# THE

# SENATE DEBATES

## (OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 2003 – 2008

## THE SENATE

*Friday, August 4, 2006*

The Senate met in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings on Friday, 4th August, 2006, at 11.20 a.m.

PRESENT

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

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

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

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

Senator T. E. BARKER, B.A. (Hons.), M.A. (Econ.), J.P. (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs)

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

Senator I. St. C. LINTON

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

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

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

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

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

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

Senator R. O. MARVILLE, B.A. (Hons.), M.A. African Studies

Senator A. A. BYNOE

*Prayers were led by Rev. Father Errington Massiah.*

Mr. PRESIDENT: This Senate is in session.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR THE PRESIDENT

Mr. PRESIDENT: I have received excuses for the absence of Senator the Hon. Mrs. V. E. Newton and Senator Dr. F. L. Chandler.

PAPERS

SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, I am commanded to lay the following documents.

1. Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemption) (Caribbean Regional Environmental Programme) Order, 2006;

2. Value Added Tax (Refund) (Caribbean Regional Environmental Programme) Order, 2006;

3. Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemption) (Caribbean Regional Sustainable Tourism Development Programme) Order, 2006;

4. Value Added Tax (Amendment) (No. 3) Order, 2006;

5. Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemption) (Queen Elizabeth Hospital) Order, 2006.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 2 – RESOLUTION TO TAKE NOTE OF THE DRAFT E-GOVERNMENT STRATEGY

SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, the Resolution before us is asking us to take note of the E-Government Strategy which was recently developed.

E-Government within the context dealing with this resolution is defined as the use by the Government of information and communication technology to extend and enhance its delivery of information and services to citizens, businesses and employees. Therefore, it is part of the wider programme of reform which has been taking place in the public sector over the years and which will continue to take place because as you would appreciate, Mr. President, as the environment within which the public sector operates changes over time, it is necessary for the public sector, as an organisation, to adjust to those changes and to continue to improve on its operations if it is to meet the expectation of its clientele.

Mr. President, over the years there have been a number of E-government like initiatives undertaken by the Government. I am sure all of us are familiar with the Barbados Integrated Portal Project, which is being implemented by the Data Processing Department, which is an electronic gateway to Government's information and services that would allow the Government to present a single official face to the world and will eventually allow for dynamic business transactions and a variety of business opportunities.

Mr. President, there is also the Community Technology Programme, which is being implemented by the Ministry of Social Transformation and this seeks to make the technology and the facilities associated with the technology available to those members of the community who otherwise would have been denied access to such facilities so that they learn how to use the technology. Sir, they can have access to the facilities in order to pursue various business opportunities as well as personal efforts.

Mr. President, there is also the EduTech Programme, which as you know is being implemented by the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports through the various schools, which is designed to teach the youngsters how to use the technology and provide facilities through which their teachers can communicate with them effectively and also give those persons who do not have access to the facilities at home an opportunity to become familiar with them. Mr. President, this is because the Government recognises the importance of making sure that all of its citizens are up to date on the technology.

This is important, Mr. President, in our development because if small countries like ours are to survive and continue to grow in this competitive world, they would have to use all the available technology at their disposal. Mr. President, we should not be in any doubt about the need for us in Barbados to do so. It is only through effective use of all the technologies which are available to us that we would be able to compete. This is so regardless of which sector we are talking about. It is so in agriculture, it is so in manufacturing it is so in the functioning in the Government agencies. Wherever, we must make use of the technology because of the tremendous benefits that will accrue to the system if we do so.

Only on Friday, to give you two examples, Mr. President, I had the pleasure to visit a farm where the owner is in the process of establishing a large amount of green houses. While chatting with him, I was very heartened to hear that by the application of the technology, he is in a position to compete with the imported produce and in a very short time would be demonstrating that to all and sundry. It is only by going in that direction, and our small producers – they may appear to be large in our context but they are small in the international arena – making use of the technology that they would be able to compete and continue to earn their living.

11.30 a.m.

Mr. President, that is so in other areas as well. The Government, over the years, has put in place a number of other initiatives. For example, there is the initiative of the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) at the Customs Department. This has brought about a tremendous improvement in the operations of that department and in the delivery of service they provide to the business community.

Mr. President, that system has recently been upgraded and we will soon be seeing additional benefits coming from that decision, to make use of that technology. There is also the IPSY Project, which deals with the Information System Network within the Government sector, to facilitate the improved performance in promoting and facilitating the private sector investment.

There is also the SmartStream Project, which has been implemented through the Department of the Accountant-General. This has made a tremendous difference to the manner in which the financial and human resources components of the Government sector are being managed.

Mr. President, these initiatives will continue to provide significant benefits to the country, not only from the point of view of increasing productivity but also from the point of view within which the speed through which services can be provided. These initiatives will also be beneficial from the

point of view of reducing cost of the operation of these agencies.

Mr. President, however, I should say that there are many other projects, where, across the system, Government has taken the initiative to deal with Information Technology components. There are the Immigration Department, the Police Department, the Registration Office and Corporate Affairs, among others. Sir, what is missing at the moment, is that they all, in a sense, operate on their own. Therefore, there is not that coordination, which is vital, in terms of making sure that we do not, in anyway, duplicate things across the system.

Mr. President, this E-Government Strategy document before us was developed through a series of consultations held by a committee, which was charged with the responsibility of coming up with a policy. The proposal now is that ultimately there will be a Central Information Management Agency, which will have the overall responsibility for the E-government programme in the Public Sector. It will seek to make sure that there is coordination in the efforts of the respective departments.

Mr. President, in this document, the vision is:

"To empower the citizens of Barbados, by improving the convenience, speed, efficiency, quality and variety of services and information delivered by Government."

The goals of the programmes are, among others:

(a) Better delivery of services to citizens and businesses;

(b) Greater productivity and efficiency in the operations of Government agencies;

(c) Greater transparency and governance through broadening public participation in the Government process".

Mr. President, these are all worthwhile goals, that, when achieved, would lead to a significant improvement in the overall operations of the Public Service.

Mr. President, as I reflect on the changes which took place in the Ministry of Finance, where I worked between 1973 and 2000, I cannot help but acknowledge the tremendous difference that has taken place in that Ministry. This difference, which has taken place through programmes such as the ones mentioned earlier, where, over the years, we have moved from the great difficulty we had in 1973, in manipulating data, in order to make sense of what was happening across the economy, to the point where, through the technology, we were able to do, in a few hours, what it used to take us a few weeks or a few months because of the fact that we were working with a manual system. Sir, there has been a tremendous improvement.

Mr. President, as a result of using the technology, we got a number of benefits. Certainly, there was increased productivity of the employees because they were now given the type of technology to assist them in getting their work done. There was, of course, improved accuracy in the output and many other things that facilitated easier and better decision-making.

We should not, therefore, underestimate the benefit that would accrue to the Public Sector, through the implementation of the E-government programme, with regards to the issue of increasing productivity. Sir, very often, the issue of productivity would not change for the better, simply by asking individuals to work longer, because sometimes it is a question of being overwhelmed by the data and not having the ability to manipulate that data within a shorter time frame, without the use of the technology.

Mr. President, therefore, one significant benefit from the successful implementation of E-Government Strategy programme, will be the increase productivity of the present system, which will lead to a speedier and better quality delivery of services to the public. Sir, people have to rely on the Public Sector for such services because they are not provided by any other entity in the country.

Mr. President, another benefit from this programme is the fact that it has addressed a number of undue delays, which can create hardship and problems. Therefore, any effort that is made to speed up that process and to improve the quality of the delivery of the service, should be welcomed by all of us. There is also the question of improved management in the financial affairs of the county, first through the determination of the revenue to be collected, then the revenue collected, *et cetera*, that could result from using the technology.

Mr. President, the human element is still needed to ensure that those things, which cannot be done by the technology, are done by the human element but the use of the technology by those individuals would make the task easier and would allow them to operate more efficiently. Therefore, coming out of the whole process, one should see some improvement in the collection of revenue and in the general management in the financial affairs of this country.

Mr. President, certainly by making use of the technology, some of the issues featured recently in newspapers, should be detected earlier, while some would be prevented. Sir, there would always be smart persons around, who would find ways of cheating the system but security issues have to be dealt with and the appropriate measures

put in place, to make sure that if those efforts are prevented, that they would be detected at an early stage and brought to an end.
11.40 a.m.

We are sure that someone will always try to breach the security system which is put in place so the system must always be updated.

Mr. President, there is the issue of transparency. Sir, transparency is a now a popular word and everybody speaks about transparency especially those countries which for years did not have that word in their vocabulary. They use it at every opportunity when they want to avoid providing certain support to the developing countries. Sir, everyone is speaking about transparency and, therefore, any administration that is sensitive to the concerns of its citizens would have to implement measures over time that would satisfy the citizens that they have an administration that is more transparent and that they can be up to date on what is taking place in the system.

Mr. President, one of the goals of this programme is greater transparency and greater governance.

Mr. President, the Portal Project has been developed by the Data Processing Department and the National Insurance Department and programmes such as those would give citizens who have the appropriate password to the system the opportunity to check on information being developed by those departments so that people would now know what is taking place and would not have to wait until somebody condescends, as it were, to provide them with information about their own business. They would be able to have access to it quite easily through these various projects which the Government is seeking to put in place.

Mr. President, the objective of the programme includes the desire to establish the structure for the management of the E-Government Programme, to put in place technical infrastructural and architecture to support the various E-Government initiatives, to develop a communication marketing strategy to ensure that customers both external and internal to the public sector understand the vision, the changes that would occur and the tangible benefits to be derived from the implementation of the E-Government strategy. Of course, there are other benefits that would come from the implementation of this system.

Mr. President, as I have said, the intention is to establish a central information management agency that would have oversight for the implementation of the project and that will, over time, make sure that all the projects which are developed at the respective departments are done within a framework that allows them to be coordinated and to interface where necessary, so that you do not get the situation which we now have where departments are doing their own thing, as it were, and they are not talking with other departments even though the matters which they are working on concern other agencies as well. It is very easy when human beings are involved for people to think only of their particular interest and to overlook the wider interest of the society and concentrate on their immediate concerns even though they recognise that pursuing that path would lead to some problem for the overall system.

Mr. President, hopefully, the Central Agency would manage the process in such a way that individual interests would be dealt with but they would all be looked at from a national interest and coordinated as necessary.

Mr. President, this programme is a significant one that would lead to important development in the public sector and in the manner in which the public sector is discharging its responsibility to the entire society. Therefore, it should be given all the support necessary for its successful implementation.

Mr. President, on that basis, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Dr. Lowe.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Mr. President, I am pleased to have the opportunity to engage in this debate today which seeks to have us look at a document called E-Government Strategy, which we have been asked, as Honourable Members of this Chamber, to take note of. As I have taken some time to go through the document, I have taken note of some important pieces of information which I believe would lend to the overall discussion on what we on This Side consider to be an important perspective on how the Barbadian society should perhaps prepare itself to engage the domestic realities of the expectations of the citizens as well as project itself as a competent player in a global environment that more and more calls upon States such as ours to lift their game to a level where there can be more than adequate competitors economically, socially and as it relates to the technology realities of the world.

Mr. President, the vision statement of this thesis would read as such:

"To empower the citizens of Barbados by improving the convenience, speed, efficiency, quality and variety of services and information delivered by Government."

