
THE SENATE DEBATES

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2003 – 2008

THE SENATE

Wednesday, August 16, 2006

Senate 55, sequence 40, 11.00 a.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. PRESIDENT: This Sitting is resumed.

RECOMMITAL

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR THE PRESIDENT

Mr. PRESIDENT: I have received the following message from the Honourable The House of Assembly dated 11th August, 2006.

“Message from the Honourable House to the Honourable the Senate. The Honourable the House of Assembly has the honour to inform the Honourable the Senate that on 11th August, 2006, the Honourable the House of Assembly committed the following Bill, Road Traffic Amendment Bill, 2006 to a Joint Select Committee of the Two Houses, comprising six Members of the Honourable the House of Assembly and five Members of the Honourable the Senate and invites the Honourable the Senate to nominate Members to the said Committee.

The Deputy Speaker.”

I expect that during the course of the day, the Leader of the Senate will present a list of nominees for the Senate’s approval.

OBITUARIES

Mr. PRESIDENT: Prior to Public Business, the Leader of the Senate wishes to speak.

Senator the Hon. E.R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, I crave the indulgence of the Senate to pay a short tribute to the mother of Senator Patricia Parris and to the wife of Senator Dean Crichlow, who both passed away within recent months. I think it is appropriate that we should do so, since today is likely to be the last Sitting for a while.

I did not have the good fortune of meeting the late Marjorie Downes-Parris before her departure from this earth, but when I heard the various tributes that were paid to her on the occasion of her burial, it did not take me long to acknowledge the type of person that she was. Sir, from all the reports given there, she was the kind of person who paid a very significant and outstanding role in her community, as an individual and, particularly, as a small business person who ran a shop in the village.

Those of us who grew up in the rural parts of Barbados know only too well, the significant part that has been played by village shopkeepers, in the early development of this country. We owe all of them a debt of gratitude for their outstanding contribution in their respective villages. The late Marjorie Downes-Parris was one of those persons.

Sir, on behalf of myself and my family and, certainly, the Senators on this side and no doubt, on the other side as well, I wish to extend my deepest condolences to Senator Parris and the other members of her family. I want to assure them of our prayers, in this their moment of difficulty and trial.

Thank you, Sir.

Mr. President, I think it would be better if I, before I take my seat, make similar remarks about the late Bernice Crichlow. In this case though, I can say that I knew the late Bernice Crichlow. I remember well those early days, when Senator Dean Crichlow was attached to the Christ Church Parish Church, which then had responsibility for St. Patrick's Church, of which I have been a member for some time.

On many occasions, Senator Dean Crichlow, accompanied by his wife, took charge of that particular parish. The late Bernice Crichlow always conducted herself in such a manner that all of us in the congregation really were happy to see her there.

Senate 55, sequence 40, 11:10:14

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SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: I do not think that I would be talking out any secrets if I say that in those early days the people at St. Patrick's would have done anything to keep both Senator Dean Crichlow and his wife at that parish. However, Mr. President, that was not to be because some time after that they went off to Jamaica, where again I came into contact with the late Bernice Crichlow when I was a student at Mona and Senator Dean Crichlow was the Chaplin there. I do not know if he remembers my face from those days but he was the Anglican Chaplin there, and as a member of the Anglican Young People's Association on Campus, there were many occasions when we visited the residence of Senator Dean Crichlow and his dear wife.

Mr. President, whenever we had the privilege to go there, I must say that she always received us with great love and was very accommodating to all of us. The last time I had the privilege of talking with her was in 2000, when I attended service at the St. Patrick's Church, the last day before I left to take on a diplomatic assignment in Geneva. In the congregation were Senator Dean Crichlow and his wife. At the end of the service I remember the late Bernice Crichlow coming over to me and sharing with me her knowledge of Geneva and Europe generally, having spent a lot of time in Brussels, and wishing me well and assuring me that even though I was moving into the unknown, as it were, that I had no reason to fear with the guidance and support of the Almighty. That is the kind of person Bernice Crichlow was. She was always willing to make a difference in the lives of those persons with whom she came into contact. She was very steadfast in her support to her husband and shared in his ministry in the church.

Mr. President, I therefore take this opportunity, on my behalf and that of my family and all of us on this side

and the Senate generally, to extend to Senator Dean Crichlow and his family our deepest condolences.

SENATOR F. J. STUART: Mr. President, I rise to associate myself with the comments made by the Honourable Leader of Government Business, Senator Griffith, in respect of the passing of both the late Marjorie Downes-Parris and the late Bernice Crichlow.

Mr. President, I did not know Marjorie Downes-Parris except by reputation. I am aware that she was a shopkeeper at Mayers Corner in the parish of St. Joseph. I knew of her reputation because a well-run shop is a veritable social centre. Mr. President, all the information available to me suggests that she was able to attract to her shop people of all political stripes and she was able to receive them with a charm of manner that always claimed their admiration.

