.10 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2003

SENATOR G.P.I. GOODING-EDGHILL: Sir, I encourage those in the private sector when they are building new plants that they may want to consider daycare facilities like the Government has done at the Ministry of International Business where a new complex is being built at Newton and with provisions for day care facilities.

Sir, a lot of workers in the hospitality industry have children and perhaps the time has come for us to look at daycare facilities for the South and West Coasts of Barbados.

Sir, there is a programme to deal with children with disabilities and we should pay particular concern to this area. The Government is not only talking about disabilities but is assisting those persons who have disabilities. I know that Government is very focussed on this and I would say that attention needs to be paid to the layout of the physical plant and design the buildings in such a way to offer significant ease to persons with disabilities. This is already being done and will continue as a gradual programme. I also know that the Transport Board has made it a deliberate policy that with any replacement programme there will be a number of buses specially fitted for those with disabilities. We are expecting an order of five buses and it is anticipated that those buses will be specially fitted to accommodate those with disabilities.

Sir, this is a Government interested in its people, this is a Government that is treating all Barbadians as part of a successful economy and we remain confident about this.

Mr. President, I want to move to the area of tourism. It is without doubt that tourism contributes much to the economy of Barbados. Indeed, I believe it is the main contributor of economic growth in Barbados. I am involved in tourism and when I read the latest information, I can tell that Barbados is on a sound course with respect to its tourism. Indeed, we have seen leadership coming through in tourism from the Minister responsible and his Parliamentary Secretary who will go into this matter in depth. When we look at tourism, we can remain confident that we have a bright future. I was fortunate quite recently to come across some bench-marking information in the hotel sector from an accounting firm outside of North America. Sir, if you review the information you will see that in 2003 it was reported that occupancy levels went up in the Caribbean to 78 per cent.

There are a number of factors responsible for the growth in tourism within the Caribbean region. The geo-

political tension, the situation in Iraq with the security concerns, the scenario where there are exchange rate fluctuations and where economies in the world's major outbound markets like United States of America, Japan and Germany compounded decline in repeat visitor arrivals from traditional areas like Europe and the Mediterranean and in the Caribbean we have been able to benefit because there is no SARS in Barbados. In Hong Kong and other areas like Singapore they have had significant problems and we have benefited from some of those travellers who would have gone to other destinations.

Sir, resorts in the Middle East are experiencing significant dips and when you are in a position to compete with Bali and get repeat guests, it tells the story. So, tourism, in my opinion, is in safe hands.

I agree that there is a problem with the state of our physical plant in Barbados. It is a fact that the hotel plant is tired and in dire need of refurbishment, and Government, in its wisdom, piloted the New Tourism Development Act and offered a number of initiatives to hoteliers to improve the state of their hotel operations. Senator Husbands made the point about the conservative nature of the banking system in Barbados but Government will have to play a more entrepreneurial role in the development of tourism. Whether we want to accept it or not, in the face of an environment where there is conservatism, where tourism is the main economic contributor in Barbados and where the banking system is somewhat conservative, it is imperative that Government undertakes an entrepreneurial role with a quick and clear exit strategy.

This improvement in new hotel investment would engineer the creation of new jobs, expanded economic activities, hotel shops, restaurants, et cetera. Sir, a whole range of economic activity will be created with new tourism investment. We have land at Paradise which the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated and other parties are looking at and there is land at Needhams Point and Hastings.

Sir, a few hotels which are currently closed will soon come back on stream. I want to make the point that entities out there should make the decision and get involved in tourism. It is unacceptable that we have tourism as our main engine of growth and our main foreign exchange earner and there is a lot of land available in Barbados but it is not being utilised to further the development of tourism in Barbados.

Mr. President, if you walk from Needhams Peninsula and come down the coast, you would find coastal land but there are warehouses, a car dealership and a police station on that coastline where we can create a new tourism economic programme to further sustain Barbados and take it forward with new hotel investment.

S12/Sequence 80

4.20 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

Senator G.P.I. GOODING-EDGHILL: It can be foreign, Sir, it can be local, Sir, but at the end of the day, there is no reason why we should have our coastal land opening, not even opening, sometimes closed, Sir, as warehousing facilities, when we can create an economic spirit in the land of Barbados.

Sir, there is no reason why we do not have a hotel in the City of Bridgetown. It is long overdue. These are the types of opportunities that we would want the private sector to join with the Government in insuring that we maintain our new tourism plant.

There are also opportunities, Sir, for investment in hotels. I know of some entities that will build a hotel. They are not hoteliers so they are not in the business of managing hotels. They will lease the hotel and monthly, they would collect, what we call, a rent check. You run the hotel, it is your problem, I have the rent check. If you lease my hotel for five years, at the end of the five-year period, it is my property and I also have enough money. If some of us were smart in the business, Sir, there are many opportunities for people to form, what I call, capital market companies, or joint venture companies. Sir, they should construct new hotels and collect the rent check but, yet still own the hotel at the end of the day. There are significant returns to be gained from the returns of investment.

Sir, you would see on occasion, maybe, less than six weeks ago, where a hotel on the west coast, in accordance with listed obligations, published its P&L and you would realise, that the benefits and the profits that they also recorded and the dividends paid to shareholders. We have to become more responsible. We need more tourism investment and the more tourism investment we have in Barbados, the more economic opportunities we create, the more jobs we will create and indeed, Sir, the Ministry of Agriculture would not have to worry too much because you would have an opportunity, where the farmers in Barbados will be able to sell fresh produce to the hotels in Barbados and further cement their base in Barbados. It is absolutely necessary.

When you look at airlift, we have seen an expansion in 2003. We have six major carriers coming out of the USA, eight carriers out of the United Kingdom, four carriers out of Canada and two out of Europe. We have a new Airport Expansion Programme. The Government had the wisdom to see it fit to engineer the development of a new airport facility. On top of that, we have seen increased traffic coming through the gateways of Canada. For

example, we have seen a scheduling capacity by 10 per cent out of Canada, 38 per cent out of Europe, 13 per cent out of the UK and 2 per cent out of the United States of America.

Tourism is making a substantial contribution and I am sure that Senator Grant would make this point more forcibly than I have been able to this afternoon. I also want to speak about the GEMS Project, because there are some people who believe that you should not talk about GEMS, but I am not afraid to speak about it because at the end of the day, I think it will, and it is showing, based on my information, to be a very successful project. There is absolutely nothing wrong with the Government getting involved on an entrepreneurial basis in the development of hotels, with a very clear exit strategy. The key to any hotel development in Barbados is to keep your gearing down. Once you keep your gearing down, and a well-managed plant, you will smile all the way to the bank. I will not go into cruise.

Asides.

SENATOR G.P.I. GOODING-EDGHILL: I am fortunate to have been in Jamaica with a group of investors who were looking to acquire property in Jamaica, and I met the former operations manager, Mr. Fraser. He was in the Marriott system then, which is a very good system, and from the time I heard the announcement that he was appointed in Barbados, I said, "Very good." He has gone on now because, obviously, Sandals came and offered him perhaps a better package. The point of the matter is that he has been able to bring it together, package it in such a way, re engineered the operation, created efficiencies and the GEMS of Barbados would be seen as a very successful model. Despite all the criticisms of the GEMS Project, I am convinced, Sir, that the Government will live to be the victor at the end of the day.

Sir, there has been some talk about Labour. I am not going to speak about the issue in detail, except to say that we have been able to maintain and keep unemployment at a low of 10 per cent. We have seen an expansion of the Government Wage Bill in this year's Estimates, essentially because of negotiated settlements, so the only thing that we need to do is to continue to improve productivity, not only in the public sector but in the private sector, so that we could drive improvement and productivity across Barbados.

If the country maintains its productivity, then we would continue, Sir, on a course of sustaining our competitiveness in the marketplace. It is indeed challenging, where a country has to pay above inflation increases and, if we to continue paying above inflation wage increases, it is absolutely important that we have associated growth in productivity.

Sir, time would not permit me to go into some other areas. I must confess that I thought it would have been a little difficult for me, but quickly I want to touch on tourism education. In the hospitality sector, I recognised in the Estimates that there is a programme designed to implement a Bachelors Degree in Culinary Arts. I would want to compliment the Ministry of Education and the Hospitality Institute at the BCC for that. It is a wise move. It is long overdue and I am sure it would save a lot of Barbadians and their parents a lot of cash, when they have to go and fund their external training in culinary arts at Johnson and Wales University and all the other Universities. The only thing I would like to add, Sir, and I hope they would make provision for those workers in the industry who cannot pursue full time study, but would want to pursue part time study.

Sir, in reviewing it all, the fact of the matter is that in Barbados, we have been able to achieve a 3 per cent rate of growth. We have been able to increase our tax revenue, and it is projected at some \$1.9 billion this year. This will be achieved despite a phased reduction in personal income tax.

Mr. President, I want to join with all those present, indeed, this is my first presentation in speaking to the Appropriations Bill, in this Honourable Chamber but I would want to say, I remain confident that the people of Barbados would continue to be very well served. The Government has done an outstanding job, in particular the officials at the Ministry of Finance, in putting together a successful programme for the future of Barbados in the forthcoming financial year. I will want to join with those on This Side, Sir, and others in supporting the Appropriation Bill before this Honourable Senate.

Sir, I am much obliged.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Senator Hon. E.R. GRIFFITH: Sir, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended for 20 minutes to resume at 4.55 p.m. today.

The question that this Sitting be suspended to resume at 4.55 p.m. today, was put to the Senate and agreed to, and Mr. PRESIDENT suspended the Sitting accordingly.

Senate 12, sequence 81,

4.20 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

RESUMPTION

Mr. PRESIDENT: This Sitting is resumed.