Mr. President, I have no difficulty in understanding why this is important at this time because the Government has struggled with public sector reform over the last several years and there have been some indicators that progress is in sight, while there are also indicators that there continue to be some niggling challenges in the public sector that

perhaps have given rise to the level of agitation members of the society feel, as they seek to engage the public sector in accessing its services. Sir, I believe that it is important for the Government to make sure that the needs of the citizens are met, and wherever the public sector is required to deliver a service, that service is delivered with efficiency and redounds to the complete satisfaction of the consumer, whatever that area of service may be.
11.50 a.m.

Mr. President, as I understand the document, the document seeks to engage our mind, on the fact that if the E-Government Strategy delivers what it promises, then the lives of Barbadian consumers of public service would be eased tremendously, and that is an honourable endeavour. I am sure that the Opposition would be eager to recognise, since we are also consumers of public services, that this system works and works efficiently.

As I refer to Page 7 of the document, it outlines goals. It notes:

> "The broad goals for the Government of Barbados' E-government programmes are:
>
> (a) Better delivery of services to citizens and businesses;
>
> 2. Greater productivity and efficiency in the operations of government agencies; and
>
> (c) Greater transparency and governance through broadening public participation in the governmental process."

Mr. President, again, goals that can be embraced by any right-thinking Barbadian, regardless to whether you are engaged in the political process as a policy maker, or you are a simple consumer of public services. When I think about E-government, I ask myself, if the "E" is for electronic or for efficient government. Sir, from the script it seems that the "E" brings with it a connotation of electronic, and the notion of efficiency is a by-product of this electronic platform that the Government intends to put in place.

Sir, then E-government is all about creating a broad technological platform that would aid in the transacting, transmitting and transforming of information and services or service systems employed by the Government. In other words, E-government is intended to create, as I understand it and certainly as the Minister has hinted, an integrated information communications technology structure, that allows for the efficient administration of public sector services, through the various systems across the public sector.

It, therefore, also looks at strengthening the office's functions and point-of-service functions, the difference between the two being, that there are critical back office functions, that give life to what happens on the service line. Therefore, very often what is produced at the service line is a reflection of the efficiency of critical back office functions, that provide checks and balances in the system of service delivery.

Mr. President, the truth is, it is incumbent upon all systems of service delivery, that all of the players involved understand that there must be an integrated way of delivering services at the manual level, then when you employ technological structures, the same integrated system must be borne in mind, so as to reduce what they call gaps in services, and what others call promoting seamless services in the corridor of service delivery.

Sir, E-government is also about seeking to close gaps between consumer expectations and satisfaction. If the Government proposes, through its programme, to perpetuate a service climate of efficiency and productivity, then this should automatically lead to a closing of the gap of what consumers expect and how consumers are satisfied by those achieved

Sir, the E-Government Strategy can be summed up, from what I read and understood, as creating an integrated operational macro-system network, that would foster a public sector network, where there should be an integration of key data and service functions.

Mr. President, you are aware that there is currently a lot of talk about road safety, traffic management and other types of important infrastructural services, that are critical to demonstrating the advancement of the society. There is also a lot of talk about whether we can begin to mastermind a process, where essential services can be housed, in a one-stop environment where you can have a series of service functions fulfilled because there is an integrated network system, where there is information sharing, where the critical information drivers that would allow for the delivery of those services can be tapped, even though the centre for those information pieces are not in the same location as where the service is being delivered.

Mr. President, those of us who would have had the opportunity to not just visit abroad, but to live abroad and integrate ourselves into an international environment, would understand the importance of being able to go to specific locations where a series of public services can be had, where the driver of those services, in terms of information, may be housed in different locations. I suppose that E-government is all about enabling the country, the public sector, to put in place these critical technological building blocks, that allow us to realise such an endeavour and outcome.

Mr. President, this macro-system network is the integrated structure. The Honourable Minister paid a courtesy call to the whole idea of integrating systems, but E-government is driven by a serious and focused contemplation of how to integrate systems of technologies to create a platform that can be managed and driven by a minimal amount of service space, in terms of locations, where information is housed.

Sir, I hear people talk about the relationship between police services, Licensing Authority services and that family of services that are critical, in terms of helping those persons who manage these services, to be able to coordinate and collate information so that they can execute their responsibilities and enforce the law without having to have the kind of cumbersome hurdles that so many of our public service officers have to go through from time to time, so that E-government is about the integration of key data service functions.

Sir, the Honourable Minister indicated that several of the systems are now stand-alone systems, and stand-alone systems mean that they function autonomously of each other, and it is seeking to create those technological linkages that would bring them under a single operational platform.

Mr. President, we also talk about interlinking, the key domains of information across government, and quasi-government institutions.

Sir, I suppose, that E-government, whether it is efficient or electronic government, because electronic government does not mean efficient government, has to be understood in the process of seeking to analyse the depth of what is meant by this particular document. Sir, one would have to agree that if we are going to be able to maximise the virtue of this approach, we have to make the distinction between efficiency of services and electronic services.
12.00 noon.

There are several systems that are electronic but they are not efficient, because technological systems themselves do not deliver points of service services. They may organise the services. They may categorise the services, but there is a human development or human capital factor that has to be able to be engaged, in order to deliver those services.

Therefore, it does not matter how sophisticated your platform is, those who are using the technology, and those who are guiding the technological process must be as equally efficient, Mr. President, in the delivery of their services or the delivery of their part of the service, to ensure that end to end, as we said from the back office to the point of service delivery, that they can be able to perform those functions.

Therefore, in terms of E-Government and integration, we are talking about the synergy of key technological functions, organisational structures, role classifications and so on, to create a more seamless system in the public sector. I marvel, Mr. President, that when we seek to engage in serious dialogue in this Chamber, they are those who become so agitated.

Sir, the fact is that if we are going to be a part of the policy making process, it is the right of the Opposition to express its views in this Chamber on what it is that needs to be done. Therefore, a discussion in and of itself, is where different parties with different views are allowed to engage in a process to bring their interpretation and understanding to the process. The Opposition will be dogged in its approach in this regard.

We believe it is important that we have the broadest possible understanding of what needs to be done, how things should be done, and what needs to be put in place to ensure that the systems of Government work at a level of efficiency that advances the well-being of all Barbadians, whether they are able, disabled or otherwise, Sir, so that they can have full access to what is necessary to ensure that they enjoy the highest quality of life in this wonderful country of ours.

Mr. President, we talk about creating an integrated operational network that would foster a public sector environment where there is, as I said before, integration of key data functions and services, the interlinking of key domains including information across Government and quasi-Government institutions, the synergy of key technological functions, and organisational structures.

Mr. President, I am sure you would agree that it does not matter how sophisticated your technology is, if your organisational structure is not as equally sophisticated, in terms of its operational nature, your technology will lay a waste, until you are able to bring marriage between the technology itself and the transporting of that technology through a sophisticated organisational structure.

Mr. President, I am sure you would further agree that organisational structures are not simply mappings of how organisational systems are connected, but that organisational structure deals with part of the institutional culture, not only in terms of how the institution is structured, but how the players of the institution seek to develop and to deliver the services intended by the vision and mission of that institution.

Enhancing the capacity of Government, Mr. President, has to also be considered, when we talk about E-Government, such as enhancing the capacity of Government to prepare, to produce, to promote and to provide key information and services to citizens.

The citizens of this country depend upon the public sector for essential service delivery. Mr. President, the public sector often finds itself in the lead, in terms of being on the cutting edge of how business is done, and the public sector remains the critical sector, in terms of the Government being able to fulfill its social mandate to its citizens.

Therefore, it is important that when Government talks about efficiency, and seeks to promote productivity, that at the heart of its consideration is the preparation, production, promotion and provision of key information blocks and services to citizens.

E-Government also talks about enhancing national competitiveness through the following:

- Enhancing economic competitiveness
- Responding to the new regional and extra-regional economic drivers.

Barbados has been pursuing a number of bilateral relationships and admirable and suitable endeavour with key economies across the globe. Sir, we have to be able to move Barbados along with those persons, who would eventually become partners or who are now partners in the process of the development of economic well-being across the globe.

Therefore, we would find that many of those countries are already E-Government systems, and have already put in place, key technological platforms to allow them to dispense services, to passage information and to link themselves to partners across the globe, in the execution of dialogues, discussions and decisions, relative to economic development.

Therefore, E-Government is a key driver, in helping a country to develop national competitiveness. This competitiveness is not only in the region of bonding regional and extra-regional partners through technology, but also in the area of moving from a consumer to a creator of technology.

Sir, we cannot simply consume technology. Part of the effort of E-Government must also be to put the infrastructure in place to assist citizens to be able to develop the academic agility, or the intellectual agility, to be able to take on tasks that would assist in creating technology themselves.

Mr. President, I have always said that one of the shortfalls of EduTech maybe that there is not a strong enough emphasis on helping our young minds, not only to understand the rudiments of accessing and utilising technology, but also to become stimulated by the fostering of an environment that allows them to pursue the development and creation of technologies that can be sold across the world.

Sir, I do not think that is an unusual postulation in the sense that we want to ensure that at the end of the day, the country is as well-rounded in its capacity to earn, also, where there is a heavy area of consumption, as would be in the area of technology, that there is a heavy emphasis on creating the technology. This would allow us to satisfy some of our consumption needs, as well as to have the capacity to sell some of our products, across the region and the globe.

I believe that this is a wonderful opportunity for the Government to push to programme a step further, to ensure that this element of the technology development of Barbados is also contemplated, and contemplated seriously in that regard, Mr. President, by enhancing the capacity of Government to prepare, produce, promote and provide key information and services to the citizens. E-Government is also about enhancing national productivity, as we said, and respond to new regional and extra-regional economic drivers, and moving from a consumer to a creator of technology.

Sir, this national competitiveness also involves building new cross-functional and inter-governmental systems through improving inforcom processes.
12.10 p.m.

Mr. President, we cannot fool ourselves. We will not be disheartened by any persistent interruptions in this presentation.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I am not aware that you had been interrupted.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Mr. President, I am sorry that you are not aware, but I feel it.

Mr. PRESIDENT: You feel it!

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Yes, Mr. President, and I am sure that my personal experience cannot be discounted in this regard.

Mr. President, I believe that it is important in terms of building new cross-functional and inter-governmental systems that we work together as a country in trying to find out how can systems work better to deliver information at different information shops.

Mr. President, this is not far-fetched since we know that from time to time, reports that are supposed to be submitted on time are not submitted on time, and that in this very system of Government today as it is, there are Government agencies that are two, three or four years behind on the delivery of critical reports that persistently inform the public as to how the Government is executing its business.

Therefore, all of the hue and cry about whether or not there is substance in any attempt to insist that the Government brings these things together and drive the process of efficiency, so that even within this Honourable Chamber our reports are delivered on time, can be perused and can be used to actually quiz the Government on whether or not it is fulfilling the mandate of the people.

Mr. President, there are some chasms in the system where reports get lost and where people like the Auditor-General, requesting information year after year, cannot seem to get the information. Mr. President, it is my hope that E-government will be able to remedy these maladies in the system and allow us to have a more efficient and productive system in terms of providing these functions to deliver this information; promoting E-government solutions to many of the telecom and inforcom problems that currently plague the public sector.

Mr. President, what are the established goals of this E-government Strategy? The document outlines a better delivery of services to citizens and businesses. What really contributes to poor service delivery in this country? That is a question that should be asked. Sir, that poor delivery of services cut at the heart of the lack of efficiency in the Government system. What hinders the delivery of services, Mr. President, is a lack of the knowledge of the products the public sector is intending to deliver.