It is not surprising, therefore, that some time, I believe it was in 1996, that I heard her on the Mark Williams "Looking Back" Programme, reminiscing on the fact that she was able to attract people like the late Right Excellent Sir, Grantley Adams, the late Right Excellent Errol Barrow and others to that social centre at Mayers Corner, St. Joseph where young and old alike benefited from interaction.

Mr. President, it must be as a result of her activities in that area and the comings and goings of public figures to and from that shop that we have with us today her daughter Senator Parris, whose contributions to the deliberations of this Chamber have up to now commanded the respect of all of us.

Mr. President, if there is one defining feature of Senator Parris, it is that I would say that she does not speak because she has to say something but she speaks when she has something to say. That is always a plus for a good public figure.

Mr. President, she does not know this, but I use her as a barometer sometimes for the effectiveness of what I am saying because she is so emotionally and spiritually attached to the Barbados Labour Party that when it is under attack she shows the pain on her face and that is when I know that I can drive home the advantage.

Her mother obviously influenced her profoundly, and like Senator Griffith, I think we are all the poorer for her passing. I am sure that sense of bereavement felt by Senator Parris and her siblings and other relatives must be very profound. Therefore, on behalf of my family and myself and certainly on behalf of the Opposition, I should like to extend heartfelt condolences to Senator Parris and to the other bereaved of her family.

Mr. President, if I may go on to the late Bernice Crichlow, I did not know her personally either. I have known Senator Crichlow for many, many years dating back to my school days at the Boys' Foundation School when he came over to the Christ Church High School as Headmaster. I do not think there were any principals in those days, there were headmasters and headmistresses. Mr. President, if the career of Senator Crichlow is put under the microscope, one immediately has some appreciation of the kind of person that the late Bernice Crichlow must have been.

Of course, I had the privilege of attending her funeral and of listening to a variety of tributes paid to her, most exceptionally that paid by her daughter Grace-Ann, who reinforced my faith, on that afternoon, in the currency of the English language. I do not know when last I sat and listened to a funeral oration delivered with such unhurried elegance and with such charm of language. From all that Grace-Ann said, it is clear that her mother was a generous and very dainty individual. Of course she would have to have been a very strong individual because in the many areas of activity in which Senator Crichlow has been involved, he has never been afraid to attract controversy to himself - perhaps controversy is a very strong word, but I am looking for an alternative and I cannot find it - and to face the world courageously when he has come under criticism, whether those criticisms were coming from within the Anglican Church or from without. That she stood by him and dutifully sustained him in all of his endeavours, is a tribute to her and of course a tribute to the very fine judgement which he would have exercised many years ago when he espoused and pursued and claimed her.

Mr. President, her passing, I am sure, leaves a void in the life of Senator Crichlow. They were married for many years, but Christian as he is, a former Dean Emeritus as he is, and a Preacher as he is, I know that he is aware that, according to Christian theology and Christian belief, he is likely to see her again. That is what we Christians believe will happen when our Lord returns to earth and when he will, of necessity, bring her with him.

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SENATOR F. J. STUART: Mr. President, until then, the best we can do is to extend to Senator Crichlow and his family the condolences of this Honourable Chamber. Sir, of course, I speak for my family and myself and for the compassionate family of the Democratic Labour Party, when I extend heartfelt condolences to Senator Crichlow.

Mr. President, I am obliged to you.

Her Honour SENATOR DAME PATRICIA SYMMONDS: Mr. President, Marjorie Dora Downes-Parris, J.P., was an astute businesswoman, as Senator Griffith has mentioned. In addition, she was also a model parent and family person. She adored her children. I can vouch for that from conversations I have had with her on occasions, and she lived for her children. They, in return, loved her very much. She never spoilt them but saw that they grew up disciplined, well-mannered, hardworking and God-fearing, above all else.

Mr. President, something I have always admired about her was the fact that she was always stylishly-dressed and exhibited good taste. She was a good hostess and very friendly, and her children's friends were always welcome.

Mr. President, she also showered love on her immediate and extended families, especially her nephew Courtney. Her kindness and understanding endeared her to everyone, and particularly the older members of the community.

I know she will be greatly missed but that their strong religious faith, especially that of Senator Miss Patricia Parris and Charles, will give them the solace which they need.

Mr. President, on the behalf of my family and I, I wish to extend sincere condolences. May she rest peacefully.

Mr. President, one of Bernice Crichlow's children's friends, who is also my Goddaughter, commented to me on Bernice's open mind and straightforward nature. She was attuned to the mores, thoughts and outlook of her daughters' contemporaries, and this gave her an insight which made her understanding and approachable. Mr. President, to use a common French term, she was completely *bieu daus sa peau*; that is, fully at ease in any circumstances.

Mr. President, because I had taught her at St. Michael's Girls' School, there was always an element of deference and fondness in her greeting of me but over the years, whenever we would have met as adults then, we were able to converse comfortably on that basis of mutual fondness and respect.

Mr. President, both Grace-Ann, whom I know quite well and who taught for a short while at St. Michael's and Gloria, are a credit to two wonderful parents, who instilled in them Christian virtues, social skills and the love of learning.