SENATOR B. R. COLLYMORE: Mr. President, the occasion of a debate on the annual Estimates is the only one on the parliamentary calendar that allows Honourable Senators to go far and wide in the points they want to make. I think, however, that it is important that we concentrate on the actual Estimates themselves. While the programmes and policies require some consideration and should be taken seriously in our various positions, I think that the actual Estimates themselves on this occasion deserve a few minutes of attention.

Mr. President, the Minister in making his presentation and according to what I see in the reports from the other House stressed that a cap was being placed on some major items of expenditure and the Memorandum introducing the Estimates identified major caps of over \$53 million on three specific items. The grant to public institutions has been reduced somewhat, the subsidy has been reduced and so has the item Retiring Benefits.

Sir, while there may be merit in such reductions in order to meet the objective of narrowing the gap between revenue and expenditure, I think that history and the reality of some of these changes are probably misplaced as an item of reduction. Let me take the area of pensions as this is one which I consider to be one of the greatest. Pensions refer to payments made to former public servants and officials. In 2002-2003 the sum appropriated on the revision for pensions was approximately \$118.6 million. In 2003-2004 the sum revised is approximately \$136.1 million and the provision in the current 2004-2005 Estimates of Expenditure is for \$117 million.

Mr. President, there is a natural increase in the number of retirees in the Public Service annually, probably up to 300 to 400 a year and those who go off the pensions roll are usually considerably less than that. Pensioners have been granted a small increase of 1.3 per cent in respect of the period 2003-2004 and two per cent to 2004-2005, so factored into the cost of pensions in the Estimates should be that 3.3 per cent which has been legislated by Parliament. It is unrealistic to suggest that you could have a pensions bill of \$117 million in 2004-2005 when the one for 2003-2004 was \$136 million. What have we sought to achieve by making those reductions?

Mr. President, later in the financial year it will be necessary to make adjustments within the item without coming to Parliament because pensions and all the allowances of pensions, once they have been granted under the Constitution automatically form part of what is charged in the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. President, you cannot therefore reduce pensions once they have been granted, therefore, the adjustment can be made in the figures. There are two sub items under pensions, one is the statutory one and the other is the

allowances. You could always increase the statutory one and reduce the allowances. Indeed, that seems to have happened in each year in the last four or five years since I was in this Chamber. So to reduce pensions by \$20 million is to be totally unrealistic.

Mr. President, the other item which I want to deal with in this question of reduction and what seems to me to be a decrease of under-budgeting is the question of subsidies. Every year it has become necessary to come to Parliament for a supplementary for the Transport Board and each year the provision that is first appropriated is always inadequate. It was \$1 million since I have been in here. Mr. President, anyone who has been associated with the Barbados Transport Board knows that the Transport Board cannot operate successfully on its returns from bus fares which have been at \$1.50 for the past 13 years when in 1991 a World Bank consultancy indicated that the bus fare that would be an economic fare for travelling from Pie Corner, St. Lucy or from Bathsheba, St. Joseph to Bridgetown would be \$2.50. If in 1991 that was considered right and in 2004 bus fare is at \$1.50, unless a substantial subsidy is given for the purpose of keeping the Transport Board afloat, that \$1.50 is wholly and totally inadequate.

I think that the Government has indicated, and there is such provision I believe, that the assessment of bus fares will become a matter for reference to the Fair Trading Commission. I am not here presuming what the Fair Trading Commission would do, but if it does a good job of assessing we can look for a substantial increase in bus fares. The Transport Board staff are miracle people and we need to consider this.

Senate 12 Sequence 83

5.00 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR B. R. COLLYMORE: Mr. President, we need to consider this when they have a list of persons who owe, which runs into millions of dollars. We need to consider also their ability to keep the system afloat where, for example, when one creditor threatens to discontinue service, for example, for fuel and this business has to pay that bill instead of another. They have to go on doing this in order to keep the business afloat. Mr. President, when the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Transformation which are supposed to be provided with funds to meet the subsidised fares of school children in the case of the Ministry of Education, and older and disadvantaged persons in the case of Ministry of Social Transformation, and a whole financial year could go and those departments would not receive all of that money.

Mr. President, it is all right to talk about efficiencies and imposing on them the necessity to be efficient. There is no greater frustration than that inability to meet one's debts and I am sure that some of those persons at the Barbados Transport Board who can do better, will get out at the first opportunity. Let us not delude ourselves that \$400 million is going to achieve anything. It is alright to sit in our ivory towers and tell the people to be more efficient. It is an impossible situation to run the Barbados Transport Board on the small and insignificant returns that they get, on a fare structure that allows them \$1.50 in 2004. It is alright to talk these things until one has to deal with them.

Sir, the other thing about the Barbados Transport Board, and I make this with all seriousness, is that for some time, perhaps not now, the Transport Board has been an employment agency. Therefore, if the staff is increased without consideration, there is going to be that inability to meet the pay. They would also have more troubles.

Mr. President, one speaker referred to the fact that people are employed in the public service and to the fact that there is always money and permanency in the service. Sir, many public service workers do nothing but stand up instead of working and when asked why they are not working, they reply that they have no material with which to work. Therefore, these workers are being paid a salary but have no material to do the work and we have to be very careful when we start examining these matters.

Mr. President, I am not asking a question, I am saying it in the form that I would expect a response. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital has been granted \$115 million. There is no provision in the Estimates for capital and I have heard of a tremendous capital programme upon which they will embark. I believe that as a statutory board, it can enter into arrangements for borrowing but the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, as far as I can recall, even with the best will in the world, even with the collection of arrears, can only collect on revenue less than 10 per cent of the cost of expenditure. Therefore, if they are going to borrow money, it would be as if the Government is borrowing the money for capital works.

The Government, like they did for the Barbados Tourism Authority which does not make money, will have to underwrite and repay any loans to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Therefore, with the Hospital not seeing it as capital and I am not hearing how it is going to meet its capital, as long as it is going to be doing those works of which I am hearing, there would be a charge on the public purse.

Sir, we hear a lot about the relative provisions to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital between 1991 and present. I am not going into the merits or demerits of what was considered to be a small allocation in 1991 but I would like

that when Honourable Senators speak of this \$115 million, for them to remember that there have been nine annual salaries and wages increases since 1994, and that by far the greatest cost to the Hospital is personal emoluments with a staff of 2 000. Therefore, anytime that staff is given a salary increase no matter how small, accumulatively they become a substantial additional cost to the hospital.

Sir, as a member of the Committee that did the review of the Hospital in 1998 and had recommended that it should be converted to a Board, and I stand by that, I warned, however, that the greatest mistake that has been made in that conversion with which the Board has not been able to deal up to now, but which has to be dealt with by the Public Service, is that the 2 000 workers there are civil servants and nobody can direct them to go to work with a Board.

Sir, the Haynes Commission has allocated a whole chapter of its Report to the matter of transition, identifying that as the greatest problem for the conversion to a board. I am still to hear that anything specific has been done to recognise the importance of the transition process.

Mr. President, I referred to a similar operation in the 1980s where the Barbados Water Authority was created and the Water Works Department's staff were seconded to the Barbados Water Authority to keep it running. Ten years had elapsed before the matter in relation to their transfers could have been settled. At the time, the Barbados Water Authority had much less staff who could have qualified for any argument that they could not have been transferred because most of them were casuals and unestablished staff, yet it took 10 years to get that converted.

Mr. President, everyone who is working at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital under the existing arrangements holds the position as a public officer under the arrangement that applied in the late 1990s to convert these temporary, casual and unestablished posts, to that of public officer. As a public officer, nobody can transfer you without your concurrence. Therefore, the problem at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in size and in complexity is far greater than anything that is obtained at the Barbados Water Authority.

I believe that if the powers that be had taken note of that chapter that spoke of the transition and what should be done, probably we would be nearer to that transition than we are now.

I think it is to be complimented that the staff at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital continue to give reasonably good service and in some cases, excellent service. Sir, that tells me that it does not matter who is the Minister, the Permanent Secretary or the Government, that people who

are motivated to work will work, especially in disciplines such as medicine and nursing.

I, therefore, think that we should not gloat about the Queen Elizabeth Hospital being so good or having changed so substantially. I hope that commonsense would prevail and that the whole concept of secondment, which has been avoided, would be worked out, otherwise this matter would remain hanging for a very long time.

It is difficult when a trade union takes up a position of resistance in one case, as it does with the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, while in another case like the Grantley Adams International Airport, it sits on the Board of the new Grantley Adams International Airport Incorporated and is able to accept that people should be transferred.

S:No. 12(84)

5.10 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2003

SENATOR B. R. COLLYMORE: I want to touch on the matter of policy. As a citizen I have some concern about the health segment of Government. At this stage, it is a topic that has been avoided for far too long. It is garbage and waste disposal. We are going to be buckled under garbage in this country if we do not deal with it urgently because in a few years Mangrove Landfill will be full. It is not only the fact that Greenland has remained unopened but the fact that we have to find a way to deal with garbage. This should be appreciated by the Government and dealt with soon because the solution is not short-term. There could be an interim or medium-term solution but the full solution is not short-term.

We are quite rightly, getting ourselves ready here to become a fully developed country and we have not been dealing with something as crucial as garbage disposal. We are talking quite glibly about hosting the World Cup in 2007. A lot of infrastructural work needs to be done which will benefit the people of Barbados and just because we are looking to host the World Cup.

Whilst there can be praise for some of the roads in Bridgetown area as they have been completely refurbished, the road network in Barbados is awful. If we have to be bringing people from the South Coast and the West Coast into the centre of the city for World Cup between now and 2007, more work has to be done.

Mr. President, I want to discuss the subject of signage again although some Senators have referred to it. Sir, our signage is awful. As I go through Barbados and see signs misspelt and pointing the wrong way, there are many things wrong with our signage. All sorts of things get stuck

on our signs and the Road Traffic Act and/or the Highway Act makes provisions for this to be an offence but it is not being policed as such.