Mr. President, let me pause to say that the public servants of this country are asked to deliver tremendous services and that for the most part they continue to be dedicated to their endeavours as public servants. What is also true is that public servants in this country today are bombarded by a series of maladies in the public sector that they are constantly yearning to have redressed by the Government of this country. All things cannot be fixed immediately, but after 12 years in office there are some things that could be done and should have been done. Therefore, we urge, as the Opposition, that the Government moves with greater haste to ensure that they are done.

Mr. President, it is obvious that when a man or a woman goes to a counter to get a service from the public sector and that service is not being delivered expeditiously that man or woman points to the public servant as the culprit as to why their service needs are not being met. Mr. President, we all have to agree that very often the public servant is only the face of many of the malfunctions within departments that hinder the flow of service delivery. Therefore, when we talk about E-government and about efficiency, we also have to look at the human factor which is perhaps the most critical factor in bonding the technology with the physical service and delivering it to the consumer.

Mr. President, I do not believe that anyone would disagree with that view because people must know the products they are selling. Poor attitude of some service workers is a problem within the public sector. However, when you look at poor attitudes, you ask why that is so.

There are those who believe when you come to a job that you could leave your problems at home and come and engage your profession. I am one of those persons who believe that problems in the workplace are very often reflective of an amalgamation of personal and professional challenges. A vigilant institution seeks to ensure that those persons who are asked to deliver the character of the institution are therefore armed with every possible opportunity to ensure that those impediments that would create difficulties with those who receive the service are removed. Mr. President, that is why some institutions would employ employee assistance services and so on to aid consumers.

Mr. President, I know that from time to time different organisations engage in the transformation or transitioning from one technology platform to another. Some years ago, I was part of an institution that introduced a very complicated banking system that was intended not only to duplicate but to remove an existing system and put a new system in place. The network of entities involved that were home-based or domestic and that were regional had to be affected by this platform change. Over a two to four-month period, professionals came together with a very well-articulated plan, clear objectives and a very focused understanding as to what needed to be done, how it was needed to be done, what was the process in terms of time to dispatch the new system and how to make sure it was tested after it was implemented.

Today that institution, though not in the same form as it was then, continues to enjoy one of the most efficient systems of banking in this country than you would find anywhere else. It is an example of how E-government and governance can work in an organisation.

The challenge that the Government is taking on now is no different from then. The Government has way more resources, has access to much more expertise, and therefore it would be expected that the Government works to eliminate those things that could become impediments in the implementation of such a system so that there is better delivery of services to the citizens and businesses. We need to arrest this poor service culture in the country and turn it around.

Mr. President, we need to arrest poor work attitudes. We need to arrest poor service quality standards because what drives service quality really is not the faces of people on the line, but the philosophy of the institution, how the institution feels about customers and how it feels about its

workers. Mr. President, what becomes the core value of that institution is what drives the culture of services in that institution.

Therefore, it might be necessary for the Government to do an inventory on its systems. It needs to revisit how it spells out its service quality standards. It needs to come up with a declared philosophy of how it feels about customers and how it feels about workers and the relationship between customer satisfaction and job satisfaction because persons who are not satisfied in their jobs, chances are, they are not going to be able to deliver the quality service that is required.

Mr. President, there is a lot of apathy in the public service. Mr. President, we cannot deny the fact that if we look at, I believe it is the last *Labour Department Report of 2002*, we would see in there a plethora of concerns that resulted in disputes in the public service.

Mr. President, may I also suggest with haste that there are many people out there who have been in the public service for years and who enjoy their work for the State and who enjoy delivering services to the citizens of this country but they are impeded by this great strand of difficulties that they go through from time to time. Mr. President, I will enumerate some of those difficulties as I go along.
12.20 p.m.

Mr. President, there is poor service, service repair and replacement standards. Do you know that in both the Public Sector and the Private Sector, if one were to purchase a commodity from an entity in this country, even with the emergence of consumer protection, there is still a struggle to get things repaired expeditiously or replaced? Sir, sometimes these are brand new items.

Mr. President, I know of a specific incident where a small businessman invested money in a machine and in less than two weeks, the machinery broke down. That businessman was starting up a business and when he took that machinery back to the vendor, they told him that it needed to be repaired. When he asked for a replacement, he was told that they do not give replacements, even though there were similar machineries there.

Sir, when that person asked about the time span for him to get the machinery returned to him, after repairs, they could not give him that time span. That man had to go and borrow money, to buy another machine. Therefore, that critical seeding investment that would have been important to the delivery of the service and the seeding of the business, was interrupted because there is no vigorous protection of consumer rights in this country, just as there is no vigorous protection of the rights of public servants. Therefore, in terms of delivering service to citizens, we need also to look at the ineffective record-keeping systems in the Public Service and how inadequate investments by employers, in the area of service quality training, is hampering the overall delivery of services and the satisfaction of public servants.

Mr. President, we are not saying that Government's intentions are not honourable nor suitable for the governance of the country at this time. All we are saying is that there are other areas that Government and those persons, who are drafting these policies, would welcome some discourse on.

Sir, that is what is alarming about some of the journeys we take on, relative to public policy because it is a draft document and the nature of a draft document is that it should be antagonised by all of the stakeholders, to ensure that the final document is one which reflects the interest and the needs of the stakeholders. There should never be the kind of... well we should always be willing to hear from others in a system of open Government. We are all players and stakeholders, who would be affected by the delivery of the services. These things affect us.

Mr. President, the second goal as set out in the E-Government Strategy, is that of greater productivity and efficiency in the operation of Government agencies. Sir, this Government has broken the spirit of the public service in this country. There is now a massive exodus of public servants, almost in every sphere of the public service, who are galloping away from their professions. These civil servants are going to other countries, to provide the same service, where the risks perhaps are higher. Sir, in their view, the Government has not been heeding their calls on a number of critical areas.

Mr. President, we understand that all public servants may not be satisfied with all things, but there are a number of basic things with which they would all agree. Sir, I went into a public building, a few days ago, with one of my colleagues. Sir, when I ascended the stairs, I was able to stand at a side – and this is where the rubber really hits the road in discussions of Government policies. Sir, what struck me was the physical appearance of that location. What further struck me was that there were pregnant women sitting, obviously for some time, and the corridor or reception area of that environment was unbearably hot. I witnessed, as some of the public servants came out and apologised for their circumstances and offered to assist them in any way that could have expedited the delivery of the service, while acknowledging that the conditions of service were not the best.

Mr. President, the fact of the matter is that we would never improve, if we allow people to continue believing that the circumstances are tolerable or bearable. It is the job, not only of the Opposition but of every individual, every policymaker, whether on Government's Side or the Other Side, to ensure that whenever observations, such as these

are made, that those persons who have the power to make changes and to improve circumstances, would improve them.

Mr. President, last night I went to a service station in the Oistins area, on my way home...

*Asides.*

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, please. I am hearing an unusual amount of crosstalk today. Please allow the Honourable Senator to be heard.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: I thank you. Mr. President, as I was being served, a police officer drove up on the opposite side of the tank and said to me: "Senator, I understand you guys are debating this E-Government Bill today."

*Asides.*

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Mr. President, the police officer said to me: "Senator Lowe, what I want you to mention for me, is to remind the Government that too many of our good officers are leaving, because their view is that they are being treated terribly by this Government."

Mr. President, that police officer went on to say that places such as Bermuda, the Cayman Islands, New York and other major cities, are now becoming more attractive to persons in the Public Service, not simply because of compensation rates but because those persons who give yeoman service in the Public Sector, feel that Government has not been listening to their calls.

Mr. President, I want to make the point that there are those who can counter that but they cannot discount the policemen experience. If people are committed to fixing the problems in the Public Sector, they have not only to look at the technology but at the human capital involved in the delivery of services.

Mr. President, therefore, I believe that the backs of the public servants have been broken by this Government and that public servants, in some cases, are being treated like chattel slaves, who continue to demonstrate their unhappiness with the circumstances.

SENATOR G. P. B. NICHOLLS: Mr. President, on a point of order. I cannot allow the Honourable Senator to accuse the Government of treating people in Barbados like that of chattel slaves. Chattel slaves are persons who were treated as though they were not human beings. Sir, that was an unfair and unfortunate remark, which I believe should be struck from the record, as it has no place in a Parliamentary debate. Sir, as excited as the Honourable Senator might have been, that kind of language has no place in a Parliamentary debate.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Nicholls, the language, by itself, is not unparliamentary. I cannot control opinions of Honourable Senators. There may be opinions with which Honourable Senators would disagree but it is the Honourable Senator's opinion. Please proceed, Senator Lowe.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: I thank you. Mr. President, employee morale is at an all-time low in the Public Sector. There is an exodus of valuable public servants from the Public Service and as I have already said, police officers, nurses, teachers and other persons in the central services in this country, are walking out, either by early retirement, voluntary retirement or whatever other methods necessary, in order to ease their burdens.
12.30 p.m.

They are constantly struggling with a call for better work conditions. They are constantly complaining about buildings of the State and the nature of the health of those buildings even though the Government had 12 years to fix them. Sir, they are complaining about the lack of equipment, poor leadership, ineffective supervision.

Mr. President, I believe that public servants are complaining about inefficient Government and the management of the public sector. They are complaining about a lack of fairness and employment practices where there are an unusual high number of supersession cases, where there is nepotism in the public service...

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Lowe, perhaps you would tell us what all this has to do with the Resolution before us.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Sir, Goal (b) – "Greater productivity and efficiency in the operation of Government agencies". Mr. President, it is my view that in order to get at the heart of productivity and efficiency that you have to address issues which impact upon the capacity of workers to be productive and efficient. Therefore, I will continue, Mr. President, if you permit.

Mr. President, there is a level of hardship that is not only economic hardship but there is a level of hardship that cuts at the root of how people do their business. As the Government contemplates this E-Government Strategy and looks at the area of efficiency and productivity, these are areas that must be addressed.

Mr. President, there are also areas regarding a lack of proactive succession planning. If you have good succession planning strategies in the public service, you

perhaps would be able to get away from a lot of the supersession which is occurring. Sir, succession planning is a system where you route individuals through development, not only employment development but professional development so that when there is a need to replace someone because of retirement, illness or whatever the case may be, that there are persons which the system has actually created who can easily take over.

Mr. President, I heard public servants say that persons come into their departments to supervise them and they have to train the same persons when they are sitting there and possess all the competencies which are required to deliver the same service within the system. Sir, I think it is an issue in terms of efficiency and productivity.

Mr. President, I believe that better wages are important. I know that as the wage negotiation talks begin that the unions of Barbados would fight vigorously to ensure that the best possible deal would be given to the civil servants of this country.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, please.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Mr. President, all of these virulent elements that are now crippling the productivity and efficiency of the public service have to be addressed and rooted out. E-Government itself cannot fix these problems. You have to take the view that part of the problem is a lack of understanding or the inability of the Government to look at the role of human capital development in its overall strategy.

Mr. President, human capital development is perhaps our greatest and most fluid commodity in this country. It is the commodity that drives the development of a society particularly if the society is defined not simply as an economic society but as one which has its balances between the social realities and the economic realities. Sir, then I believe that understanding and developing human capital is of critical importance to the implementation of any strategy to encourage productivity and efficiency.

Mr. President, in this human development strategy that should be part of the consideration of E-Government you have to focus on helping people to develop their true capacities. I know that this Government and the Honourable Prime Minister speaks constantly of capacity building, speaks constantly of how to get people to maximise their natural talents. I want to take it a step further and put some systems in place that focus on distinct measures which would allow the Government to know when it is hitting its targets in terms of the development of human capital.