To Senator the Very Reverend Dean Crichlow, to Grace-Ann and Gloria, as well as to her son-in-law and her darling grandchild, I extend deep and sincere condolences.

Bernice will always be remembered, with great affection, by all who knew her.

Mr. President, as Thornton Wilder so poignantly puts it:

“There is a land of the living; And a land of the dead; And the bridge is love”.

Mr. President, may she rest in peace.

SENATOR A. A. BYNOE: Mr. President, this Honourable Chamber is paying tribute to the lives of two persons, who were connected to us in this Honourable Senate, one of whom I know very well. There is also a connection with Marjorie Downes-Parris because as a shopkeeper, we do have something in common.

Mr. President, I would like as well to join my voice in paying tribute to the life of Marjorie Downes-Parris, who certainly would have gone through the ups and downs in that particular industry. She has also produced a wonderful daughter, who is now a Member of this Honourable Senate, Senator Miss Patricia Parris.

Mr. President, before I speak of Bernice Crichlow, whom I knew very well, I would also like to pay tribute to Wilma Dixon, the wife of a former Dean of the St. Michael's Cathedral, to say that she, indeed, was also a very outstanding and loving mother and wife.

Mr. President, in speaking of Bernice Crichlow, I have known her for a long time, since my childhood, so to speak, and as Senator Griffith spoke of being a member of the Anglican Young People's Association (AYPA), in his days in Jamaica, I, too, would have met her in that connection, through my association with the various churches. I remember Dean Harold, when he was at All Souls Anglican Church and the St. Michael's Cathedral, in particular.

Mr. President, Bernice took a liking to me and I must say this was particularly important to me because when I was involved in a business in Wildey, I closed that business and went elsewhere to Black Rock, she followed me and she said to me, wherever I go, she would follow. Therefore, there is a particular reason why, in this Honourable Chamber, I must take the opportunity to pay tribute to Bernice. I was happy that I saw her shopping a week before, her last shopping day at Carlton Supermarket, and as usual we hugged.

Mr. President, that was very important to me. Therefore, though with sadness, it is with pleasure that I give these few remarks on her behalf. Sir, in so doing, I would like to commend the words of a certain poet to this Honourable Chamber:

“Life is an ecdysis; An everlasting moment that has gone forever; And always here to stay; Until the body exhales the last farewell”.

Mr. President, I would like, therefore, to say farewell to all persons, to whom we dedicate these speeches.

Mr. President, I thank you.

SENATOR G. P. I. GOODING-EDGHILL: Mr. President, I too would like to join with other Honourable Senators in celebrating the lives of Marjorie Downes-Parris and Bernice Crichlow.

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SENATOR G.P.I. GOODING-EDGHILL: I must say that Marjorie Downes-Parris was a woman of great compassion who cared for all in the community. She was peaceful and humble. One thing I can say about her was that whether you met her for the first time or known her for a long time, she would display that warmth and welcome. Sir, had she been alive, she would have celebrated her 80th birthday last Monday. I know it was an event that she was looking forward to celebrating with her friends and family but that was not meant to be, because of her illness.

Mr. President, she accepted her fate and carried on courageously. Those who had the opportunity to meet with her before she passed, would attest to the courage that she carried with the fight before her. It was also fitting that on the day she passed, she had all her children at her bedside.

Mr. President, I am not familiar with Bernice Crichlow, but certainly, all that has been said about her, there can be doubt that she too was a woman of great compassion. I would like, therefore, in joining with other Senators to offer my deepest sympathy to the families and to say that in strength you will always find the Lord and to those who have great compassion, great things will come to them.

Mr. President, I am much obliged.

MR. PRESIDENT: I would like to associate the Chair with the tributes paid to late Mrs. Marjorie Downes-Parris and Mrs. Bernice Crichlow, in one case the mother and in the other, the wife of two distinguished members of this Chamber. I did not have the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Downes-Parris but from all that I have heard, she made an outstanding contribution to the community in which she lived and, of course, Senator Parris is perhaps an example of the kind of person her mother was. Senator Stuart has already said some rather nice things about Senator Parris with which the Chair wholeheartedly agrees.

The district of Mayers Corner is very well-known in the political life of this country, from all I have read and heard and, no doubt, the influence of Mrs. Downes-Parris expanded far beyond that area.

I had the pleasure of meeting and conversing with the late Mrs. Crichlow on many occasions over the years and have always been greatly impressed by her charm and dignity. Senator Crichlow often spoke of her and I have no doubt that they enjoyed a very long and happy marriage. The funeral service which I had the privilege of attending some days ago was, in fact, a celebration of her life, with tributes paid by, among others, her son-in-law and the retired Bishop of Trinidad & Tobago but, perhaps, the most outstanding statement of her life and work came from the Crichlow's daughter, Grace-Ann. Only on Monday, I spoke to Senator Dean Crichlow about how impressive her presentation was. Senator Stuart spoke of the unhurried elegance of her prose and I do believe that it is one of the finest eulogies that it has been my privilege to hear.