Another matter of infrastructural consideration is our potable water supply. This is again important to our achieving the status of complete development and to our hosting the World Cup in 2007. I heard that one of the problems is the question of leakage. I heard this from the CEO of the Water Authority and other people, and if that is the case, we need to put finances in place and replace those pipes on a phased basis especially in highly built-up areas in order to ensure that this wastage does not occur. These are matters which have to be addressed not in a political way but towards the achievement of the development which we want.

Sir, I was impressed with the exposition given by the Minister who lead the debate on the Ministry of Agriculture generally. I only say to him that there have been 13 Ministers of Agriculture since 1954 when we had ministerial status. One Prime Minister said that the only Minister of Agriculture is God and the other one asked if I knew of any successful Ministry of Agriculture.

It was not because these Ministers did not have good views or that they did not want to achieve. I support Senator Chandler's point about irrigation, that if it does not rain, our food crops and other crops will fail and that we need to put systems in place which will ensure that some of the areas of Barbados that produce food have a supply of water. In the early 80s there used to be a programme called the Integrated Rural Development Programme which identified certain areas where there sought to improve roads, housing and above all make provision for agricultural production. So, high on the list of agricultural production then was irrigation.

I wonder what are the new arrangements for the Rural Development Commission and the divided authorities in matters of rural development and what is the coordinating mechanism to ensure that these areas identified as falling within the purview of rural development have a coordinated approach.

I think that the objective of the Rural Development programme is a noble one but the implementation might not be so noble. Sir, we were always building tenantry roads from time immemorial and 151 tenantry roads were built in a two-year period but what is the Rural Development Commission's role in matters other than housing and roads?

S12/Sequence 85

5.20 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR B. R. COLLYMORE: What percentage of its allocation at any stage is given to these matters?

Sir, I could not make my short intervention, without touching on a matter that is very dear to me. It has to do with personnel matters in the public service. It is common that people at all levels, trade unionists, politicians and everyone, say that the biggest problem with the civil service is the 1974 Amendments to the Constitution. This might be true. I do not know.

I say that it allowed Ministers to make decisions on personnel which they otherwise had not been able to do. I do not believe that Ministers are necessarily bad judges of these things, but they may have a particular motivation. We now have a situation where there are more than 28 000 people in the public service. I read this in the Regrading Report. Sir, please pardon my referring to it.

I was talking to an actuary who did work for the public service and he told me it is more like 31 000 people in the public service. Sir, if I take the average, let us say that there are 30 000 people in the public service, if you have all of them, as the Government has done, now called, public processors, meaning that their appointment, promotion, discipline is reserved exclusively for the Service Commissions: Public Service Commission, Legal Service Commission and the Police Service Commission, except appointment to certain top positions for which consultation is required with the Prime Minister, his Deputy, Heads, et cetera. Only consultation with the Prime Minister, so he cannot decide who should be appointed.

I have been Head of the Civil Service and I know that if the Commission makes a recommendation at the Head that the Prime Minister does not like, they review it because the Prime Minister does not like it: and I served two Prime Ministers. Therefore, one recognises that the Prime Minister has to have a say in certain things. Certainly, a normal Minister should have a say in determining who is his or her secretary, not that he will go and pick out one, but you give him six names and he chooses the one he wants. He might tell you one of the names to put on that list, but that does not matter. I am practical on these things.

Sir, no Minister has any authority, and that includes the Prime Minister, under the present arrangements where this Government has made all the casuals and unestablished staff, and public officers, within the name of the Constitution, and therefore, not subject to the appointment promotion discipline of any Minister. If the system works, the 1974 Amendments that relates to this, is no longer a problem. Let the system work.

The other point I want to make, has to do with the job evaluation exercise. I have looked forward to this really earnestly and I would like to say that each time the Estimates were presented here since 1999, reference was made, in great detail in some cases, to this exercise which was going to be the mother of all regrading exercises.

I have said before that there is no one way to job evaluation. Indeed, there are four major ways and what evaluators, if I can call them that, do is sometimes marry the various ways into what they call, "a unique evaluation", for a particular client, whether it is a quantitative or a qualitative evaluation. The qualitative evaluation is classification. The quantitative evaluation is where you have points, and various factors which you then subdivide into sub factors and give points for each one. Which every way it is done, a large measure of value judgment still has to apply.

How do I know, as this last evaluation did, that in awarding points, the Auditor General or the Director of Public Prosecutions should have a lower rating in points, not in salary, than a Permanent Secretary. In our Constitution these two are the only public officers that have a unique Constitutional provision. Therefore, they are totally responsible for their actions. This merits special consideration.

Therefore, I cannot understand this cultural thing that people who know nothing about the whole question of the Constitutional position, come and make some recommendations. Fortunately, they did not recommend, and they could not recommend any down-grading for them, but job evaluation, although it has the same factors, whether it is classification, or points rating, has the same basic factors. Whether you do it one way or the other, the whole question of value judgment has to arise.

I would like to know the cost of this last exercise. Given the fact that you had two sets of consultants, and that it took over three years, that you utilised the services of 13 public officers, which is a cost in carrying out this exercise.

The noble idea of people being part of this thing cannot be refuted. In the other exercises that I know, people were involved as well and with some trained abroad, not only in Barbados, but they did not remain in the agencies that dealt with these things for longer than a few years. Therefore, the constant training and retraining of new people to do this exercise is absolutely necessary.

Let me say that I have been involved in this matter from 1961. I was conscious of the whole question of the Adams Report of 1948, and each salaried Commissioner that came to our shores was given, as part of his terms of reference, to carry out some aspect of job evaluation. In 1961, it was a man called Jacobs. In 1966, it was a man

called Gardner Brown. The one who did the earlier salaries revision and some job evaluation in 1956 was W. D. Godsall. In 1969, a person was engaged called, Pusinelli to do only a regrading exercise. This has nothing to do with the ones we attempted - let's say we attempted - in 1974 and 1989. Never yet has a job evaluation exercise been accepted by everybody and will not be accepted on this occasion either.

Sir, let me tell you something. The last one must have been very good. The only major change in this recommendation has been for the police and other security services and in the context of what has been happening in Barbados in crime and that sort of thing. The sophisticated crime that we now have, and the change in crime, the police can always justify an upward regrading.

Therefore, the 2 000 persons that constitute the police, fire and prisons, including temporary policemen, which we have to regrade as well because they get a basic salary, constitute 2/3 of the posts recommended by this new exercise or regrading.

Senate 12, sequence 86,

5.30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR B. R. COLLYMORE: Mr. President, I have often said in here and elsewhere that the greatest accusation levied against the last regrading exercise was that it dealt only with those at the top of the civil service, but that is far from the truth. I have given the history and the facts that only a couple of posts were upgraded because there were two grades of the same post. We felt that you could not have two grades of Permanent Secretaries when the Permanent Secretary running the Ministry of Health, the biggest budget, or the Ministry of Education was getting less than the Permanent Secretary running - I am not casting anything - the Ministry of Social Transformation.

You cannot have a Ministry with 4 000 or 5 000 employees in 18 different branches and say that the Permanent Secretary of that Ministry's job is less than that of somebody running a smaller entity. In addition, all Permanent Secretaries are subject to transfer, and they have no say. Today, you could be in charge of the Ministry of Social Transformation and tomorrow you could be in charge of the Ministry of Health, so we felt at that time there should be one grade of Permanent Secretary. Except for those who were in the lower grade and went up to top, nobody at the top of the civil service got any regrading in the last exercise.

Mr. President, on this occasion they have been recommended for substantial increases and therefore the question of responsibility and the question of the nature of their job have been given a very high rating on this occasion. I am saying to beware that it will not be accepted by, not the people involved... I am not here thinking he loved them and saying they do not deserve it, I am not saying that. I have been one for 20 years and I understand these things. When you are putting people in those positions, you need to be sure they can do the work especially at this sort of grading that has been recommended.

Mr. President, I want to identify with the view of some people that it was not a very good exercise. It lacked consideration of the cultural and constitutional peculiarities of Barbados. It has to have some degree of value judgment otherwise it will not be generally accepted by people who have not benefited from it. Two hundred posts have been recommended for a downgrading and I think that is in order. What I would say that out of those 200 posts more than half of them were created since the 1989 exercise. I heard somebody say that it was the absence of standards that they were graded on, but give me another, Mr. President. I am sorry to use that term, but give me another. That could be true, but a lot of those posts were graded without the concurrence or even the total examination of the agency that is responsible for looking at those things.

Mr. President, the one thing that the 1989 job evaluation people stress was that not to go and grade posts willy-nilly because it upsets the whole apple cart. I do not only feel that it is those 200 posts that are to be downgraded that were created. Many of them were posts that were converted from the casual and unestablished staff to the permanent positions and something seems to have gone awry at that point of conversion. Even this exercise that was just concluded referred to that as a problem.

Mr. President, job evaluation is not a scientific perfect thing. I have seen job evaluations done in Canada where the computer models and everything else were put in place and it was not accepted. I had some training in England on this matter and one method that might be suitable for one industry or one particular organisation is not suitable for another. This Report refers to jobs with the same title but doing different work. The fact that the public service is made up of so many departments and agencies and employs so many skills, you cannot cross the public service to evaluate on a rating system that is rooted primarily in arithmetic.

Mr. President, while I am not putting up my ammunition on this exercise, because I would await what would happen when the trade unions discuss it with the Government, I feel justified in whatever part I had to play in the 1975 and 1989 exercises. I am justified because these

people have only been able to identify 3 000 posts, 2 000 of which came up in one group, the P scale, and a lot of them have been posts that were created since then and fixed. We must have done a good job that as a public service of 24 000, 6 000 posts received upgrading and less than 200 are to be downgraded. I say nothing was wrong with the Police but the police can justify and they have justified each time 61, 66, 69 and onward some different grading because they used the argument of the difficulty of the job and the fact that they are exposed to these dangers and they can always bring cases to prove that.