Sir, if you are talking about development, you are talking about the development of self which deals with one's self-confidence, one's self-worth and one's self-esteem. It also deals with the balance between work and life and the capacity to come to the workplace and engage it at a level of efficiency where productivity is never compromised even though there may be a number of issues which are outside of the domain of the job.

Mr. President, it focuses on the development of the self-economy of workers. Sir, by self-economy of workers, I refer to the workers' capacity to develop their competencies, which deal with their skills and development of knowledge on one hand and on the other hand, the self-economy would be the area that deals with attributes, those inbred qualities that lend themselves to the flow of good service delivery.

Mr. President, I have said in this Chamber before and I will say it again that one of the problems with fixing service in this country is that we focus on systems. Sir, we create a lot of pretty phrases and deal with a lot of issues which are only the by-product of the root of the problem. I would say again, as I have said it before, that in order to change attitudes, we must investigate the beliefs of people. If we are living in a culture where volunteerism is dying and where people are not involved in the level of community service which tends to promote that kind of disposition towards service delivery, then we need to investigate what is happening in the nurturing and development of our young people that is not including that element of service, but not servitude. Sir, there is a position in the society where people repel the notion of servitude so much that they are beginning to misplace service with the notion of servitude.

Mr. President, I believe that it is important that entities like the 4-H Club, which was instrumental in helping young people to become efficient in how to do business in agriculture and other endeavours, need to be revisited, revitalised and reinstituted. Sir, even in other areas where students spend a significant amount of hours outside of the formal education process in looking at those informal areas of learning, which involve engaging other people, learning the social dynamics of inter-gender relationship and so on, Sir, those things in my view are important. The focus on the development of self in terms of human capital development and the focus on the development of the self-economy which looks at competencies and attributes.

Mr. President, it all deals with encouraging creative and innovative learning that produces a kind of creativity and a creative spirit. Sir, I must give credit where it is due. I have heard the conversation about reviving the creative spirit of Barbadians and it is a worthy endeavour, one that needs to be pursued by all persons in this country. We need to invest more time in counselling, guidance, mentoring, coaching and helping those persons who would become part of the public sector tomorrow. We have to help them develop those

qualities today that they can work on them and, therefore, focusing on international learning links.

Mr. President, I have had the opportunity to study abroad and, Sir, one of the best things that happened in my life, was my experience living in Cincinnati, Ohio, a town where a lot of persons like myself did not exist but where you had to engage the culture in order to get your experience beyond book learning. People sometimes frown on it but, Sir, it is a valuable experience now in helping me to understand the international realities which drive people's expectations about us in Barbados because everybody does not see us the way we see ourselves. Mr. President, it is good to know how other people view our capabilities as people and be able to develop ourselves so that we could meet those expectations as well.

Mr. President, strengthening the organisational culture also drives our public service efficiency. There are people-based factors that talk about leadership and at the heart of the public service leadership are the Ministers of Government. Mr. President, they cannot be excused when their ministries are not delivering the quality of service and pin the blame on Permanent Secretaries and other people within the ministries. 12.40 p.m.

I believe that it is important that Ministers of Government must take responsibility for their ministries, ensuring that the mandate of the Government is delivered through those persons that deliver the services in the ministries. The leadership starts there and filters down through Permanent Secretaries. There is an issue of supervision and team spirit within the public sector. Those are people-based factors, enhancing productivity and efficiency, as a bold outcome of this E-government system that has to focus on process-based issues, dealing with organisational systems, performance management, quality assurance practices and suitable technological platforms within an integrated network of services.

Finally, let me talk a bit about greater transparency.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator, could you do that in two minutes?

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Yes. I would try my best.

Sir, greater transparency and the governance practices: At the end of the day, this Government will be judged on whether it delivered its commitment to transparency in this country. At the end of the day this Government will be judged, as to whether it has been able to deliver the kind of governance standards that are critical in terms of the delivery of Government in this country. Governance and transparency, are twin pillars in the structure of functional Government. These two variables are driven by strict accountability.

Mr. President, the truth of the matter is, when you look at the Auditor-General's reports from 2003 to 2006, these reports are replete with incidences, where accountability has been bastardised by persons who were required to manage the affairs of the State. Sir, it does not matter how people feel about that. The reality is, any Government that boasts of being able to chart a new course for a country, embedded in that course must be a practice of strict accountability.

Mr. President, we need to stop leakage in this Government and in this country. We need to stop elements of leakage. We need to answer the people when they ask questions, because at the heart of accountability is good stewardship, honesty, integrity and transparency.

Sir, if at the end of the day, when the people ask questions and the Government answers the questions, there would be no hint of a lack of transparency. I do not want anybody to say of this Government that it is corrupt. The only way that can be avoided is if the Government practises the tenets of transparency, making sure that when the people have questions about the actions of Government, that somebody in the Government gets up without fear of contradiction, and answers the people on the questions. When the Government divorces itself from the governed, you have problems with confidence, and that confidence can lead to unrest and the perception of a lack of justice in the society.

Mr. President, I thank you.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Marville.

SENATOR R. O. MARVILLE: Mr. President, I must say that E-government like mother's milk is not something that you can rail about. However, the one thing that you must remember about a mother's milk is that it has to be properly ingested by the infant to be effective.

I quote from Page 13 of the document:

"The compiled data shows that ICT is playing a more significant role in Barbadian society but the digital divide still exists."

According to the figures that I saw, approximately 5 per cents were computer literate. Senator Eastmond has always railed at this figure and thinks it is higher. It probably is by now, but I doubt it would have arrived at a figure of 15 per cent. Mr. President, while this might not seem to be important, I am saying that E-government has to take place in the context of a generalised computer literacy,

otherwise, you would find a large segment of the population being dependent on those who understand the computer.

Unfortunately, in our society if we assume that 15 per cent are computer literate, among the remaining 85 per cent are CEOs, which includes in my book Permanent Secretaries, *et cetera*, it gets us to a position of looking at the question of Public Service Reform. I talked to the people who represented the engine of Public Service Reform and they said that quite frankly, the greatest obstacle were people who had worked with a different system all their life, were not prepared to understand the system, but ran the system. In other words, for E-government to work properly, it has to be bought entirely by the leadership of the public service. This means that the leadership of the public service must be totally computer literate and able to handle the system.

Mr. President, the document talks about the sharing of information. I would like to know whether we are talking about a government-based LAN or clusters of LANs, that make it possible for ministries to be able to interact without the passing of files, over several miles, several times, before decisions can be made. This would in one way increase the efficiency in decision making, producing the output that is necessary.

Sir, the Ministry said that it would increase productivity. Of course, E-government would theoretically increase productivity, but the increase in productivity will depend on the use of the system. E-government is not a solution in itself. It is a technology that has to be used properly to get the production that we are talking about.

Unfortunately, E-government does not in itself create either greater open transparency or availability of information. Like everything else that has to do with the computer, what you put in is what you can get out. Unless that transparency is part of the operational material that is put into the system, it will not come out.

Sir, we really have to understand that E-government in a country like Singapore would work easily. At the time when I gave you the figures, Singapore had a computer literacy of 49 per cent, which is where it needs to be in practically any society. E-government will obviously work because you will have people who understand the system, who would keep it in place and who could question the operation of the system, *et cetera*, *et cetera*. We are, unfortunately not yet in that position.

The Honourable Minister referred to the training of young people. I think that we could practically forget the training of young people. Sir, young people pick up computers and use them and use them as if they were born with them. It is the older segment of the population that we need to deal with. We need to set out in every community centre, classes that teach ordinary citizens computer literacy effectively. We have 15 per cent literacy. That is incredible.

The point I am making is...

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator, do not be distracted.

SENATOR R. O. MARVILLE: This is an effort which we have to do at a pace that we have not been doing before. It has to be much more intense and quicker, because only then will we profit from systems like this. We have always to build foundations for the grand ideas that we propose. I have nothing against the grand ideas but I want to see the foundations.

I thank you, Mr. President.

SUSPENSION

SENATOR HON. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 1.55 p.m.

*The question that the Sitting be now suspended until 1.55 p.m. was put to the Senate and agreed to and Mr. PRESIDENT suspended the Sitting accordingly.*
12.50 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. PRESIDENT: This Sitting is resumed. Senator Dame Patricia Symmonds.

HER HONOUR SENATOR Dame PATRICIA SYMMONDS: Thank you, Mr. President.

I wish to support the passing of a Resolution to take note of the Draft E-Government Strategy. Sir, before I begin with the subject in mind, I just want to draw attention to something that Senator Marville said, which I find interesting. But I wish to remind him, looking at the document, on page 53 that there are currently ten Community Resource Centres in operation across Barbados, with Internet access being available to persons from 9.30 a.m. to 9.30 p.m. In addition, approximately 1 121 persons have been trained, with those graduating ranging in age from 12 to 83.

Sir, data on the Computer Technology Programme revealed that of the 1 121 persons, and I find this interesting, that 833 were females and 25.7 per cent males.

Similarly, 90 were retirees, the oldest one being 83. Of those 81 per cent were females and 19 per cent males. I think again it reveals a disturbing trend where gender is concerned and where people are complaining that women and girls are outstripping men and boys in certain fields.

Mr. President, I do not want to say too much about the hyperbolical and histrionic statements that were made, especially about mass exodus. Suffice it to say though that

as we know Barbadians have always immigrated for various reasons. In certain professions, particularly nursing and teaching, there is a worldwide trend where some people immigrate for higher salaries or what they perceive would be higher salaries and better conditions, just as some people are coming to Barbados for what they perceive is a better environment and better conditions.

Mr. President, this Draft E-Government Strategy document that is before the Honourable Senate and the subject of this Resolution, described clearly and concisely a wide range of initiatives that either have already taken place or are in the process of implementation to modernise the public administration of our country.

As our Leader, Senator Griffith, has stated, but I think it bears repetition, all Barbadians are at the centre of this strategy. It is a people-centred strategy aimed at improving access and the quality of Government services to all. The thrust of this document aims at improving the discipline and coordination of these efforts while at the same time developing the core competencies and critical skills to manage and enhance existing systems and to develop an integrated approach to the implementation of new systems in the future.

Mr. President, while the document stresses the technical aspects of the use of computer networks as modern-day tools to bring a greater level of efficiency, transparency – I am sorry if I am overworking that word but I have to use it here – and accountability to the work of Government, it also stresses the critical aspect of the need for business process and structural change that is an essential element of successful ICT implementation.

In this regard, Mr. President, it is useful to note that recent studies have indicated that without adequately addressing the need for business process change to efficiently use information in a digital format and determining the necessity for organisational restructuring as a result of the new information flows that there will be a decline in productivity.

This means, Mr. President, that it is essential that non-technical administrators at the more senior levels – and I think Senator Marville rightly referred to that – need to be intimately involved in the planning and implementation phases to ensure that the best results are achieved with the investments in ICT.

Mr. President, I know, as I am sure that some of you know here about me, that I am not particularly well-steeped in the arcane aspects of computer science and the new technologies of the communication world, but I am well-aware that good commonsense and sound real world business processes are an essential ingredient for success in any undertaking, whether the tools are a quill pen and parchment or the latest computerised systems.

Mr. President, if the Dot.com bubble – perhaps some listeners may not know what that means, but I am referring to the Wall Street crash – at the beginning of this century taught us anything, it was that technology should not blind us to the need for the development of sound business processes and the need to keep in mind the needs of people that both use the systems and the final product of information.