I extend sincerest condolences to Senator Parris and Senator Dean Crichlow. We are all the poorer for their passing and may they rest in peace.

MR. PRESIDENT: Senator Parris.

SENATOR Miss P.E. PARRIS: Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to thank Honourable Senators for their sentiments and the support they have given to my family during the past week. My mother was thoughtful and dear; she showed us love from day to day and has touched the lives of several persons.

Mummy will be greatly missed by her family and friends but we will all take comfort in knowing that she would be lovingly embraced in the kingdom of God.

MR. PRESIDENT: Senator Crichlow.

SENATOR the Very Reverend H.E. CRICHLow: Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President, and Honourable Members of the Senate, on behalf of my family, I should like to thank you very much for the kind tributes you have paid to my wife of forty-five years standing but of over 60 years friendship because we started courting about age 10 when we went to private lessons together at her brother. I should like to thank you for all the telephone calls, sympathy cards, floral arrangements which were sent on your behalf and to say that the kind of tributes paid here this morning do reflect the kind of person she was.

I should try to convey what was said about Grace-Ann's tribute, many people have said the same thing. I had to strong for the family but her tribute almost brought me

to tears. It was good to see that Government Senators and the Senators of the Opposition were at one in paying tribute. This is one of the rare occasions in the Senate where we can have that type of unanimity which we would all like to have in our society.

Mr. President, I certainly think that we have it among the politicians and would wish that member of the Barbadian community would understand that despite the contentious behaviour sometimes and adversarial speeches, that it is the nature of democracy and that their representatives are fond of each other and wish the best for Barbados.

Mr. President, before I close to should add to those Senators who paid tribute to Senator Parris' mother. I am sure the persons who produced Senator Parris would have to be parents of great stature.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

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MR. PRESIDENT: I would now ask all Honourable Members to stand for two minutes in silent tribute to the memories of the late Mrs. Downs-Parris and Mrs. Crichlow.

The Senate stood in silence for two minutes.

ORDER NO. 5 – SECOND READING OF THE EXPORT PROMOTION AND MARKETING FUND (AMENDMENT AND VALIDATION) BILL, 2006

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Griffith.

SENATOR HON. E.R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, you will recall that in 2005 the Prime Minister, in his capacity of Minister of Finance, introduced a Cess tax on extra regional imports, with two goals of assisting with the restraint of imports, and at the same time providing funds to support exports. Both objectives are aimed at dealing with the imbalance, which currently exists, in our external accounts. Sir, by January 2006, it became clear that while there was some success, it was necessary to move a further step. At that time the Minister announced that the Cess would be increased from 3 per cent to 6 per cent on imports, from extra-regional sources. It is because of that decision, in January 2006, that this Bill before us.

Mr. President, as you are aware, while the Provision Collections of Taxes Act, covered the increased for four months, it is necessary to have legislation in place for the

continuation of that measure. Therefore, the Bill before us is seeking to make an amendment to the Export Promotion and Marketing Fund Act, to include a provision for the continuation of that Cess. At the same time, to validate the collection of the Cess during the month of May. Subsequent to that, the four months would have expired by May 15, 2006. That is why this Bill is before us.

It is a measure which is necessary for us to continue and to keep in place, particularly because we need to continue to control our external account, and to ensure that the gap between imports and exports is gradually closed.

Mr. President, with those few remarks, I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to without division.

On the motion of SENATOR HON. E.R. GRIFFITH, the Senate resolved itself into Committee for further consideration of the Bill, Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The Senate is in Committee.

Clauses 1 to 5 inclusive were called and passed.

On the motion of SENATOR HON. E.R. GRIFFITH, Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT reported to HIS HONOUR the PRESIDENT, the passing of one Bill in Committee and Mr. PRESIDENT resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of SENATOR HON. E.R. GRIFFITH, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Export Promotion and Marketing Fund (Amendment and Validation) Act, 2006.

ORDER NO. 6 – SECOND READING OF THE LIAT (1974) LIMITED GUARANTEE (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2006.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Griffith.

SENATOR HON. E.R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, this matter before us deals with two aspects.

11.50 a.m.

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Senate 55, sequence 45, 11.50 p.m.

Senator the Hon. E.G. GRIFFITH: One is the LIAT (1974) Limited (Guarantee) (Amendment) Bill. The other is the Resolution for guarantee for the maintenance and return condition obligations, under the lease agreement between LIAT (1974) Limited and Bombardier Services Corporation.

LIAT (1974), Mr. President, has been with us in the region for a very long time. Over the years, LIAT has continued to make a significant contribution to the movement from persons throughout the region, and by extension, to the development of our tourist industry in Barbados and the region, in general.

The airline industry, as you know, Mr. President, is one which operates in an environment that can be destabilised quite easily. One only has to look at what took place in the United Kingdom, during the past week to discover that. Sir, only yesterday, I heard that one of the major airlines operating out of the United Kingdom is calling on the airport authority to provide some measure of compensation for it, because as a result of the new security measures, it has had to cancel in excess of 100 flights. Already, you can see that this particular airline, though it is a major one, is going to be hit quite significantly, financially. Sir, that tells you the fickleness of the environment in which airlines operate, both big and small airlines. If the big ones have those difficulties, very often, as a result of occurrences, that are beyond their control, you can imagine what would be the plight of the smaller ones.