Mr. President, let me say that while I am particularly impressed with the presentation of the Minister on Agriculture generally I did not hear as much as I would have liked on marketing and extension services. Within the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development there are still the same eight extension officers that existed there for 20 years. Is there any other agency, be it the Rural Development Commission or the Barbados Agricultural Society, that has extension officers? We need to ensure that farmers have the opportunity to consult with these extension officers. When I was a boy, and that was a long time ago, I used to belong to something called a judging ring and every week we would travel with the extension officers to Jerusalem in St. Peter, Haggatts in St. Andrew or the Home in St. Philip and we were required, because we were given certain information, to judge the quality of animals whether it be sheep, goats or cows. We were required to learn something about food production and vegetable production as well. As I said, that is a long time ago. Is that sort of thing being done now at all?

Sir, when we start talking about figures we need to be careful, because there is a quote which I hope I do not misquote that talks about "more statistics than dammed lies". Figures are dangerous things to rely on especially if you are not making equal comparison on the same things at the same time.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator even though the word may be unparliamentary, I think the source is quite reputable, so I would permit it on this occasion.

Asides.

SENATOR B. R. COLLYMORE: Thank you, Mr. President. I hear people talk about lunch and the quality of school meals and so on, I am glad for that. I have had more grandchildren than children that benefited from that. I went to school at secondary school in 1942 and my lunch money was four cents. It did not do much to harm my progress or my enjoyment. I hear about children now getting \$10 a day. Money is a strange thing to compare. I think that is too much, but still that has nothing to do with what I am trying to say.

Senate 12 Sequence 87

5.40 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR B. R. COLLYMORE: I remember when the Right Excellent Errol Barrow was looking at the question of a uniform bus fare, I had a discussion with him and proffered the view that to bring one bus fare was wrong, that it did not recognise the cost. He said to me: "You have joined that bourgeoisie. We are doing this and we are supplementing it by subsidies to ensure that the average person can get to work from wherever they are. It will be \$0.25." I told him that when I travelled from St. Lucy to go to school, the fare was \$0.26, and I went to secondary school in 1946.

Mr. President, what I am saying is that one has to match these things against the times and, therefore, what one could have gotten for four cents then, one probably has to pay \$2 for now.

Mr. President, I think the last point I need to address has to deal with the elderly in our society. The elderly in our society, measured in terms of pensioners, is about 40 000 persons. When measured in other terms, it is more. The elderly constitute 13 per cent of the population at this stage. They have serious problems, not only in terms of vagrants descending upon them and beating them up in some cases to get what they have but also having serious deprivation inflicted upon them by their own relatives, such as withholding their pension cheques. This is happening at a time when we are moving towards a full development status.

Mr. President, the Barbados Association for Retired Persons (BARP) had the opportunity to discuss with Sir Roy Marshall, the question of law and order. We have identified the need for a Protection of the Elderly Act as a very urgent matter. At that time, we had identified about ten instances where the elderly are being disadvantaged. This was not done willy-nilly, a Committee headed by Mr. Justice Frank King, including a former Commissioner of Police, now a practising Attorney-at-Law, Mr. Orville Durant, and a former welfare person to look at this. They came up with these ten matters as being important, to be addressed by the Government and by legislation to protect the elderly from the ravages that are being inflicted upon them.

Mr. President, I want to think that when this report reaches the higher corridors of Government that this matter would be addressed urgently. The Barbados Association for Retired Persons now has over 9 000 members, with the objective of getting 10 000 by September 30, 2004. Mr. President, we propose to use all the influence and pressure

at our command, to ensure that some of these things are done.

Mr. President, I will not be addressing the question of pension in detail, except to say that the Government has set up a committee to look at the review of public service pensions. The committee did the National Insurance pensions and now is doing the public service pensions. The Government gave good reasons for having this matter urgently examined, the chief of which was cost. Therefore, in a situation where people are living long, in a situation where the number of persons who have to pay taxes is reducing because less people are coming onto the job market, one cannot wait for the danger to hit but have to plan, therefore, because of this reason, not only the cost but the desirability that pensions be funded. As they are now, pensions are charged on the Consolidated Fund under the Constitution and, therefore, as long as one gets to the stage of earning pensions, it has to be paid from the Consolidated Fund. Other countries have moved towards the question of funding and contributory pension, that is to make the worker pay a part of the contribution to the fund or pensions in payment. Under the Barbados Constitution, this cannot happen unless Government changes it and enforces on people the necessity to make a contribution to their own pension in the public service.

Sir, a consultant came around and recommended that persons be made to pay. It is so important in these matters that Barbadians who know guide these consultants. I, therefore, would like to give way to one of my colleagues if it is possible. I promised I would have given him 20 minutes of my time, I hope I have not gone too far.

Mr. President, to recap my presentation, I wish first to say that the figures in the Estimates are misplaced in some respect; pensions cannot be reduced; they cannot say that they are not giving a subsidy to the Transport Board unless they want Barbadians to stop working and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital urgently needs to have capital funding. If a loan has to be raised, then raise it quickly. I think the whole question of the transfer of Staff from a hospital to a Board has not been handled properly and would not succeed unless persons come to grips quickly and first get workers seconded, then in the meantime, ask them if they want to work with the Board, et cetera, and in terms of the rules and service, make it so agreeable that they would want to come over.

Mr. President, many workers at the Hospital cannot work anywhere else, while many of them can put up their plates and practise things other than medicine, while some of them, especially nurses, are in demand elsewhere. Therefore, we have to find a way to ensure that we can get that transition working, and soon.

Mr. President, I am thankful for the opportunity to make these comments and I am obliged to you.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Before calling on Senator Newton, I wish to make an observation which perhaps I should have made before. I would like to ask Honourable Senators to desist, as far as possible, from walking around the Chamber to converse with other Honourable Senators during the course of the Sitting.

It is a distraction to the Chair and in particular to the Honourable Member on his feet. Honourable Senators may use the anteroom. The Marshal, I am sure, would assist you in sending an appropriate signal to the person with whom you wish to converse.

I generally ignore isolated cases but I thought I should mention it today.

SENATOR THE HON. Mrs. V. E. NEWTON: Mr. President, I will take the advice of the Honourable Senator who went before me and not go on an excursion dealing with figures, especially if they might be taken out of context.

Mr. President, however, I would like to start my contribution by mentioning, as others before me have done, the Report of the Auditor-General for 2003. Sir, the most shocking revelation was that there is an estimated \$380 million in arrears, of which \$114 million are contributions due from individual taxpayers.

S:No. 12(88)

5.50 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2003

SENATOR THE HON. Mrs. V. E. NEWTON: There is no difference in this Report from the others that have gone before. Sir, I was privileged a few weeks ago to sit in on an Estimates exercise in another capacity in which I heard the Prime Minister constantly speaking of accountability and best practices and of a need for public funds to be well spent. I do not think it was mere rhetoric but in spite of all this, year after year we continue to receive reports from the Auditor-General pointing to slackness in aspects of our public accounting. I wonder what the problems are, whether there is insufficient staff to deal with the matters, which I doubt or whether it is training or simply that persons responsible for accounting matters are careless because it is not their own personal funds they just do not care but I am not sure.

Mr. President, I would like to move on to the Grantley Adams International Airport Inc. Sir, tourism is our lifeblood and for a long time it has been evident that

changes were needed at the Airport not just for visitors to be comfortable but for Barbadians travelling to enjoy those same comforts. Sir, the in-flight check-in area is too small and has been this way for a long time. The staff of several carriers usually double up to find space. The arrival lounge is too small to accommodate traffic especially in the afternoon when several international flights are in. The old departure lounge, even with the recent addition becomes crowded early in the day. The canteen and coffee shop in the departure lounge is not only expensive but too small and there is no alternative. There has also been a decline in recent years in the standard of maintenance at the Airport especially in relation to the washrooms.

Mr. President, after several months of inconvenience, Barbadian travellers cannot be proud of the improvements made so far at the airport. The redevelopment projects spearheaded by the Grantley Adams International Airport Inc., a company incorporated in 1988 is about half-finished. The objectives of the project were:

- to extend the useful life of the airport, increasing passenger handling to accommodate passengers up to 2 000 by 2015.

Mr. President, it is expected that around \$170 million will be spent on the airport expansion by the time the exercise is finished. The departure hall is almost complete and I am told that the company has been receiving compliments from visitors and the Barbadian travelling public on its attractiveness and the easy way travellers feel when they are going to other places. A new arrival hall is being constructed that will have high-capacity baggage carousels along with increased floor space for Immigration and Customs. It is expected that the arrival hall will be opened in 2004. The ticketing area is also to be expanded and should be operational soon.

Two very admirable features will be to facilitate the need for handicapped travellers and in keeping with national efforts towards conservation, to treat all waste water generated by the Airport and use it for irrigation and re-flushing purposes. I think this is an important feature given the fact that we are a water-scarce country and it is likely to get worse within the next few years as massive building continues.

Mr. President, I am satisfied that the airport expansion project when completed will be one of the most attractive and functional in the area but, I am of the view, that given our scarcity of land, the design could have been such that the expansion went upwards instead of outwards. Hopefully, upward expansion at a later date is possible. We must, however, ensure that the Airport, like all other international airports, has multilingual signs and diagram as

at present there are too few and that the quality of bathroom maintenance improves.

If the problem is one of supervision or too few staff, whatever it is, it ought to be addressed because the first impression given of a country when you arrive is the state of the bathroom facilities at the airport.

Sir, the car park needs to be extended as well. I am not sure whether plans are in the works for that but attention should be paid to the car park.