This document indicates an awareness of the issues of a people-centred approach to the implementation of computerised information systems and the need for citizens to have direct access to critical information when they need it, rather than when someone wants to give it to them. It indicates that the Government is in a – I thought a little while before I decided whether I would say continual or continuous, but I think I will say here – continuous process of modernisation and improvement with the objective of better serving the general public and reducing the burden of public administration.

Mr. President, this is just another example of the "Visionary Dream" – with apologies to Wordsworth – to the "glory and the dream" which the Barbados Labour Party, from its inception, has demonstrated. As Medawar, famous Nobel Prize winner has said – and let me hasten before I quote it to say that, I am not at all referring to any Honourable Senator here or any intelligent Barbadian – that "To deride the hopes of progress is the ultimate fatuity, the last word in poverty of the spirit and meanness of mind".

Mr. President, I know that because of the good sense of Barbadians, not to mention the intelligence of all Honourable Senators here, that there will be no derision. Far from that, there has been and will be by others who speak the acknowledgement that this Strategy will be successful. It is necessary at this point of our history. As I have said before, it is in keeping with the "Visionary Dream", "the glory and the dream" of the Barbados Labour Party Government.

Thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR A. A. BYNOE: Mr. President, I rise in support of the Resolution before this Honourable Senate. Mr. President, in listening to Senator Lowe who spent a good deal of time focusing on the human factor, I think that is where I would start, and I do so by saying that we are no better as employers, be it the Government or the private sector, than the people whom we employ.
2.10 p.m.

Therefore, while I would agree with paying some attention to the human capital, I would not agree with many of the sentiments expressed by the Honourable Senator.

Mr. President, I would like, however, to draw to this Honourable Senate's attention, a concept that has been and

perhaps is being promoted in the United Kingdom, by the leader of the Conservative Opposition, Mr. David Cameron, when he promoted the concept, which I should get to shortly, he was ridiculed by the British Press. I believe that is because the media did not take time to understand what he was saying.

Mr. President, briefly he said that whereas countries have concentrated on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), as an indicator as to how well that country is doing or has done, perhaps it was time that we use another indicator, the gross domestic well-being. I am sure if we give thought to that, it could restructure significantly the way businesses operate, the way Parliaments operate and the way in which countries operate. Thus, I would say that he has a convert in me, in relation to paying attention to our gross domestic well-being.

Mr. President, this Resolution before us is summed up in this document, which, though it is a draft, one could see that, indeed, the Government is on the right track, not by ramming such concepts down our throats but by giving us and, indeed, the country, the opportunity to have an input. Therefore, I see nothing wrong with the document being labelled the Draft E-Government Strategy.

Mr. President, this document has been so well put together, that I believe it should be sent to our radio stations, to give them gist for their call-in programmes, so that when people begin, at that level, to debate Government's strategy with respect to E-business, they would have the facts. They then would be able to speak from a position of information, which, very often, is lacking on the various call-in programmes.

Mr. President, my suggestion is that the media should put their hands on this document, as soon as possible, so that the public could have a wider input into this Draft Strategy, in terms of E-commerce by this Government.

Mr. President, for the benefit of the Honourable Senator, Dr. Lowe, I would like to quote the vision of this Draft E-Government Strategy because I believe that the Honourable Member has missed the vision.

Mr. President, the vision is:

> "To empower the citizens of Barbados by improving the convenience, speed, efficiency..."

Mr. President, Senator Lowe paid attention to efficiency, so it is in the document.

The vision continues:

> "... quality, and variety of services and information delivered by Government".

The Draft Strategy then speaks to the services.

Sir, in this document, the various departments of Government have been itemised. Some of these departments are the Immigration Department, the Department of Health, the Police Department, the Department of Commerce, and EduTech. All the various departments of Government that will deliver services to this community, have been earmarked as departments that need to be improved, based on the delivery of E-commerce or E-strategy within this country.

Mr. President, the document goes further and contemplates that the strategy would be to create one agency, and I read:

> "It is, therefore, proposed that an agency called the Central Information Management Agency, be created to manage e-government programme, with the Data Processing Department being incorporated into the new entity."

Mr. President, therefore, the document is comprehensive or shows a comprehensive look at Government's strategy, as a policy for delivering an improved service in this country.

Mr. President, I would like now to sound a caution, that is, that the persons entrusted with the sourcing, that is, the purchase of both the hardware and software, would take a very careful look because without a doubt, there will be many salesmen and saleswomen lining up at Government's door, to sell them from A to Z, in relation to this technology. Therefore, I am sounding a caution that whenever such decisions are made, the greatest thought should be given to choosing the partner, who would deliver.

Mr. President, I can speak from experience. I speak as one in the private sector. I know that you can go and spend 'good' money in believing that you have a good system, to find out that, indeed, there are cracks in the works. It is from this experience that I am warning Government to be wary and to make good decisions. I am also warning those persons in the Public Service, who are entrusted to do such, to go through the process, which would enable them, at the end of the day, to be able to present Government with the best alternatives.

2.20 p.m.

Mr. President, one of the other areas of concerns to me is that at times, for various spurious reasons, we do not take advantage of the best technical advice because that advice is not local advice. This is to say that the persons who possess that advice are not Bajans. Sir, often enough contracts are signed, people are given jobs and opportunities simply because they are Bajans when at that point in time what is required is not that you are Bajan, but the best technical and practical advice for that situation irrespective of that advice being from a national or a non-national.

Mr. President, we have to watch how parochial we become because that can retard the progress of this country. We have to recognise that we are no longer competing among ourselves but that we are competing at a global level. Therefore, the expertise that we pay for must be the best expertise available, irrespective of whether the person is from Germany, England or Barbados.

Mr. President, having said that, it is incumbent upon us, therefore, to make sure that we give opportunities to our bright minds to be able to assimilate at the highest level.

Mr. President, with these few remarks, I lend my support to this Resolution before this Honourable Senate.

Sir, I thank you.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Eastmond.

SENATOR THE HON. Miss L. V. EASTMOND: Mr. President, I rise to speak in support of this Resolution for this Honourable Chamber to take note of the Draft in Government Strategy, which is prepared by the Subcommittee of the Government.

Mr. President, I think it is important for all of us to make an effort to visualise in our own circumstances what pursuing an E-Government can mean for us. I believe it would be a wonderful thing if one day, all of us could come to this Chamber without the necessity of travelling with all the papers we now travel with, all of the reports, all the Order Papers and the Bills. Sir, maybe one of these days we would come here, turn on a computer and all the information would be on a screen so that we can peruse it at will, we can peruse it when we come here, we can peruse it at home, we can peruse it if we travel overseas and wish to look at it because we are coming to the Senate the next morning. It would be a wonderful thing if we could do all of that. This is what introducing an E-Government Strategy could mean for all of us. It could mean that those Members of the Senate who are not with us today, if they are in Miami, could have the facility of not only listening but watching the debate on the internet as you can now with respect to the Parliament of the United Kingdom, that is what it would mean for us.

Mr. President, yesterday, all of us left Cabinet with pounds of reports, which were too heavy for many of us to carry, certainly for me to carry because, as everyone knows, I am quite delicate. Sir, we left with all this material which was too heavy for us to carry. If the information had been put on a diskette or memory stick, we simply would have put it in our pockets and gone on with it. If we did not feel it necessary to print all that information, there would be no need to print it.

Mr. President, in addition, this happens with all of us. With all the papers we have, when the date comes that we want to find the 2003 Report on some particular initiative that was taken in the Ministry of Health in one of their departments, we cannot find it so we ask for another copy. When information is stored electronically, it is so much easier to find it. It would simply be on a database, which we could download to our database at home, office, or wherever else and be able to access the information quite readily. Sir, these are some of the initiatives to which I very much look forward. These are initiatives that as simple as they might sound, could make our work more efficient when we do research and when we want to find information which has been stored somewhere else.

Mr. President, as you know, if we are using an electronic medium, when searches are done, if they are done by key words, there is a huge document in which you want to find some aspect of the report, it will no longer be necessary to go through the entire document if one has a provision where one could search using key words and then the information is found readily. These are some of the realities.

Mr. President, some points were made by Senator Dr. Lowe and some of them were good points. Sir, not that Senator Lowe connected with the good points made but, nevertheless, they were made. They seemed to be no connection between his delivery and what was actually said by him but, Sir, some of the points were good points.

Mr. President, he queried what the "E" meant, whether or not this was an electronic Government strategy or whether it was an efficient Government strategy and went on to argue why it was not an efficient Government strategy. Sir, in my view, it is just as ridiculous as my taking up the document and wondering whether it means electronic Government Strategy or the Eastmond Government strategy and then enter into a debate and dialogue with myself as to why it could not be the Eastmond Government strategy.

There is nothing in here to suggest that we are saying that simply because you introduce an electronic means of delivery or entering into certain transactions, that it is going to make absolutely everything you do efficient or that it is going to resolve absolutely all the human resources issues that might be in the civil service. Sir, one is not saying that.

Mr. President, I believe it is important for us to seek to raise the debate to a higher level not by simply making simplistic statements that we know it would be impossible for anyone to agree with. An E-Government Strategy would not mean, that if there are human resources issues within the public service, they would simply be resolved, because an individual now has a computer and internet access. Sir, who would argue that? Is it something so difficult to contemplate, that one would be concerned, that it would even be raised in a serious forum such as this?

2.29 p.m.

The intention of any E-Government Strategy, or any Information Communications Technology Strategy, is not to resolve all of the problems that are in Barbados. The next thing you know, an argument would be made that this Government is buying into an ITC strategy, yet it is not helping with garbage collection, the reduction of tariffs at the port or traffic congestion, but nobody is making those arguments.

Sir, as we all recognise, much of the technology is to assist us, with all of the other things that we must do, and no one is making any other argument.

Mr. President, I wish for us to take the concept of having an E-Government Strategy in its much wider context. It is important to understand, that what we are doing here is not a stand-alone initiative, separate and apart from the other initiatives, that Government has engaged in over a period of time.

There are several issues that continue to face Barbados, from a social and economic perspective. All of them are interconnected. I do not see how one could develop one's society properly, without developing the economy, or developing the economy without developing the society. As far as I am concerned, one of the greatest challenges facing this country is to ensure that a broader cross section of the population, is actually engaged in wealth creation, and wealth creation that can move from one generation to the next.

Sir, one would not be able to do that, unless one's certain economic policies are in place. There are also a number of social issues that have to be addressed to make sure that in pursuing those economic strategies, they can be facilitated by the society itself. Mr. President, there are a number of issues like confidence and trust, that we talk about that would help to facilitate the economic vision.

The E-Government Strategy has to be taken within that context. It cannot be taken outside of that context. These are the kind of days in which we live. We know that our economic future is one that is now being guided by what is happening externally. We also know that there are issues we have to face, with respect to trade liberalisation, which we have been grappling with, and a need for us to become more competitive, in everything that we do. We also know that there is a requirement that in order to be competitive, we have to reach a certain international standard. Mr. President, an E-Government Strategy and information will help to assist us.

Sir, it has been said many times that with the liberalisation of our own market, there are a number of issues that we have to confront; the reduction in terms of the duties collected at the Port, greater competition for Barbadian goods and services, not because the services were protected in any significant way, except for sectors like the telecommunication sector, but in terms of goods, especially, where we went through a 'tariffication' process and for most part removed items like quotas and licences. We know that there is a greater challenge and that the preferential arrangements, many of them have been removed or are in the process of being removed. We also know that in cases where they exist, their value has been reduced significantly, because there has been greater liberalisation around the world.