LIAT falls in the category of small airlines, but is performing a role to Barbados and the region that is of great significance. It is a role that the larger airlines are unlikely to undertake, because to them, it may just be a humbug, in the sense that in many instances, as soon as the plane gets up in the air, it has to land. The distances between the respective countries are so short and would be unsuitable, in many cases, to the larger equipment, which is used by those big airlines but, it is a role that is of great significance and benefit to the region.

Therefore, in spite of all of the arguments that have been used over the years, against the Governments in the region continuing to provide support to LIAT, we have to be realistic and to acknowledge that we have a great deal to lose, if the services are not available. It is nice to say that there are others who are willing to provide those services.

We have said that in many instances, in other areas of economic activity and we have paid the penalty. When the going became rough, those persons who are from outside of the region, have made the decisions that affected their bottom lines, without any due concern for the interest or otherwise of the region. While it is nice to say there are

others, meaning from external sources, who are willing and able to provide the service, we always have to be careful.

Mr. President, in a sense, it is somewhat like a topic, which we now discuss with great passion, regarding food security. I remember very well many years ago, whenever that topic came up, there were those among us who would argue that there was no need for us to produce any food. You could import it at cheaper prices. I always said to them, that you have to earn what you need to pay for the importation so, at least, you must be able to do so. You can only procure those cheaper imports when you earn the money to pay for them.

Now, today, because of the stark realities that have presented themselves to us across the world, I listened attentively to some of those same persons who now argue, with great passion, for food security, meaning that we should produce a certain amount of the food we eat. If they had acquired that knowledge before, no doubt, we would have been better off.

We have done it also when it comes to shipping. One of the great and big problems, which we now have in the region is to transport goods from country to country. It is amazing that sometimes in order to get products from one country to another within the region, we have to go out of the region. They have to leave the region, then to come back into the region, because of the arrangements that have been made by the large shipping companies. We have no shipping arrangements among ourselves, at a time when we are promoting deeper integration. One of the big problems we will have, is how to get the products from country A to country B, without going out of the region to get them back into the region.

Therefore, my advice is that when it comes to air transport, we do not make the mistakes that we have made in relation to sea transport. This is why I fully support the position of the Barbados Labour Party administration to provide support to LIAT.

The issue before us has resulted from the fact that LIAT, like most other airlines, particularly small ones, has to lease planes from people who make their daily living out of leases. As a small airline, the restrictions that the lessors will put on LIAT, would be different from restrictions which it would put on bigger airlines, particularly, if they are airlines that are owned by persons in their particular countries.

Therefore, in this particular case, Bombardier, which is leasing aircraft to LIAT, would normally expect LIAT, on a monthly basis, to put into an escrow account, the sum of US\$49 600, as a guarantee, so that when the leases expire and the planes are to be returned, Bombardier will have funds, which it can use to repair the aircraft, in the

event that they suffered any damages during the term of the lease. Sir, that is an extraordinary burden to a small company like LIAT. In fact, it is some US\$1.2 million a year.

Sir, LIAT, because of the nature of its operations and the difficulties that it has experienced over the years, is not in a position to carry that expense, while trying to implement the restructuring plan that was approved a while ago, by the shareholders. This restructuring plan is taking shape. Even though the airline at the moment is still in the red, in terms its operations, there are signs that there are gradual improvement.

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SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: Sir, over time with the support of the shareholders and others, the airline would gradually makes it ways out of that particular situation.

Mr. President, an approach was made to Bombardier Services Corporation for an alternative arrangement so as to facilitate the continuation of LIAT. Mr. President, the alternative arrangement is that a Guarantee would be given by the shareholders. Mr. President, in this particular case, Barbados happens to be the largest shareholder, and Antigua is the next in line, although my understanding is that within recent times they have put measures in place to increase their shareholding.

Sir, Bombardier Services Corporation has indicated that it would be willing to take a Guarantee from Barbados and Antigua and Barbuda through which LIAT would be assured that it would have access to funds to maintain the aircrafts and to return them in good condition to Bombardier at the end of the lease. Sir, those conditions are set out in the agreement between Bombardier Services Corporation and LIAT.

Mr. President, what is before us is simply asking the Government of Barbados to enter into an arrangement that would permit LIAT to assure Bombardier Services Corporation that without putting this money on a monthly basis into the escrow account, the aircrafts will be maintained and will be returned in good condition at the end of the lease.

Mr. President, legal advice is that under the existing legislation, there is no authority for the Government to sign such an agreement. That is why it is proposed here that there be an amendment to section 4 of the Act. Mr. President, if you look at the terms in the agreement and the provisions of the existing Section 4 and Part II, of the Schedule, you would notice that there are some limitations

to what can be permitted and so on. Therefore, the Bill before us is seeking to delete section 4 and Part II so as to facilitate the terms in the contract so that the new Schedule would accommodate that.