Mr. President, this brings us to airport management. A few months ago, there was a widely publicised case of a letter written to a North American offering him a job as airport manager at a salary which caused many Barbadians concerns. At the time, based on the information in the Press, I too felt that the salary mentioned was too high but I caution that airport management, like hospital management is a highly specialised area and that persons who head these institutions should be well paid.

My question is whether in the time that has passed, the Airport Authority has done anything about identifying a Barbadian to train for the position

There is the question of landing fees but we have to be careful to make sure that the airport as a destination is not out-priced because our neighbours are competing with us for the tourism product.

S12/Sequence 89

5.60 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

6.00 p.m.

SENATOR THE HON. Mrs. V. E. NEWTON: Mr. President, having said those few words on the Grantley Adams International Airport I would like to congratulate the Government and I am not sure when the conceptualisation started, but whichever Government it was, I think it was a good idea to conceptualise and support the project. I would like to thank the Airport Authority, the contractors and the workers on the project for what seems to be going well. I say that because I have travelled a few times in the past few months and each time I got the impression that whatever needs to be done to make travellers feel comfortable is being done, and I think that is highly commendable.

Asides.

SENATOR THE HON. Mrs. V. E. NEWTON: Sir, I move on quickly to the National Library Service.

The National Library Service is operating under legislation that was drafted at the turn of the Century, and the library regulations were drafted in 1954. The Act speaks to the library and the museum being under the governing structure, which has never been the case. If there is one piece of legislation on the statute books that needs to be removed is the Public Library Act.

Mr. President, many developments in the area of librarianship and information provision have taken place since then and a new Act is very urgently needed, with regulations that take into account modern day information provision.

Also needed is a public policy-making body. The days are past when you had one person in a library serving a large population making all the major decisions. Even in the small library of which I am in charge, there is an Advisory Committee to which I must report and which helps me make decisions. It ought to be the same in relation to a National Library Service and archives services as well, because they all fall within the same rubric. Both of them serve large sections of the public and I would say are in need of assistance which a body, comprising of persons with different expertise and experience in various areas could provide.

Mr. President, I move to the Police Complaint Department which is provided for under Head 30, sub Head 238. Provision for the establishment of the Police Complaints Authority was made in October 2001 when the Police Complaints Act was passed. This Act was a result of submissions made to the Constitution Review Commission. I remember the debate on the need for a Police Complaints Authority continued in the Press after the Commission made its report.

The Authority was set up and may I read, Mr. President.

“To supervise the investigation of any complaint alleging that the conduct of a police officer resulting in the death or serious injury to some other person, any other matter, whether or not the subject of a complaint, referred to the Authority by the Commissioner, which in the opinion of the Commissioner should be supervised because of its gravity or its exceptional circumstances.”

The Commission was also mandated to monitor the investigation by the Police Force of any complaint with a view to ensuring that the investigation is conducted impartially.

Mr. President, the Complaints Authority legislation, as I said, was passed in 2001. When I checked through the Estimates to decide what I was going to comment on this time around, and I called to find out what was the delay

because I noticed that \$213 302 had been set aside to set up the Commission, I was told that Commissioners had been identified and a Chairman but lo and behold, the Act had not been brought into force.

Sir, I know that in a department such as the Attorney General's where several other major pieces of legislation are drafted and discussed in the course of any one month, it is possible for such things to happen. It is also possible that some legislation may get overlooked and not brought into force because nobody considers it their particular responsibility to look after these things. I would hope that urgent attention is given to bringing the legislation into force, so that the Commission can get started and do its work.

I was also told that the Commission's Headquarters had been identified, and I was gratified to be told that the plan is to move it as far from the Police Headquarters or any police station as possible. After all, we are involved in transparency and while substance always takes precedence, in my view, over form, on this occasion, I think the two should go together. We would not want the public to think that the police against whom they are complaining are just next door and in any position to influence decisions made by the Commissioners or any procedures to do with the complaints that they are going to make.

Mr. President, I am hoping that the Commission will soon be able to get started on its work. I am told that there are a fair number of complaints waiting for this Commission and I am hoping that it will ensure that its decisions are made available to the public so that Barbadians who are concerned about aspects of police operations, especially in relation to how citizens' complaints are handled, will get an opportunity to feel that fair play and justice are going to prevail.

I hope that the Commissioners, and this is a subject on which I spoke a couple of weeks ago, are not persons who will be influenced by the need to be seen as one of the jolly boys and girls, will not ask the right questions and will back down on matters of principle, but will do what, I am sure, the Attorney General is hoping that they will do, that is, ensure that matters of the public interest are dealt with fairly and justly, and without fear or favour.

Sir, having said those few words, I just need to say that I am not like Senator Collymore, versed in dealing with figures. Therefore, I will not attempt to say whether or not enough money is allocated to any one ministry, but I would say that there are a few ministries that one cannot help but say that they seem to be doing a commendable job. Sir, just as we are quick to criticise, we should be equally quick to praise when we think that the situation merits it.

Mr. President, on the Ministry of Housing, I would hate to be the Minister of Housing at this time because the housing needs are so complex and great that anything a Minister of Housing does, is likely to bring criticism. There are just too many needs to be satisfied from the public purse. I would not want to say that the Government has given the impression that it is there to satisfy all the housing needs.

I would say that I think that “needs tests” should be applied fairly strictly to make sure that housing, financed from the public purse, goes to those persons who are most in need and cannot afford to do for themselves.

We also have to continue on the path of high-rise housing because of our land scarcity. Mr. President, it should not be that housing is allocated for persons for ever.

Senate 12, sequence 90,

6.10 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR the Hon. Mrs. V. E. NEWTON: If you qualify for a Government unit in 2004 at a salary of \$300 a week and four or five years later you are making a salary of \$2 000 or \$4 000 a month there should be some mechanism for revisiting those situations to make sure that those people who could afford to help themselves move out of the Government subsidised housing and go and do their own thing and let other people have an opportunity.

So I am sure the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment is going to have a hard time. That is the reason why in some countries persons who are Ministers of Housing and probably Ministers of Public Works and Transport are not elected representatives because sooner or later their colleagues, their enemies and everybody will get at them because they cannot satisfy all the needs that are out there and then sooner or later their own constituents might turn against them as well. These persons are in a very difficult position and they cannot be seen to be favouring their own constituents. They cannot do enough for constituents of other representatives as well and then they are between a rock and a hard place, but that is just my perspective on the issue.

Mr. President, notwithstanding the comments made in the Auditor General’s report which I think ought to be looked at seriously, I think the Ministry of Housing is really trying to make a difference in terms of housing in Barbados.

With those comments, Mr. President, I thank you very much.

SENATOR G. P. B. NICHOLLS: Mr. President, I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in the debate of the Appropriation Bill 2004-2005. Sir, the Government’s fiscal agenda would precede the upcoming financial year on the basis of a budget of current revenue of just over \$1.9 billion and a total expenditure of around \$2.5 billion.

Sir, as a member of this Honourable Senate I am mindful of the constitutional prescription that limits the Senate’s ability to effectively go into the broad heads of the Estimates, but I believe that our deliberations over this Bill are important in this society as a small society and an emerging democracy. Our ability to be an effective check on any legislative excesses has manifested itself by the contributions of Honourable Senators, particularly by the Independent Senators who spoke.

Sir, our power is really to review the broader concerns of Government’s fiscal policy and agenda for the coming year. Indeed, the revision of the Public Accounts Committee by allowing Members from this Chamber to sit and review the operations of Government’s expenditure over a period of time is a welcome reform measure. Indeed, it goes even further to allow that Committee to look into the affairs of corporate entities in which Government owns significant shareholdings.

Sir, as we speak, the economic outlook for Barbados in the coming year is projected to be better than the current year. A lot of discussion by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition in this House focussed on the lack of Government’s ability to really snap out a strategy to deal with social concerns. It was unfortunate that the Government of Barbados has been criticised by Senator Stuart on the basis that the Barbados Labour Party looks after the economy and not the society. Sir, that is an unfortunate distinction that was made by someone who I believe should know better because an economy is made up of people, not of esoteric figures or contrasts.

Sir, we refer to concepts such as the marketplace where people come together from various sectors of the society and undergo certain relationships where they are preformed in a particular manner. It is an unfortunate intellectual somersault to try to bridge a divide between two political parties in this country. This is part and parcel of the kinds of politics that the Right Honourable Owen Arthur, the Prime Minister of this country, has spoken about when he spoke about the politics of inclusion because we cannot afford in a society like Barbados to develop these artificial philosophical cleavages to define two populace political parties as being different from each other. That is why I said that it is unfortunate that the Honourable Senator has brought about these intellectually dishonest somersaults on these issue.

Sir, the projected economic growth for Barbados for the next financial year is about 3.5 per cent which is an improvement from the growth of 2.5 per cent of Gross Domestic Product that we experienced in the current year. A major plank of the Estimates this year is to narrow the fiscal deficit. We have been able to achieve our projections where we have narrowed the fiscal deficit by 1.2 per cent of Gross Domestic Product to 4.5 per cent. Sir, it is important in this debate, given the context in which our society has developed that we confront these terms, and I would deal with that a little more.

Sir, our country, like every other economy in the world, has had to grapple with what the economists call the first synchronised downturn of the new global economy. We have had to battle all of the challenges like every other society in the world. Our economic growth, though small, has been led by one sector while other sectors have been relatively underperforming under the weight of the new changes in the international economic order that exists. It is not a form of incestuous back-patting that we speak about the management of the Barbadian economy and about the good performance of the tourism sector. It is a fact that the tourism sector in this country has led Barbados' charge to get out of the sticky situation we found ourselves in two years ago. The Government quickly responded by creating the emergency package to tour operators and to hoteliers who were faced with cancellations of forward bookings. Sir, the Government did not only stop there by plugging money into the industry, it created the Tourism Development Act which created a scheme of incentives to encourage persons to come to Barbados and invest in our tourism product, especially in the area of creating new attractions to a mature tourism destination like Barbados in which we were in danger of becoming a stale tourism destination.