Sir, we have been told and we know that our mandate is to make our economy more competitive in all the sectors. The critical element of this, obviously, is the role that Government plays. Government is the key facilitator, in every business activity that you can think about in Barbados. There is absolutely no doubt about that. Therefore, if the Government is going to say to our private sector, that they need to become more competitive, Government recognises that it has an obligation to try to improve its efficiency, so that it can lend to the competitiveness of the private sector as well. This is what the E-Government Strategy is about, about trying to make our work more efficient in terms of delivering those services to the public.

I think that it is necessary for us, to have an insight into what we could possibly be talking about, in terms of an E-Government Strategy. Often it is difficult to individualise. I always hope that, for example, the Information Society of Barbados or any of the key players in the technology industry in Barbados, could display more exhibits, so that individuals can actually see what the technology can do, and to become familiar with it.

Sir, I do not think that many individuals really recognise the power of the technology we have at our disposal. There are some individuals who know that the internet is available, but never investigate the possibilities that the internet presents. I am fascinated by it every day. I remember that I was doing a speech once, and I could remember very vaguely a quotation from a book called "The Lighthouse", by Virginia Wolf. All I did was to go into a search engine, type in the few words that I could remember, and the quotation that I needed was there. As simple as that. That is the miraculous nature of the internet.

Sir, there are many more complex things, you can do using the technology that can be made available. In the same way that I can do that for a speech, civil servants, during their daily duties will be able to use those facilities for their research.

Obviously, there are issues about security. We are not saying that there are not issues about security. There are always issues about security, in whatever we are doing. There are also issues about the type and quality of research. There are going to be issues about the quality of internet sites you visit. For example, the official World Trade Organisation website, should have accurate information. We

will be comfortable that the official World Trade Organisation website, would have the appropriate information in terms of the documents, and most recent decisions taken by the World Trade Organisation panels, *et cetera*. So that is a website that we would be comfortable with.

Mr. President, as we educate ourselves we would recognise that there are other websites. There are other websites, when your search engine is WTO, other websites would appear, but those are not the official World Trade Organisation websites.

Sir, in the same way research in a library will show that there are certain authors and printers with a certain reputation. You will therefore be obliged to carry out that kind of due diligence, when working on the internet as well. Mr. President, those are some of the more realistic issues we need to follow.

With regard to the accessing of Government services, we must talk about information first. One of the most difficult things within the Civil Service, and I know that the public has this experience, even as a person working within the public service, sometimes it is difficult to know, where you should go to find a piece of information. If all the departments of Government have their information on websites, you could sit before a computer and peruse that information very quickly, without having to call various departments trying to find the right person to give you the information on the particular issue, for which you are concerned. You would simply be sitting before your computer, the Government portal would come up, if it is something to do with land, you might know that you want to research the Land Tax Department, and you go into the particular search engine. It could be Town and Country Planning and, using a simple search, you find the particular department. You can research taxes or any other topic.
2.40 p.m.

Therefore, these are some of the practical measures or elements that will be there, when we put this E-Government Strategy in place, so that you can sit before a computer and actually find the appropriate information that you need, without actually having to know that Mr. Browne is the person who deals with that and he would know. Then, you might find an individual that really did not know that the Tax changed from 2.5 per cent to 2.3 per cent, and that information will be there.

Sir, when the Prime Minister delivers his Financial Statement, when legislation is passed and you need to have a summary of what the various changes are, those things should be there on a website for easy access to the public.

The issue has been raised about whether or not there is a digital divide in Barbados. There probably is and, I guess that until everybody has free access to a computer, there would be a digital divide, arguably, but certainly, I do not believe it is the case that only 5 per cent of the population has access to technology.

Sir, from one of the reports in the E-Government Strategy, it shows that 56.7 per cent of the population has access to technology. Access means through your home, your workplace, or your community centre. The issue is access. The issue is not actually owning a computer.

For example, do you have access to travel? Yes, you do. You do not own an airline but the issue is whether you can get from Barbados to Trinidad, or whether you can get from Barbados to Miami. The issue is not whether or not you own an airplane yourself, the issue is access. Therefore, as long as you have access to the technology, that is the big issue and not actually ownership of a computer. As you know, you do not own the internet. The key issue is having access to the internet.

Sir, Barbados has made significant strides, in terms of access to technology. Apart from putting this issue within the context of our trade liberalisation efforts and the need to be competitive, I would wish to also put it within the context of developing a culture of science and technology.

Sir, the Ministry of Commerce, through the National Council of Science and Technology, has a mandate to promote a culture of science and technology in Barbados. This sounds all well and good and I am sure everyone would agree with it, but then I was most surprised to find that within the context of the Crop-Over Season in Barbados, there are individuals who actually express a concern that you have individuals who are now producing music in their kitchen and in their bedroom, and all of a sudden, everybody feels he or she is a producer.

Sir, in terms of developing cultures, developing a culture of science and technology, there is nothing elitist about it. If you are going to develop a culture of science and technology, it means that you are talking about the broad masses of the population having access to technology.

Therefore, when you hear elitist comments about every fellow now feels he can make a record, I am concerned about that because it means that we do not understand that ordinary members of the public are meant to be able to participate in the most sophisticated levels of technology that there are, or even unsophisticated ones.

Now, I understand that some people said that about 600 songs were made this year, and people were talking about the quality. If you make 600 songs, it is likely that the

larger percentage of them would not be of the highest quality. But I ask everyone in here, Mr. President, how many songs do you think are made in the United States of America on a daily basis? Thousands are made. How many of them ever make number one in the Charts? Not many of them, but what they are able to do is to sustain an entire industry off it.

The same thing happens with film as well. Individuals seem to believe that the entire film industry is supported by films like *Gandy, Benhur, Raiders of the Lost Ark* and all of these things. They are not. The film industry is supported by a lot of what they call, B-rated movies, those movies that never come to Barbados. Movies that people say flop. But you know what happens? It keeps the people who own shares, the make-up artists, the lighting people, the stage people and the extras, employed.

You need a critical mass to create an industry. If we take the position that, in terms of science and technology, when you are talking about making music, we are talking about using technology and access to technology, you are talking about ordinary Barbadians utilising technology to do what they consider to be important, Sir, if we ever take the position that in this too, we are going to be elitist, we are not going to make much progress.

In terms of science and technology, this fits within the whole notion of the fact that Barbados is now focusing on being competitive. Nobody is going to protect us in our market anymore. Therefore, what we have to focus on, is being able to do the research, play around with the technology, if people want to play around with it, be innovative and creative, supply our entrepreneurs with activities and ideas that they can commercialise and take to the market. This is where we need to go.

Sir, if we are going to be elitist about it, it would not happen, because the point that has to be made over and over again, you never know where your next entrepreneur would come from who will make $1million. They are not necessarily well-educated. They are not necessarily from any particular strata of the society. They are not necessarily from any particular corner of Barbados. They can come from anywhere in our society. If we are really going to say now that we could compete with the rest of the world, it is absolutely important that we create a facilitating environment for all of our people.

This is why Government recognises that, in terms of technology, Government must be one of the key drivers. The members of the Civil Service that will participate in this strategy, come from anywhere in Barbados. These individuals will have access to technology, in a way that will become second nature to them.

I am not overly worried. Most of us who are older see computers, and access to technology, and the Internet as a big thing. We have to recognise that many of the younger people know no different. It is there, just as we came along and we saw a cup and glass and picked it up and used it, and never wondered how it ever got made in the first place, they are of the same view with respect to computers.

Therefore, they will pick them up and use them for whatever they think is necessary. They will take them apart and they will put them back up. There are individuals when you ask them if they bought their computer from Dell, they say, no, that a fellow down the road put it together for them. This is what is happening in Barbados, on the ground.

Therefore, it would seem to me that some of the Members on the Other Side, have not been going through their constituencies, but there are many Barbadians, all over Barbados that now have computers in their homes. This is a direct result of this Administration, reducing the duties on the importation of computers and computer related equipment.

*Asides.*

2.50 p.m.

SENATOR THE HON. Miss L. V. EASTMOND: Mr. President, an individual who uses a computer, who believes that it is outdated can pass it on to a fellow who would fix it. Mr. President, we have mechanics all over Barbados that we believe could challenge any of the mechanics that are trained in Germany, France or anywhere else simply by using their intellect and working on the equipment. The same is happening with the computers.

Mr. President, we have individuals in Barbados who can take computers apart, fix them and reassemble them. The same is happening with the software. Mr. President, that is not as far ahead as we would like it to be, but there is absolutely no doubt in my mind that our people would be going in that direction. I have had discussions with individuals from the University of the West Indies who have said to me that many of the huge companies in the United States of America are willing to hire them even before they graduate from the universities to work on software development there.

Mr. President, I am not going to blame any particular sector, but we, Government, the private sector and everybody else, have not as yet created the environment that if they choose to stay in Barbados to do that type of work that they can stay here. I believe that with Government putting this particular strategy in place, it will help to create the environment and an industry where those individuals who may have studied overseas and have had some experience overseas can return to Barbados and find work that is suitable to their abilities.

Mr. President, I wish to support this particular Resolution. It is my dream that one of these days – I might not be in the Senate – when we are in House of Assembly that we would be able to utilise the technology to do our business more efficiently.

Mr. President, before I end, I will just make a plug for Parliament's website because I know that many people do not recognise that Parliament actually has a website and that the Order Papers are on the website and they can go and view them.

I thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR Miss S. C. V. HUSBANDS: Mr. President, I rise to support the Resolution before us on the draft document pertaining to the E-Government Strategy. May I say to the last Speaker that we ourselves support her in the hope that she will be in other places in her career as a politician where she will be able to do even more sterling work for the country of Barbados in that capacity.

Mr. President, I am really very excited about the E-Government Strategy that is before us and what we are discussing because it is very important that both the public and private sectors get onboard with the new technology if we are going to build a competitive environment. I am really pleased to see that we are putting forward such a serious document that shows tremendous thought in how we are going to go about implementing that E-Government Strategy, and I want to touch on a few of the things today. Of particular importance to me is how it is going to impact on small businesses and how it is going to affect us in being more effective, and I will wish to speak to that.

Mr. President, I think it is very important that the entire nation treats this as something that is very important because it is not just the matter of buying the technology and the software and so on and putting it in and plugging it in, it is going to challenge us as citizens and as workers to operate differently to get the maximum benefit out of it. Therefore, I think it is very important that we understand what it is going to call for.

Mr. President, that E-Government Strategy is going to help us in being much more effective. However, for it to be effective, it is going to require an acceleration of Public Sector Reform, that is going to be vital.

Mr. President, being in business, one of the things that I realise in having the technology and having access to the internet and so on, is that there is so much information, so much data and so many facts available to you that if you do not build the proper strategy for the effective management of that information, if you do not know how to access it, how to take that information and use it creatively to inform the decisions that you are making, if you do not know how to use it to inform the ideas that you are coming up with and how to use it to help you to be innovative, then all the modern technology is not going to translate into the benefits that we hope to have. Therefore, it is going to be essential to this E-Government Strategy that we accelerate Public Sector Reform.

Mr. President, I want to congratulate the subcommittees, because as I read the document and saw that they have put forward the idea of the creation of a central information management agency and that part of its mandate is to take the time to sit with other strategic partners, especially the Office of Public Sector Reform, to discuss ways in which we are going to improve processes and performance of the human resource in order to make the transition to the use of the technology and to create the long-term benefits that we are looking for. I was very pleased to see that kind of thought was put into this strategy because the recognition is there that without human beings making the transition, then we make a nonsense of our investment, so I really want to congratulate them on that.