Mr. President, I know that from elsewhere there has been a lot of discussions about the availability or otherwise of the financial statements of LIAT. My information is that the statements for 2004 and 2005, are with their auditors and will be dealt with shortly. The issue here is whether the region can allow LIAT to come to a halt, and if they allow that to happen, who would fill the void, and whether the arrangements that would be put in place by others would adequately cover their interest. Mr. President, based on all of the information before us, that answer at this present moment, in my view, is no.

Therefore, I am in full support of the proposals before us for the amendment of the Act and for provision to be made for the Government to provide the appropriate guarantee to Bombardier Services Corporation, so that LIAT could continue to perform the role which it is performing at the moment and which is absolutely necessary if we are to continue to move around the region for whatever purposes, particularly at this time when we are talking about the movement of persons and encouraging Barbadians who have various skills to travel through the region to provide their services on a regular basis.

Mr. President, I am sure that Senator Dr. Lowe recognises the importance of the role that LIAT plays from that point of view because he is able to move around the region quite easily. Sir, there would be others who would be able to take advantage of those opportunities.

I therefore beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

SENATOR F. J. STUART: Mr. President, the question of LIAT has come before this Chamber, I believe on three or four previous occasions since the 2003 General Elections. Mr. President, whenever the issue comes before this Chamber, we hear the same stories about LIAT (1974) Limited and its role in this region and its role in transporting people across this region, a necessary role may I say.

Mr. President, the Democratic Labour Party does not need any persuasion on this issue since it was the Party in Government in 1974, when the original owners of LIAT were pulling out of the Caribbean, which decided that Government should get involved and preserve the airline precisely for that purpose.

Mr. President, the Party's commitment to LIAT and to the continued survival of LIAT does not extend to asking Barbadians to close their eyes and to support LIAT

whatever its shortcomings and whatever may be the shortcomings of the information available to Parliament when Barbadians are being asked to support the airline.

Mr. President, it is true that travel across the region is facilitated by LIAT. It is true that Barbados is in the nature of a hub between the North Atlantic and other parts of the Caribbean and that LIAT performs a role in facilitating the movement of people from the North Atlantic across the Caribbean through the Grantley Adams International Airport. Mr. President, it is true, as Senator Griffith just said, that we might be taking a very big chance if we allow LIAT to die and for private profit-oriented interest to become responsible for so critical a link between Barbados and other parts of the Caribbean.

Mr. President, these are the familiar refrains one hears whenever issues relating to LIAT come before this Chamber. I dare say that there is not much fault one can find with the lines, they do communicate a kind of melody, though that is doleful, if I may use that word. There is no hint of optimism about LIAT when we come before this Chamber to discuss it because the information provided to Parliament does not allow parliamentarians to evaluate what the Government is really doing and to determine whether continued support for LIAT on the terms and conditions outlined by the Government can be justified.

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SENATOR F. J. STUART: Mr. President, that is where the Opposition's problems lie. Sir, we frequently have to rely on the ipse dixit of this or that Minister of Government but we do not know what are the plans for LIAT. We heard about a restructuring plan and how it is taking shape. Where is the restructuring plan? What are the elements contained in that restructuring plan that would lead the Government to say today, that the plan is taking shape? Sir, this would be a plan, to which not many Honourable Senators would have been privy. I certainly am not privy to this restructuring plan the Government is talking about.

Mr. President, I have heard broad statements being made by the Honourable Minister, in relation to LIAT, justifying the Government of Barbados increasing its shareholding, along with the fact that the Chairman of the Board is now a Barbadian and we have a majority of members on the Board. Sir, in terms of a plan to revive LIAT, to make it viable, both in Caribbean term and in financial terms... That does not necessarily mean that it has to be making a profit, although that is highly desirable. Mr. President, if the taxpayers of Barbados are being asked to

stand by LIAT, then I would believe that some serious attempt would have to be made, to ensure that the extent of their obligations would be controlled and that the obligations of the taxpayers of Barbados would not turn out to be unlimited obligations.

Mr. President, I think Government has been a little dodgy on the issue of LIAT. We have discussed it in this Honourable Chamber about three or four times, since the 2003 election. This maybe the fifth, I am not sure I have lost count but we hear the same story all the time. Sir, what is consistent about that story, is the fact that the taxpayers of Barbados do not know what they are getting into, neither do they know what is the full extent of their obligations to this airline.

Mr. President, as I said, the Democratic Labour Party believes, as a matter of policy, that we need LIAT or some such airline, to perform the services being performed by LIAT and that it deserves the support of Governments across the region. We are aware that not all Governments across the region have lived up to popular expectations, in terms of their loyalty and in terms of meeting their obligations to the airline. It is still a matter of concern, for all practical purposes, that LIAT is headquartered away from Barbados, while Barbados is bearing the brunt of the obligations to that airline.