Sir, we spoke about equity financing a couple of months ago when we dealt with the subvention to the Barbados Tourism Authority, but we must repeat some of them because when we look at the true Barbados economy what really exists touches and concerns the lives of everyone of us. So to try to divide political thinking in this country between a society and an economy is really ludicrous. That is why I am taking my time in going through the logic behind Government's strategy for maintaining the level of social services that are provided for our people.

Senate 12 Sequence 91

6.20 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR G. P. B. NICHOLLS: Mr. President, in respect of equity financing, instruments under the

Enterprise Growth Fund, the Small Hotels Fund and the Tourism Loan Fund, have also provided an opportunity for that sector to be able to finance its operations in a situation where there was high liquidity in the commercial banking sector. Sir, the commercial banking sector has always shown a reluctance to get involved in risks in terms of non conventional means of doing business in this country.

Sir, for the Year 2004, the outlook for tourism is even brighter because as up to the end of February we have had a better year in 2004 than we have ever had in a long time. This is as a result of the Government leaning on the local sector because it needed the help, not only that we could have grown but that we could have maintained the status quo in terms of the Government and the State's responsibility to provide a means of economic development and social engineering through its fiscal policies.

Mr. President, it is projected that the surge in spending in this country by the several English tourists over the next coming weeks is so important that it would mitigate against the projected rise in terms of our imports into this country.

Mr. President, Barbados is a society that could be considered a net import and when economists could forecast that as a result of the British tourists coming to Barbados to watch cricket, that it has a significant impact to mitigate against the increases in terms of our net retain imports and the fact that our domestic export sector is struggling under the weight of trade liberalisation and globalisation, it is important that we confront these issues head on.

Sir, there is also projected to be a boom in the construction sector and the economy is expected to grow and as Honourable Senators on this side have spoken, especially Senator Husbands, the expansion of the economy would mean more jobs. It would mean that people would spend more money, businesses would earn greater revenue and Government could also collect more taxes from its workers and from the businesses that are making profits.

Mr. President, as a Government there are a number of challenges that we have to face and, therefore, I applaud the enthusiasm of the Leader of Government Business. Sir, the agricultural sector faces a number of challenges of which we do not like to speak. The Barbados Labour Party came to office at a time when this country was committed to a number of international trade arrangements and at no time did the then Government come honestly to the people of Barbados and said to let them discuss the way forward because the changes in the international economic environment that were projected would have significantly impacted upon the way in which the agricultural sector,

which has functioned for over 300 years as the backbone of the economy, could no longer function.

Mr. President, yet the same Democratic Labour Party can tell the people of Barbados that the Barbados Labour Party is guilty of treating this society as an economy and not as a society, when they had neglected to bring plans and programmes which would have helped this country to plan ahead, while at the same time they were committing the Government and the people of this country to the changing obligations in international world trading system.

Sir, our agricultural sector, our soils in Barbados are very thin and we are having less and less rainfall every year. Our trade preference ratio in terms of our economic activity to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is very great. Our agriculture and manufacturing sectors have operated in an environment in which a lot of trade preferences have been given to them and subsidies by the Government to allow them to be competitive. We can no longer operate in that environment because of the changes in the international economic environment. Therefore, Government must put plans in place that follow the rules of international trade and not to offend the treaties and obligations to which we are committed but at the same time must try to protect the quality and standard of living that we enjoy as a people.

Sir, there are adjustment costs that are associated with these kinds of arrangements that impact significantly on the people in the society. That is why I say it is an unfortunate slur and an unfortunate attempt to try to make that kind of philosophical division where it does not necessarily exist in practice. I suppose that I am new to this business and am not yet a qualified politician and that I do not understand that there is need to make political points every time one speaks.

Mr. President, as an economy, we have to be more competitive. I think one of the biggest challenges is how do we become competitive, while at the same time maintaining the current commitment to the social services sector which we undoubtedly believe is the reason why Barbados enjoys being the third ranking State in the Western Hemisphere, in terms of the human development index.

Mr. President, the current system of Government's allocation of expenditure and collection of revenue has come in for recent criticism. Sir, the Estimates are limited to setting out the sums which are calculated and will be disbursed in the year to which they apply. It is true that the Estimates do not show the value of the assets that are owned by Government, nor the extent of the liabilities that Government must face from a previous financial year, or those to be spread over years to come. Sir, that is why the

accrual system, which is an accepted system of measuring one's assets and liabilities over long periods of time, have been used in the private sector and not simply recording one's revenues and expenditure on a cash basis, by closing one's entries and recording the revenue in the period in which it is earned and one's expenditure in the period in which it is spent.

Mr. President, the accrual system would give a more comprehensive picture of the programmes of the Government by linking the resources consumed with outputs produced. It is something on which I believe we must have more discussion. I am mindful of the Leader of Government Business who spoke about an increase in the obligations of those managing the collection of Government's revenue, to make sure that we do not end up with too many. There is also the equal obligation of those who are in charge of spending to make sure that we do not expand the size of Government.

Sir, in my reading since we have come to this debate, I looked at what obtains in other Commonwealth jurisdictions. In fact, in England, the country from which we borrow much of our institutional arrangements in terms of our Parliament, the House of Lords discusses the Appropriation Bill but only as a formality. It is done in one day. In fact, the Estimates are not even prepared or printed for the Members of the House of Lords.

S:No. 12(92)

6.30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2003

SENATOR G.P.B. NICHOLLS: It passes as a formality and the last time Estimates were discussed in the House of Lords in any substance was in 1907. Sir, we are fortunate that this Honourable Chamber can afford some time to deliberate over these issues. I think we need to look at some of the jurisdictions to which we bear some similarity in order to find the model best suited to Barbados in terms of the fiscal reform process.

Sir, I return to the criticism of the Government that this document is only about economics. Every Government which has run the affairs of this country has used fiscal policy as a mean of engendering social and economic development for its people. I say that particularly where the private financial system in the country has been less than kind to emerging new enterprises. Government has played a central role in creating an enabling environment to facilitate the financing of entities not currently serviced by the financial services sector. We can think of the creation of the Barbados National Bank in the 1970s and a host of other arrangements such as the Small Business Association

and the Enterprise Growth Fund to which I referred to earlier.

Government has also spent money in the EduTech programme, created the Ministry of Social Transformation, the Urban Development Commission, Rural Development Commission and directed resources to these entities to service the needs of these people. There is nothing esoteric about the fiscal policies contained in these Estimates because they are real and relate to people but because of the current international environment that exists Government must design the Estimates in order to manage the country because it charged with the obligation of looking far down the road.

I want to draw reference to a statement made by the Leader of the Opposition when he was in this Chamber in a previous Estimates debate in March 2000. He said at that time that everything else depends on how well we are able to forecast revenue and expenditure in the Estimates, that if we do a bad job there will be further turbulence in Barbados and in the economy and that there will be greater difficulties and layoffs.

Mr. President, the Leader of the Opposition when he was in this Chamber understood the need for the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure to play an important role not only in collecting revenue and spending Government's money but in terms of forecasting a long-term strategy so that Barbadians could maintain the high quality standard of living that we fundamentally believe is our own right.

Sir, this position is not taken by the Honourable Senator Stuart. When he spoke to the gallery, he was political savvy and created an artificial distinction that bears no reality to how a Government in 2004 ought to operate Sir. He departed fundamentally from his Leader.

Sir, the Barbados Labour Party, as a Government, recognised the need for change, and for many, change happens in small, gradual, evolutionary steps. The overall objective of the Government is to make Barbados into a full-fledged economy based on the delivery of high value-added services. This process is contemplated at a time when the prevailing international economic environment to which many Honourable Senators referred, presents significant challenges in terms of the loss of trade preferences and our ability to get concessional loans to build infrastructure in this country.

Sir, by 2005, the Barbadian economy will have to function in an environment in which we must remove all barriers to trade in goods, services and investment within the hemisphere. By the end of this year, we will have to begin the process by which the Caribbean Single Market and Economy creates new opportunities to the way in

which we have functioned for over 400 years as a single economy in this region.

Sir, by 2007, our ability to export sugar, rum, agricultural and manufacturing products to the European Union would change because of the new economic partnership agreements that have to be in place.

Sir, 80 per cent of the \$300 million domestic export economy of this country comes under the auspices of arrangements under the Caribbean Basin Initiative. The kind of change required to meet the challenges of economic development is not an evolutionary process because it requires the kinds of changes that would bring the sort of qualitative and quantitative leaps in the way in which our society organises itself and, Sir, the Honourable Senator Eastmond spoke to this last night in her contribution to the Estimates debate.

Sir, it has to be a non-evolutionary change in order for us to grasp the benefits of the new international, economic environment that confronts us and which we have never had to deal with before.

S12/Sequence 93

6.40 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR G.P.B. NICHOLLS: There was not a word, Sir, from the Opposition on how this society will grapple with these changes, not in their Manifesto and not from any of their spokesmen. Sir, if you hear the Shadow Minister of International Business speaking anywhere on the International Business Environment, any first level economic student, any first level political science student or law student would be ashamed. You cannot compare the Barbados International Business Sector with any country that has international business companies and I believe Senator Eastmond spoke to that in our tribute to the late Sir Harold St. John.

When the sector was being created in Barbados, there were fundamental qualitative differences in the international offshore sector back in the 1970s that we decided we would implement in this country. It stood the test of time because we were able to make distinctions in terms of Barbados being a low tax regime that conforms to the regulatory framework of all standards that could be plausibly employed to manage the sector.