Mr. President, I feel that if we can put this strategy in place and get it to work more effectively that there are a lot of benefits that citizens can enjoy. I feel that with regards to things like the health sector, town planning, the Police and reporting from various social service agencies that that information is going to be very helpful to increase efficiency in the functioning of a number of those organisations internally and it would also aid the citizens interacting with those services and allow us to get access to information without having to leave our home and to go and try to find somebody to give us the information then to tell us that we have to wait. All of that would be cut out and citizens would be able to access information on a real-time basis.

Mr. President, how are we going to help the public sector to make the transition? What are some of those challenges? I believe that Senator Dr. Lowe shared some of his concerns about what was happening in terms of productivity in the public service. He sought to attribute a lot of the difficulties that the Civil Service is experiencing to Government either failing to do this or having some underhand plan to undermine the comfort of the Civil Service and to keep them as chattel slaves. He took up all kinds of extravagant positions in relation to that.

Mr. President, I thought that was unfortunate. It really pointed out to me the fact that if, for example, the E-Government platform is already functioning, he would have been able to get some facts about exactly how many people are leaving the Civil Service and he would then be reassured that it is not an exodus. I think that he would have been able to look to see well yes, we hear that the Police and the teachers are complaining about this and about that, but he would have been able to go on that E-Government

platform and be able to see the efforts that are being made, the changes that are being made, the buildings that are being built and all the equipment that is being purchased to try to assist to improve the conditions within the Civil Service, and then he would have been assured that there is not a plot by Government to keep people as chattel slaves. I really think it was very unfortunate that he should put that out over the airwaves.

Mr. President, one has to ask the question what then is impacting in particular on the productivity of some civil servants, because we cannot say it about all civil servants. I have interacted with civil servants who work really hard and who give of their best despite the same conditions that are prompting others not to perform. I ask myself the question what is causing that.

Mr. President, I had to ponder on what would have gone on in the past and I had to ponder about what is going on in other civil services across the world and ask myself is it that they have perfect conditions and therefore they are not experiencing strikes every day as a result of those conditions, is it that the conditions under which civil servants in Barbados have to work are the worse in the world and therefore they are intolerable and they should not and cannot work but they do want to work. When I asked those questions of myself, I had to come back to the answer that in truth and in fact that cannot be true.
3.00 p.m.

Mr. President, very often one can hear this from amongst workers, not just in the Civil Service but in the Private Sector as well. They use the excuse of the conditions of the environment as a reason for such high level of absenteeism, low productivity and wastage.

Mr. President, one of the things that I have realised is that some of us are departing from our spirit of commitment. That is the bottom line. Some of us are departing from the spirit of excellence that used to characterise us as Barbadians. Therefore, as a result of some people departing from that, they are putting a lot of strain on the others, who are seeking to hold up their end. This is causing tremendous stress in organisations because there are people who would not rise up and carry their particular end.

Mr. President, I think back to stories I would have heard from persons, who would have explained how hard life was for them, while growing up. These are some of the people today who command big positions, high levels of education and who are doing well. When these persons describe their early lives, such as the fact that they had to read by lamplight; the fact that they did not have proper beds to sleep on; the fact that they had chiggers; the fact that they did not have proper shoes to wear to school or how they had very little food...

Mr. President, did these people use those things as excuses not to get up and do, not to get up and pursue with the spirit of betterment for themselves? Did they use these things as excuses not to perform the best they could have? Sir, the answer is no. These persons decided that these conditions were not going to hold them back, that they would press on.

Mr. President, I am saying it all has to do with the spirit of our people. Therefore, I would want to urge all Barbadians that if we are going to build a better society, we cannot drop our hands because of the fact that things are not perfect. What we must do is to press on even harder, to do more to ensure that we create the growth around us, so that all the conditions can be changed.

Mr. President, I have had an embarrassing experience, when attending a calypso tent during this Crop-Over season. I had a governmental visitor from overseas with me. At that tent, the MC made a joke and talked about "Joe" not seeming to support the National Initiative on Service Excellence (NISE) but that he has created a different initiative. I think the MC referred to it as a national initiative on striking every day. Sir, as a Barbadian, I was embarrassed to hear this is how another Barbadian ... not that I thought he was wrong but the fact that we had come to this.

Sir, it is important that if we are going to build a society that would grow from strength to strength, I think we have to analyse what it is we are doing and why we are doing it. Therefore, for E-Government Strategy to work, it is going to call on everyone to put more effort in, to be able to work with improving the processes and structures in the Civil Service, so that they are able to give better service to Barbadians.

Mr. President, if we give better service to Barbadians, we are going to make their lives better and more comfortable, as we are going to contribute to their well-being. Sir, this is important because there are tremendous benefits to be gained and, therefore, it is important for all of us to try to make it work.

Mr. President, one of the benefits I see the E-Government Strategy platform providing for us as Barbadians, is providing us with the concrete data that we need. Sir, today on one of the call-in programmes, they were discussing the Israeli/Lebanese conflict, and one of the contributors called and said that people have to be careful today when listening to the media or when watching what is being put before us on television. That caller said that if persons do not make sure that they have all the facts, then the views that are put before persons could seek to influence their opinions. These views could also seek to bias persons in a way that do not allow them to make informed decisions. Sir, I thought that was an excellent point.

Mr. President, I believe that this E-Government Strategy would help to take, out of the public dialogue, a lot of the uninformed talk that goes on, where people are swayed on biases and where prejudices are formed on non-information or inaccurate information. What it does, is to put the public at risk at being the dupe of persons, who have their own agendas. Therefore, I think it is important that every citizen should have the opportunity to be able to go on a site and be able to check the facts for themselves, so that when we are discussing national issues, we could do it in a constructive and informed way, and that we could make meaningful contributions or criticisms of something that is happening.

Mr. President, it is unfortunate that so much criticism is being created in the absence of facts and data. Therefore, I welcome E-Government Strategy to allow us to change that. When I listen, for example, to the media, when people are discussing things, such as the issue of land, nobody knows the percentage of land that is owned by Barbadians. Sir, nobody knows the number of people, who are buying houses every day or every year, yet we hear a number of generalised statements about people not getting land or not getting housing.

Sir, if we were to sit and look at the facts, I think we would be able to see that there are some who are getting, but that there are more who want. Therefore, we would feel hopeful of the fact that if some persons are getting, more would get. We should let us see how we could hasten or improve the process that would allow us to get access.

Mr. President, it is the same thing, in terms of the discussion in relation to the Guyanese, in relation to EduTech, and even with the issue of Cricket World Cup, 2007. What is being put abroad is that this Government is only doing a number of things because of Cricket World Cup, 2007. If you listen to the dialogue, you would feel that all road maintenance had been stopped for years and that there was no plan to do any more roads, to beautify the country or to make housing more accessible.

Mr. President, people are able to get away with these statements because the general public is not able to go on a website and with ease, open up and get the information they need to inform them, so that they do not become the dupe of persons who have their own agendas.

Mr. President, I would love to see this strategy taking root, as quickly as possible. What I found happening in the area of public dialogue, is that persons would want to depend on a Minister, who might have happened to hear the question or the furore that has been created, where that Minister would then rush to a telephone, to speak to the call-in programme, to give people information and facts. Sir, in this day and age, that is not always practical.

Mr. President, there is no Government that could function, where, between 11.00 a.m. and 2.00 p.m., everybody goes on pause and is on the alert to hear what issues people are going to make, so that they could rush to give such information. We have to go about our national dialogue in a more structured and rational way. We have to go about it in a way that would allow for true genuine discussion, that would allow us to arrive at the truth and at the facts.

Mr. President, I believe there are people out there, who would love that. I also believe that this E-Government Strategy would make it easier. I know there are lots of information out there and a lot of reports that people do not ask for, to inform their dialogue. Sir, I know that sometimes the amount of information can be overwhelming. Certainly this E-Government Strategy platform is going to make national dialogue easier and more factual, where we could then get good criticisms, good analyses and good ideas of what is happening in the country.

Mr. President, on the issue of the implication to small businesses, I welcome this Draft Strategy so very much because of the fact that we desperately need greater efficiency in the Small Business Sector, coming from Government, especially when it comes to information sharing. I am hoping this particular strategy would allow us to create one-stop shops. There are too many of our small business members, who are forced to go to two, three or four departments, while executing one business transaction, where each trip to those respective departments could take as much as half of the day.

Sir, small business people do not have time to spend half of a day waiting for a form, where, in some instances, on receiving that form, they would have to come back another day for that business to be transacted. Sir, that creates tremendous wastage in the economy.
3.10 p.m.

Mr. President, if we can make this E-Government Strategy work, we would be able to go onto a website, fill in a form without having to stop work or production to do it, we would be able to get information back instead of having to go to an office for someone to tell us the results, it could be posted via the internet. Sir, these are the things which I am longing to see.

Mr. President, our vendors have to go to five different offices before they can become legal. This means that they have to take five days out from work because the offices are not next door to each other. I think if we can bring it all together and make it into a one-stop shop that something tremendous would be done for the small business sector. It is going to increase our efficiency and reduce their

Mr. President, one of the areas mentioned in the Strategy which I think is of great importance to us not just in terms of being able to man the E-Government platform but certainly to us as a nation is the whole area of how we are going to retain skilled workers to work not just with the E-Government Strategy but also to work in that economic sector of Barbados.

I am happy to see that they are trying to come up with innovative ways to allow the public service to retain people with those skills because, the truth is, the private sector in Barbados, at the level of people with higher level computer skills would always be paid more than what people can receive in Government. Certainly what is paid by the Barbadian private sector to qualified computer professionals cannot match what they can get outside. Sir, one of the things we have been experiencing in our economy is that as fast as our young people acquire skills within the technological sector, they are snapped up quickly and absorbed into other economies.

Mr. President, one young man shared with me that he was working at Sprint who was able to offer him a salary which was four times higher than what we could afford to give him in Barbados. Therefore, for him as a young professional seeking to build a future, he had a challenge. He would have loved to make his skills available to his country to help to build its IT capacity but he had to maximise his career. Sir, he was able to identify 13 other Barbadians, whom he personally knew who worked in large firms for the same reason but their hearts want to be able to contribute to building technology in the economy of Barbados and to be able to use their skills to improve what is happening here.

Mr. President, therefore, I am pleased to see that the Government is looking at how it can retain people to help them to implement their platform but I would love to see the Government and the private sector get together and begin to discuss ways in which we are going to be able to utilise the skills of these talented young persons and facilitate them in setting up projects and entrepreneurial activities, which would allow them to use the cutting-edge skill they have and create real income generating foreign exchange making earnings for Barbados through their endeavours. Sir, there has to be a way we can do this because we cannot support the continuous drain of this skill from our shores. Sir, when PRT came, they could not find enough people here because as fast as they were formed, they had been absorbed elsewhere.

Mr. President, I just want to thank you for the opportunity to be able to share on this particular Resolution. Again, I want to congratulate the Subcommittee on E-Government for the tremendous work done. Sir, as I read it, I recognise that a lot of work had gone into it and that it was well-thought-out.