Mr. President, it is true that we are talking about the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, about deeper integration movement and so on but the Caribbean Single Market and Economy and deeper integration movement cannot, by any elasticity of meaning, be extended to denote or to connote that the taxpayers of Barbados should be beast of burden, as it were, for other people across this region.

Mr. President, therefore, I would hope that when Senator Griffith is winding up this debate, that the country might have the benefit of hearing from him that which I have not had the benefit of hearing. I would hope that the Honourable Member would give us more specifics on the state of LIAT today, as to what this restructuring plan is about and as to what time frame the Government is looking at, in terms of pulling LIAT out of its present hole.

Mr. President, as I listened to the Government on the issue of LIAT, on every occasion that the Government has come here with a Bill or Resolution, one gets the impression that one is just discussing a 'life sore' and that we are going to bandage it, from time to time, but that we all know it will never heal. Sir, that is totally unsatisfactory for the taxpayers of Barbados.

Mr. President, I would expect to hear from Senator Griffith and Senator Grant, the Parliamentary Secretary in

the Ministry of International Transport, the specifics, in relation to the state of, and the future of LIAT.

Mr. President, since LIAT is an intra-regional carrier, it must necessarily have a lot to do with the Grantley Adams International Airport. It relies substantially on the Grantley Adams International Airport, since that airport, we are told, from time to time, is a kind of hub to facilitate movement from the North Atlantic, into the Eastern Caribbean.

Mr. President, how the Grantley Adams International Airport functions, therefore, must necessarily be linked to how LIAT is able to function. Sir, therefore, concerns have been expressed in Barbados about what is going on at the Grantley Adams International Airport.

Mr. President, the point at issue, if I may use a highly popular term in media circle, has to do with how passengers coming into the Grantley Adams International Airport, travelling by LIAT or passing through the airport, to go to LIAT, would have their luggage being taken care of. Mr. President, indications are, from all reports one is hearing, that there is a kind of an Ayatollah Khomeini at the Grantley Adams International Airport, who overrides decisions of the Cabinet, decisions of Ministers and decisions of the Government, who sets out to ensure that the airport is run along certain lines. Sir, the most recent issues has to do with the fate of the "Red Caps" at the airport.

Mr. President, for as long as we have known the Grantley Adams International Airport and its predecessor, Seawell International Airport, there has been a critical role carved out for the jobs performed by "Red Caps". Of course, these "Red Caps" are some of the humblest people to be found anywhere in this country. Mr. President, what we are now hearing suggests that with the passage of time - and we do not know how much time - these "Red Caps" might be no more.

Mr. President, for very good reasons, I have raised this point in relation to LIAT (1974) Limited and its connection to the Grantley Adams International Airport, that airport being a hub between the North Atlantic and other parts of the Caribbean. Sir, the Democratic Labour Party wants to make it very clear that the Government will not have its support, if the policy at the Grantley Adams International Airport is to render "Red Caps" a category of the past. We stand firmly behind the continued functioning of "Red Caps" at the airport.

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SENATOR F.J. STUART: We are not at all suggesting there should be no organisational changes at the airport to facilitate passengers and to ensure that the service quality is optimal but we are seeing that the Red Cap fraternity and, to the extent that there are women, the Red Cap sorority, has made its own contribution to the development and culture of the airport and we stand firmly behind them.

Mr. President, making that point alone does not mean that Senator Grant and Senator Griffith are relieved of any obligations in here today to tell the people of Barbados, specifically, what the position of the Government is on the future of LIAT, what is the nature of this restructuring plan, how is the plan taking shape, as Senator Griffith has said, and what kind of time frame the Government is looking at in terms of this plan being determined a success in terms of the objectives of the Government and what level of performance does the Government expect from LIAT that would satisfy it that the taxpayers continued faith in the airline is justified. These are simply questions and any Government on top of policy and information which know what it is doing should be able to answer these questions.

We cannot come in here every three, four or five months with an amendment to the LIAT Act or bring another Resolution on LIAT and have to listen to same information at every Sitting. We need some light shed because all we have experienced so far is heat and it is time to bring the transition from heat to light as people what to be able to understand what is happening with LIAT and what they can expect from the airline in terms of optimal performance, not only performance in terms of transporting people across the region but in terms of its financial state.

Mr. President, I await the explanation of the Government. With those few words, I am obliged to you.

MR. PRESIDENT: Senator Marville.

Senator R.O. Marville: Mr. President, there are two small African countries located in the Indian Ocean, the Seychelles and Mauritius, which have their own airlines. The point about this is that it was a stated policy. They recognised that even if the airlines cost them, it was necessary to be sure that their tourism product was sold. In case we are wondering what this has to do with LIAT, the answer is very simple. We have obviously looked at LIAT as an airline that is necessary for our regional survival in terms of movement across the region, transport of goods and people, et cetera. What worries me is that we do not seem to be totally sure of this commitment. At least, Barbados seems to be hanging on to the commitment but I am not sure what is happening in the rest of the region. This is a serious issue because there are at present four or five regional airlines. The problem is that Caribbean Star is

extremely well-capitalised. It is capitalised by a businessman who uses his business savvy in a very specific way to run the airline on top of which, it insisted that it would be within half hour of any time given. The point being that somebody is concerned about the bottom line and, the bottom line is very important in any business if it is going to function, let me assure you of that.