Sir, to point to the reduction of registration of international business companies as a failure by the sector is nonsense; but this is the kind of criticism that would come to persons who seek, not necessarily to get involved with the issues of the day but to make political points, and

to frighten Barbadians into believing that this Government does not know what it is doing.

I welcome the day, Sir, when there could be serious intellectual challenge to the Government's development agenda. We are not saying that the Barbados Labour Party has all the ideas, and for the Honourable Senator Stuart to say that the Opposition is not in the business of bringing ideas to the table, but keep saying that because they like being in Opposition, brings no development to the people so that there can be a debate. The Government cannot proceed on the basis that everything that we do is right. Bring a challenge to the issues. Tell us how are you going to defend our surrendering up of certain service sectors in respect of our FTAA negotiations. What is your idea in respect of what services should be protected and what services ought to be liberalised?

There was not a word from the Democratic Labour Party on these issues in 2004 and I warn, Sir, that you will hear this for the next five or six years from them, because they seem not to want to grasp these issues and to define them as an economy that the Barbados Labour Party is dealing with.

Sir, in 1976 the Barbados Labour Party set in train the process by which the economy of this country could be diversified in a very large way and, because of that process which was set in train we are able to sustain the level of social service on which Government in these Estimates can spend the taxpayers' money to provide for our people.

When the Airport to West Coast Highway was being built in this country, people criticised that development as a means for drug planes to land in this country and they scoffed at a highway that would open up the belly of this country and facilitate infrastructural development and access to all of the major areas in this country by our people, visitors and people who do business in this country. That idea was scoffed at. But, could you imagine Barbados without a highway?

Sir, could you imagine all the traffic that comes from Grantley Adams International Airport to the West Coast would have to go either through the country or through Bridgetown? Suffice it to say that the stage is really set for how our society is going to manage this process of change which I feel is non-evolutionary. It is not gradual and it is not small. Giant qualitative and quantitative changes need to be confronted. Sir, I am not going to leave it there, because I am going to explain what I mean by these giant steps. Thus, historians have summed up societies across the world over time, and those societies which have made the transition in a number of ways. There are three things essentially that they say you must do. You must have:

1. New forms of organisation.

2. You must have new production technologies.

3. There must be a transformation of human values as a cultural response to the challenges ahead.

I deal, Sir, firstly with the new forms of human organisation. This Barbadian society can only become a developed economy if we have new forms of human organisation which will enable our society and our people to manage efficiently and effectively our human and physical resources.

We cannot do business like we used to, that is why the process of public sector reform is so critically important to that development process. This is why the EduTech programme to bridge the digital divide in our educational system so that those persons whom we are training to come into the labour market and help this service economy function, would be able to compete successfully with those other persons in the western hemisphere and all the other economic relationships that we enter into that our people can compete.

Sir, 30 or 40 years ago, the East Asian economies particularly were way behind economies like Argentina. Labour was shoddy and cheap and the GDP was way below, as I said, countries like Argentina. They embraced new technologies and new forms of organising their society and today, Japan as a society enjoys a better economic outlook than Argentina which 30 years ago had a GDP twice that of Japan's. A country like Argentina, as rich as it was 30 years ago, in terms of social, human and other capital, did not embrace a fundamental change in the way in which the society was organised.

Sir, the good thing is that the potential to utilise and manipulate technology is not sacrosanct. It is not a monopoly that is enjoyed by a particular country or region or class of people. It can be utilised and manipulated by everybody. I urge the Barbadian people to join the Government in looking at ways in which we can be more competitive and productive. I am calling particularly on the labour movement, to embrace the concept of fundamental change and stop holding on to the historical baggage of a past era in which economic, human and social organisation in this country was fundamentally different from that which we confront now.

Sir, the Minister of Finance and Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. O. S. Arthur in his introduction of this debate in the Other Place, spoke of the Government's plan to be more entrepreneurial. He set out a number of criteria which, in his mind are essential, in terms of making sure that this Barbados economy is able to stand the test of time.

Senate 12, sequence 94,

6.50 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR G. P. B. NICHOLLS: The first was that there must be sustained investment in social and human development. Sir, all the Honourable Senators on this side who spoke made the point that this year's Estimates commits over half of Government's budget to the social sector, and I want to re-emphasise that point. Sir, over \$242 million will be spent on health in the Barbadian economy this year. Over \$76 million will be spent on social transformation, some \$242 million on education, \$88 million on housing and \$47 million on public works. That amount has to do with the infrastructure and things like that.

Sir, there is a commitment on the part of this Government to maintaining the high level and the sustained investment in the human and social capital in this country. Nobody can walk away from this debate saying that the Government has reneged on one of the fundamental tenets of the governance contract between the governed and the people that make the decisions on the behalf of the Government.

The second criterion which the Prime Minister set out is that we must practice an open economic system, that is, that we must commit ourselves to the full integration into the real economic. We must not hide from it and we cannot tell our people that when the Government goes away to negotiate on their behalf it is only concerned about economics and not social policy. Sir, in my humble opinion that is rubbish and we must move beyond that.

Sir, we must agree to the process of liberalisation because as I said earlier in this Honourable Chamber Barbados cannot stand splendidly in isolation and opt out of the international economic environment because the very basis of an organised society in this country, as the Honourable Senator Stuart spoke, was to integrate this economy three or four hundred years ago into an Atlantic trading system that was dominated by a monopoly capitalism that was operating in the European continent. So we cannot now in 2004 disengage ourselves from those dynamics so easily.

Sir, the third feature of what the Prime Minister is saying in terms of this economy and making it ready for the challenges that lie ahead is to create an enterprise culture which deals with the psychologic, as Senator Doctor Lowe would tell you in respect of fashioning in people the desire to be more productive thus creating a productionist impulse in people which is endemic.

Sir, a society must have a cultural response to the whole question of development and if the society cannot engage itself in such qualitative changes in the way it perceived that it can function, then the battle is lost. So, we

must create in this society an enterprise culture in the country.

Sir, the fourth tenet of that principle is that the Government must play an entrepreneurial role. The State must take reasonable risk to create and broaden the scope of opportunity for all. It must create an enabling environment that is facilitative of all classes of entrepreneurial activity. So the Government must take the lead and build those institutions that can carry the load and the commitment to our people in terms of the sustained investment in the social services sector.

Sir, I say that against the backdrop of criticism of the sale of the Barbados National Bank. Sir, this is a Government that believes fundamentally that we must make a distinction on the optimal size of the State. We must make that distinction now because we cannot continue on the basis of rhetoric or nationalistic sentiment because those are not necessarily relevant in terms of our country's long term survival. Government must be able to divest itself of interests in institutions that at a particular point in their own development are designed to make a profit.

Mr. President, when Government divests itself of those institutions and sells them to the private sector, Government must therefore set the policy, the standards and the parameters in which the divestment operates so that the social gains that were achieved by the ownership of those institutions are not lost to the people. That must be fairly said because we operate in an environment in which all around us our domestic financial systems are adjusting to the changes of globalisation. We saw it with the merging of Barclays Bank and the Caribbean Imperial Bank of Commerce. The Bank of Butterfield has now brought the Barbados Mutual Bank and it looks like the Royal Bank of Trinidad and Tobago is buying the Caribbean Commercial Bank.

Mr. President, none of the institutional investors in Barbados saw it fit to make an offer for the Barbados National Bank in the same way none of them are making an offer on the Insurance Corporation of Barbados, but a Government must be entrepreneurial. The Government must make a decision that it is better to divest itself of some of the interest in a particular asset, notwithstanding that it is earning, and look for strategic relationships such as the private sector who can better run it to allow that entity to strive in a changing market and to be able to compete rather than owning a set of institutions in this country that are making profit and is still committed to the sustained level of investment in human and social capital.

Mr. President, Government has to make a distinction between pumping funds in the Barbados National Bank so that it can compete on a regional level and indeed on a

hemispheric level and on building a school or repairing a police station. These are the fundamental questions that we have to answer. Therefore, I think it is time to scotch the heresy that Government sold the Barbados National Bank because Government sold some of its shareholdings but retained a significant portion of that shareholding so that the new majority shareholder cannot trigger the takeover clause in the Companies Act and buy the entire bank. The Government is committed to maintaining this size of its shareholding. As I said, the Government can set policies and standards so as to make sure that the social gains that have been earned as a result of owning the economic assets are not lost overnight.

Sir, when this Chamber can decide to debate the issues as they presently stand, the people of Barbados would not be fooled and some of the nonsense you hear on the call-in programmes about Barbados selling off the Barbados National Bank to Trinidad and Tobago and Caribbean Commercial Bank being sold off to Trinidad and Tobago and all of that will not take place.

Sir, it is important that we understand that the carrying capacity of this Barbadian society is coming to a stage in which Government must make critical decisions about its size. When I talked about the size I am not talking in terms of the numbers, I am talking about the ability of the State to provide the basic level obligations to its people. We have reached the stage where the receipts from our export of goods and services are far less than what we pay for the things that we import, so while the fiscal deficit is manageable or it has reached manageable proportions there is a deficit in what the economists call the current account which is a cause for concern.

Senate 12 Sequence 95

7.00 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR G. P. B. NICHOLLS: Sir, the Barbados Government has determine the way forward is for us to have strong, private capital investment in this country to support the Balance of payments situation that we have. Therefore, we must embrace the concept of strategic alliances and mergers in the critical sectors as a means to trouble-shoot the effects of globalisation.

Sir, the other entities that practise in the private banking sector are doing it and, therefore, why should Government hold onto the Barbados National Bank and have to make the hard decision as to whether we should capitalise that institution so that it could effectively compete at the expense of the investment in social and human capital. Why should the Government be making that decision in 2004? It is an asset.