I just want to state that the implementation is not going to be as easy or as smooth as we would like it because anyone who deals with the introduction of a new system or process knows there are a lot of hiccups, challenges and difficulties. I want to urge that we remain patient, that we remain committed and that we seek to put in place this strategy that can only redound to the benefit of all the citizens of Barbados and help Barbados to continue its journey into the 21st Century of being an efficient economy.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Grant.

SENATOR R. W. GRANT: Mr. President, I rise to support this Resolution which is before this Honourable Chamber. I would wish first to reflect on the contribution made by Senator Lowe. I want to say to this Chamber that as I listen to Senator Lowe's contribution and certainly felt that I was in the Crop-Over season because Senator Lowe in his remarks, reminded me of Poonka's song, "All Over the Place." Further, it also made me remember a quote because based on the comments made by Senator Lowe, I was not sure where he studied in relation to the E-Government Strategy and I remember the quotation that if you do not know where you are going, any road will take you there.

Mr. President, I am not, therefore, surprised that today we would have heard in this Chamber an impression conveyed that this Government is treating to the public servants of this country as chattel slaves. Sir, I start by reflecting on that statement and feeling a bit disappointed because there is so much that this Government has done for the advancement of people. This Resolution provides not simply for efficiency or improvement in the delivery of service which Government offers but the reality is that a well-thought-out and structured E-Government Strategy will enhance and deepen democracy.

Mr. President, this Strategy brings the Government and the people of Barbados closer together. It does that because the citizens of this country, through this E-Government Strategy, those aspects which have already been implemented and others, which would be rolled out in the future, the citizens of the country have greater access to the various agencies of Government. Therefore, they can be greater thrust in what the Government is doing on behalf and for the benefit of the people.

Mr. President, this is a world that is constantly changing. This is a world that is driven significantly by technology. Sir, information and communications technology is constantly changing the way business functions and the way our citizens interact with each other, their environment and the various communities. It is, therefore, important for the Government to take the lead by properly facilitating access to citizens to participate in Government.

Mr. President, Senator Marville spoke to issues in relation to persons being trained. This document speaks of the community technology. I know that Senator Dame Patricia Symmonds has made reference to that, so there is no need for me speak to the details, but simply to say that one way of ensuring there is success of this E-Government Strategy, is by ensuring that all segments of the society are able to access the technology. Therefore, Government's commitment is clearly communicated and demonstrated, through the community technology programme.
3.20 p.m.

Mr. President, I wish to speak briefly to some areas, in relation to international transport, where already we are seeing the E-Government Strategy having a significant impact. Sir, there are a number of airlines which operate at the Grantley Adams International Airport, and there are designated places for you to check-in for a flight. However, Grantley Adams International Airport has introduced a Common User Technical Equipment Terminal. It is referred to as the CUTET system. At this terminal, you can now be checked at any counter, at the Grantley Adams International Airport, once the necessary technology is provided. For instance, if an airline has four counters and the airline beside has three counters and not at the time facilitating passengers, then the airline that is operating with the four counters can expand and facilitate additional passengers, by the utilisation of the CUTET system.

Sir, I mentioned that because, already that type of system is helping to ensure, that as persons travel through the Grantley Adams International Airport, they are better taken care of. I will also say to this Chamber, that as far I am aware that CUTET system is the only one that is operating in the world.

Sir, there is also a system being implemented at the Grantley Adams International Airport known as the Flight Information Display System, which is referred to as FIDS, and there is the Baggage Information Display System, which is known as BIDS. Sir, persons will no longer have to necessarily, come or call the airport, to find out when their aircraft will be arriving. They will be able to go on the internet, and visit a particular website for the arrival of the aircraft into Barbados.

Mr. President, for instance, if you have a relative coming to Barbados on an American Airlines flight, you can go on the internet, to see when that flight departs, the altitude of the aircraft and when that aircraft lands. Sir, by the FIDS system, we are ensuring that persons have access to information in relation to flights coming into Barbados. Sir, we are also ensuring that we provide a security access control and surveillance system.

Sir, I speak of these, because there are all part of the E-Government Strategy, where persons who work at the airport, will no longer have to access security areas, by simply utilising a pass. You will now have the finger print access which will provide for greater control, as it relates to security.

In addition, the technical section in the Ministry, has requested that the Ship's Registry be completely computerised. We are also requesting that the Registry in the Ministry be computerised.

Sir, I reference those things, because the Government, through its E-Government Strategy, is seeking to utilise electronic technology, to improve services to Barbadians and increase overall efficiency.

Mr. President, every day more and more persons are utilising the internet. I cannot tell what the figures are in Barbados, but as I travel through Barbados, and into the homes of all different types of Barbadians, many of them are utilising the internet service, and it is something that is very commonplace. Therefore, if Government is desirous of ensuring that we are better able to communicate with persons, who are utilising the technology, then this E-Government Strategy is certainly the way to go.

Mr. President, I give my full support to this Resolution. I think that it is a very significant step forward which the Government is taking. I wish to compliment the Committee and give my full support to this Resolution.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Griffith.

SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, I wish to thank Senators for their contributions on this Resolution before us. In winding up, I wish to refer to a few comments that were made during the debate.

Sir, let me say at the outset, that the Barbados Public Service currently employs over 28 000 persons. When one looks at the occasional strike or protest, it is a small part of the 28 000 persons. I do not want anybody in the Senate to get the impression, that because there were a few cases of persons protesting, for whatever reason, that there is any large-scale disenchantment in the public service. There are a few persons out of that 28 000, who were involved in those particular cases, and there were about specific matters.

I do not know that we will ever have a world, in which there will not be some issue, that will cause some discomfort and discontent by anyone. Therefore, why persons would regard small cases of a few people protesting a particular

concern and try to magnify that to suggest that there is any wide-scale disenchantment in the public service, I do not know.

Mr. President, I have not been able to find any evidence to support the claim, that there is any exodus of persons from the public service. There are persons who have retired or resigned from the teaching service, nursing service or the police force, and have gone to work in other jurisdictions where they believe, sometimes with good reason, that they would be able to make a better living than they can in Barbados. That is perfectly in order, and it is a healthy sign. At least it shows that they are thinking about their future, making decisions that they think are in their best interest.

I do not know that Barbados should try to keep them back, by giving them more money than Barbados can afford. I am not going to support any suggestion such as that. My view is, the way to deal with these situations, when it is a case of technical skills, is to make the training available at large.

Sir, there were times, when there were a few people with professional degrees, or whatever certificates in accounting, and everybody felt that they had to be paid ten times the Governor-General's salary to keep them employed. I used to laugh and say that you could do that, instead of going and making the facilities available to all, then, you would discover who can demand what, when you have everybody familiar with the subject.
3.30 p.m.

Sir, the same thing has to happen when it comes to the technology. This is why I believe that the Government's strategy is correct, that is, it is making sure that everyone, young, middle-aged and old can have access to the technology, through the EduTech Programme.

I heard Senator Marville say that you do not have to teach the young, because they will take to it like a duck would take to water. This is perfectly true, but the water must be available for the duck to take to it. Therefore, the computers must be available and accessible to those children who do not have computers at their schools, so he is missing the point about the EduTech Programme.

Sir, it is not whether the children will take to it like a duck will take to water. That is a known fact. The water has to be available, and the EduTech Programme ensures that all and sundry can have access to the technology, so that all would become familiar with it, whether they have one at home or not.

Sir, so too is the case with the Community Programme. It provides an opportunity for all and sundry to have access to it. The persons who do not have the technology at their homes, can have access to it through these resource centres, which are being set up across Barbados. This is the essence of it, so that young, old, middle-aged and everyone can have access to the technology. When that happens, we do not have to worry about 10 people leaving and going somewhere else because they can get more money. There will be 40 others there who can fill the space. The problem with us is that we have always allowed a few to get access to these particular skills, while the masses had to go without them, and this is an effort to prevent that from happening. All and sundry must have access to the technology.

*Asides.*

SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH: Sir, this is the same philosophy that I push when it comes to agriculture and use of technology, that all should have access to it. If they then do not choose to use it, that is a matter for them, but it should not be that they are not using it because they do not have access to it. Therefore, this programme is an effort to make sure that the Government service will have the technology for its use.

Now, I was a little surprised that Senator Lowe and Senator Marville took the view that one was suggesting that the technology by itself would mean that all the ills of the public service will be cured, and that productivity would increase automatically and so on. I think that is a very simplistic interpretation of the issue.

In fact, I gave the example of what transpired in the Ministry of Finance between 1973 and 2000. I made the point that the persons having been trained to use the technology, were able then to do things in a shorter time space, and with greater accuracy and speed than they could do those same things, when they were working manually.

Sir, no one is suggesting that simply by putting the technology in, that productivity would increase and the quality of service provided will improve and so on. What we are saying is that these tools can be used by the individuals to improve the quality of service to the clientele that they serve. It will allow them to make better use of their time, and to be more efficient, in the production of the particular services.

I am not going to get into the issues raised by Senator Lowe suggesting that members of the public service are so upset with everything that is happening and there is this wide-scale disenchantment and so on, and, therefore, it is all of this that affects productivity and so on.

The truth about it, Mr. President, is that I worked in the public service for 41 years. When I heard people outside of the public service speaking about it, I seldom recognised the public service that I was involved in, from hearing those

stories. They all spoke with great authority about things they knew nothing of, and that is always the danger in this community.

It is like a discussion I heard, a few evenings ago, having left here, about the proposed water park. This is the misinformation that has taken hold of this society. The gentleman said that the Government has something called, Special Development Areas. The moderators said that is a good point – because everything is a good point now for the moderators. The gentleman said that in those Special Development Areas, you get tax rebates and so on. The moderator said that is true. The gentleman said that he did not know if the proposed water park is in Graeme Hall. The moderator said that is a question, to which we need an answer. He further stated that if what you say is true, that there are Special Development areas, when they pay salaries and meet other expenses, they will get these rebates and the rebates will nullify the effect of these salaries, so they will benefit at the expense of the public.

Sir, a long debate ensued on an irrelevant point, because Graeme Hall is not in any Special Development Area. This is the kind of evil that has now overtaken this society, where people who have very little information about issues, do not know how to say, "I am very sorry. I do not have the information on that. Let me check it first." But they would enter into a long discussion. Therefore, I, as a pubic servant of 41 years standing, have always refrained from getting into discussion with non-public servants, because they spoke about the place with such authority, and in such a manner that I never recognised it, even though I was in it for 41 years.

Therefore, that is usually the case and I do not get into discussions with people from outside because they always know what is happening inside, even though they have never entered the inside.

The truth about it is that they sometimes are the biggest hindrance to public service productivity because they always try to degrade the public servants, calling them armies of occupation and other things like that. They make all derogatory statements about them, and then somehow would expect them to perform to their expectations. Now, that does not really happen. In fact, most of the time that is really the problem with the issue of the public, and public servants, but that is another matter.

Mr. President, this strategy before us is one which deserves our support. Once successfully implemented, it would make a tremendous difference to the performance of the public service. I think the Government is to be highly commended for it, because it shows that the Government is thinking forward and is looking always, at ways of improving the conditions in the country.

In this competitive age, there is no doubt in my mind that the only way we are going to succeed and continue to succeed is by making use of the latest technology and producing whatever it is in which we are engaged, at a level that meets with the satisfaction and the expectation of the clientele of the Government service.

Mr. President, on that basis, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

*The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.*
3.40 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, we have come to the end of our Business for today and I beg to move that the Senate do now adjourn *sine die.*

*The question that the Senate do now adjourn sine die was put to the Senate and agreed to and Mr. PRESIDENT adjourned the Senate accordingly.*
3.45 p.m.

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