Mr. President, the same credit unions in this country who were complaining that Government did not bend over backwards to sell them the institution, as soon as the Republic Bank of Trinidad and Tobago opened its doors, went and sold their shares. These are the same credit unions that said Government should have given them first option before selling the Barbados National Bank who instead sold their shareholding in the Barbados National Bank to the Republic Bank and made a fat profit doing so.

Sir, an entrepreneurial Government must be able to make those kinds of decisions while, at the same time, give the people the commitment that it will not do anything to break their trust in terms of that sustained investment in human and social capital.

Mr. President, I want to respond to a comment made by Senator Fields in respect of what he feels is unfair criticism about mergers in this country. Sir, we must have a situation in Barbados where businesses merge and do not bring the kinds of economies of scale that would result in low prices to the consumers of this country. There is a tendency in which mergers are operating in this country, and there is a form of oligopolies that are taking root, in which there is a limited amount of certain entities in the sector which operate in very much the same way as though they were one entity. What the Government has done in respect to the Barbados National Bank, is to approach a strategic partner, who has throughout the Caribbean been performing in the banking sector in respect of other transactions other than the commercial banking which we know in Barbados. Sir, I am speaking about the venture capital arrangements, merchant banking and other facilities that are being offered by Republic Banks in other jurisdictions which have recognised the need for strategic investors.

Mr. President, the insurance industry is also part of our financial arrangements in this country. We also have a strong offshore sector but when we look at the kinds of performances, qualitatively in terms of our domestic financial services sector, there is a significant lag in the kind of sophistication, synergies and operations, when one makes the comparison between our domestic financial services sector and the offshore financial services sector.

Mr. President, I want to spend some time, if the clock would permit on...

MR. PRESIDENT: It is a little time. It is about eight minutes more.

SENATOR G. P. B. NICHOLLS: Mr. President, when one looks at the life insurance industry in Barbados, there is in excess of \$5 billion in that economy. On a per capita basis, the sums ensured are high, relative to the average earnings in this country. The premiums as a

percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is 7.4 per cent, which is called insurance penetration. Therefore, what we have in this country is a relatively small population that has a significant investment already in the insurance market and a significant number of insurance distributors in the market. Therefore, the only growth for the insurance industry is to look outwards.

Sir, there is tremendous potential in other countries whose insurance penetration do not reach the level of Barbados and again I beg the question, does Government make the decision to capitalise the Insurance Corporation of Barbados at the expense of any of the other heads in terms of the social services sector in this country? The Government must be entrepreneurial, there must be change in the society, and we must make the decisions. We must be honest with our people.

Mr. President, therefore, there is a need to form strategic alliances and again I issue the warning, which is not necessarily mergers and acquisitions which do not bring any economies of scale to the operations but strategic alliances which would improve the market share; which would acquire a crucial supplier and which would link one's distribution systems and mesh the emerging technologies in respect of Information Communications Technologies.

Mr. President, at the end of it, this Barbados Labour Party Government is going to make the right decisions in respect to the management of the affairs of this country. The people are not worried about our commitment to the continued social investment that every government makes. We have had 10 years of the Barbados Labour Party in Office and people can go to work tomorrow without worrying about whether or not this Government would continue to commit itself to education, housing, and to those things which we feel are fundamental rights to all Barbadians.

Sir, we must caution that in the bringing of this Appropriation Bill at this time, the Barbados economy cannot continue to function in the way it has functioned in the past. There are serious challenges ahead and we must confront them. We must develop strategies to how we want to develop.

Sir, I issue the caution that we must confront those hard decisions about what is the optimum size or what is the carrying capacity of the State and like any other entrepreneur would, should the State exercise its right to make strategic decisions in respect of its income generating assets.

Mr. President, those are the kinds of questions with which this debate should concern itself. The people who have to work in this society, those people who are at

school, expect nothing less than that. I have before said that there are young people in this country who do not necessarily feel that the State is the absolute provider of everything for them and that decisions must be made on the level of what is best for all of Barbados. Therefore, because we pay taxes, we cannot continue in a situation where everybody believes that the State owes them a job, a house, free education or free health care. There must be change and we need to grapple with the fundamental and qualitative change that would ensure the fruits of development which are called progress.

Sir, I believe when the Right Honourable Prime Minister set out his vision for the Barbadian economy, he was moved by the words of the New England Poet, Robert Frost, who said:

"The woods are lovely, dark and deep,

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep,

And miles to go before I sleep."

Mr. President, I am convinced that the policies of this Barbadian Government are in keeping with the kinds of words that Robert Frost would have written when he wrote the poem called "The Weary Traveller."

S:No. 12(96)

7.10 p.m.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

SENATOR G.P.B. NICHOLLS: We are weary travellers, but we still have far to go.

Sir, the challenges are formidable. They are not the sort of challenges that can be resolved at Glenburnie over a bowl of pudding and souse. They are formidable challenges but the Barbados Labour Party knows that the woods are wondrous, dark and deep. Sir, we have promises to keep and miles to travel before we sleep.

Sir, I am obliged to you.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

SENATOR THE HON. E.R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until Wednesday, March 24, 2004 at 10.00 a.m.

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

S12/Sequence 97

7.12 p.m.

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Senator B. R. Collymore, 43, 45, 46, 47, 48; Senator The Hon. Mrs. V. E. Newton, 49, 50, 52; Senator G. P. B. Nicholls, 52, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59.

SPEAKERS IN THIS ISSUE

CHANDLER, Senator Dr. F. L.

COLLYMORE, Senator B. R.

EDGHILL-GOODING, Senator G.P.I.

FIELDS, Senator A. C.

GOODING-EDGHILL, Senator G.P.I.

GRIFFITH, Senator the Hon. E.R.

HUSBANDS, Senator Ms. S.C.V.

LOWE, Senator Dr. D. S.

NEWTON, Senator the Hon. Mrs. V. E.

NICHOLLS, Senator G. P. B.

PARRIS, Senator Miss P. E.

WILLIAMS, Senator the Hon. J.E.D.

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

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

EDITORIAL QUERIES

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

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

Q2. Opening. The source opens without the convening sentence (Pursuant to the adjournment ... met at ...). The date is taken from the heading of the source.

Q3. Dates in the text. The source gives 'Tuesday, March 23, 2003' (23 March 2003 was a Sunday). The weekday and date do not agree; printed as in the source.

Q4. Senator the Hon. J. E. D. Williams, about 3.15 p.m.. Three paragraphs of the Minister's reply on the Pan African Commission (from 'I know that I would be encroaching on your good office') carry the speech label 'Mr. President'; the Minister's own label resumes after the take-slip Senate 12, Sequence 74. Please confirm the speaker.

Q5. Speech labels, Senator G. P. I. Gooding-Edghill. The Senator's first speech is labelled 'SENATOR G.P.I. EDGHILL-GOODING' and the rest 'SENATOR G.P.I. GOODING-EDGHILL'. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Senator Dr. D. S. Lowe, point of order. While Madam Deputy President was in the Chair, one ruling is labelled 'Madam PRESIDENT', and Senator Fields begins 'I thank you, Madam President'. Printed as in the source.

Q7. Close of the record. The Sitting was suspended, not adjourned, until Wednesday, March 24, 2004 at 10.00 a.m., with the debate on the Appropriation Bill still in progress. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The Senate resumed on Tuesday, 23rd March, 2004, with Mr. President in the Chair, to continue the debate on the Appropriation Bill, 2004, which the Leader of Government Business had introduced the day before. Senator Miss P. E. Parris, in her first Estimates debate, supported the Bill, said unemployment had been reduced despite the economic difficulties of the past year, and cited the pledge on page 55 of the Barbados Labour Party

Manifesto 'Every Bajan a Winner' to provide computer training for low-income communities.

Madam Deputy President then took the Chair. Senator A. C. Fields, also speaking for the first time, argued that small island states must protect their right to feed their people and warned against opening the meat market to cheaper imports, and urged employers to open their books to the unions. Senator Ms. S. C. V. Husbands said the rules of the World Trade Organisation would force taxes down, and noted that close to \$50 million was available for entrepreneurial lending through Fund Access, EGFL and other funds. Senator Dr. D. S. Lowe replied for the Opposition, the Democratic Labour Party; he was asked by the Chair to address his remarks through the Chair, and his reference to the contract at St. Leonard's School drew a point of order from Senator G. P. B. Nicholls, who said the Auditor-General's Report spoke of a limited liability company, not an individual.

After a suspension until 2.20 p.m., Senator the Hon. J. E. D. Williams, replying for the tenth time to an Appropriation Bill, said that Standard and Poor's had not used the right information in its latest pronouncement on Barbados; gave HIV/AIDS figures of an adult prevalence of 1.8 per cent, 2 738 persons testing positive between 1984 and 2003 and 1 213 deaths; and answered Senator Sir John Goddard on the work of the Pan African Commission. Senator Dr. F. L. Chandler spoke on agriculture, including his 1995 research on a year-round onion variety, and Senator G. P. I. Gooding-Edghill supported the Bill, saying unemployment was just under 10 per cent.

Following a further suspension to 4.55 p.m., Senator B. R. Collymore urged attention to the Estimates themselves, raised arrears owed to Government and defended the last regrading exercise in the Civil Service. Mr. President asked Senators to stop walking around the Chamber to converse. Senator the Hon. Mrs. V. E. Newton spoke on the Grantley Adams International Airport, the National Library Service, and the need to review the position of tenants of Government housing whose incomes had risen.

Senator G. P. B. Nicholls said the Government's budget rested on current revenue of just over \$1.9 billion and total expenditure of around \$2.5 billion, discussed equity financing under the Enterprise Growth Fund, and argued for strong private capital investment and strategic alliances in critical sectors. On the motion of Senator the Hon. E. R. Griffith, the Sitting was suspended until Wednesday, 24th March, 2004 at 10.00 a.m.