Mr. President, we do not have the sort of working within the region that we need to have on these things. If we are in any way committed to a single Caribbean, whether a single market or single economy, we have to look at these fundamentals seriously. Clearly, Barbados cannot carry this on its own but the only answer for LIAT is proper capitalisation. I do not believe that it is too small to own airlines if there is a system that has been worked out for LIAT in purchasing aircraft. We cannot rely on an outsider totally, there needs to be elements of competition.

If we look at BWIA, it has always has its problems with management, staff, financing, et cetera. If we are going to be in the business, we have seriously to be in the business. We cannot just put a little bit here and hope that somebody else would put a little bit. There needs to be a regional conference on LIAT which says that we want LIAT and that we are going to make it run. Otherwise, the effort of Barbados, Mr. President, is a waste in time, a declining effort. We cannot go on like this, we need to do something more fundamental.

I thank you.

MR. PRESIDENT: Senator Challenor.

SENATOR DR. F.L. CHANDLER: Mr. President, I support the Bill and the Resolution before us. I think that LIAT is necessary although all of us would like to see it run more efficiency and without undue political interference, for example, in the choice of the headquarters.

I would like to support the statement of the Minister about difficulties with shipping in the region. It is much easier to get on the phone and order something from Miami - in my case, I am thinking mainly of agriculture produce - whereas, it is almost impossible to get anything from next door in the other islands. Sir, LIAT has not seemed enthusiastic in the past about operating an air cargo service and I trust that they would at this again. I feel that if we combine the fresh produce with manufactured items that the operation of an air cargo service could be feasible and would certainly assist the agricultural sectors of all the islands in the region.

Mr. President, again, I would like to reiterate my support for the Bill and the Resolution. I thank you.

MR. PRESIDENT: Senator Linton.

SENATOR I. St.C. LINTON: Mr. President, I rise to give support to this Resolution before Parliament. I want to go beyond partisan politics in relation to air travel in the Caribbean. We have struggled with the problems of airlines like BWIA, LIAT, and there are perennial problems and it is my concern, that some Governments in the Caribbean in spite of the fact that they know that they do not have the capacity to manage the airlines in the Caribbean but that there are purposeful for us.

Mr. President, without LIAT, where would we go or what would we do? The question and problem of LIAT, in my view, is that when any country in the Caribbean could seek to use an airline as an employment agency, it will have serious problems.

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SENATOR I. St.C. LINTON: Mr. President, seeking to move LIAT from one place to another adds to the problem.

Sir, Governments of the Caribbean, including Barbados, must recognise that LIAT and BWIA are necessary for the Caribbean to develop and to manage its business, especially on the advent of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy. Therefore, that is why I said, we must go beyond the politics and Party politics.

Sir, if LIAT is out of the air tomorrow, Barbados and all the other countries in the Caribbean would have problems, because it is important for airlines like LIAT to be able to move people from the north and elsewhere throughout the Caribbean, for the Governments and Caribbean people to benefit.

In addition, all of us as Barbadians and business people must be able to travel in the archipelago. Sir, with the lack of adequate shipping, it is necessary. Sir, not only for Governments, but those who are Opposition Parliamentarians in the Caribbean to have a policy. You cannot just come here and ask questions about a policy, especially when you are a Government in waiting, like the Opposition Party.

Sir, what is the Democratic Labour Party's policy on LIAT, now, and in the future? We do not have to tell you. You want a Government. You have to tell the people of Barbados, what you will do about LIAT if you come to Government. You cannot just come to Parliament asking questions. You have to bring a policy of your own. Sir, you can challenge the Government on their policy but bring one to the table.

Mr. President, it is time that the people of the Caribbean, become wary of the kinds of criticisms that come from the Opposition, especially when they are not putting one measure on the table for the people of Barbados. Sir, as Barbadians we cannot accept this.

Mr. President, the time has come when Barbados must have serious political Parties. The Government must have a policy of what is best for Barbados, and an ability to solve problems with LIAT, BWIA and other businesses in the Caribbean, but the Opposition has to bring matters to the table also.

Sir, when we look at the issue of the "Red Caps", as referred to by Senator Stuart, will there always be a need for red caps at the airport? I travel too. Mr. President, when several people arrive at the airport in Barbados, they need to get out of the airport as soon as possible. They cannot sit around and wait for a 20, 80 or 100 people to clear their baggage with the "Red Caps". If it is possible, we should come up with a policy to integrate the Red Caps into the new Grantley Adams International Airport.

Sir, there are times when people arrive in Barbados and there are no "Red Caps" available. We should stop criticising, but rather integrate a proper system where the Red Caps will be part of the new policy at the airport.

Mr. President, these are the things that we should talk about. The truth is, certain jobs in the world have disappeared. You cannot keep people in jobs because you want them in a job. Sir, you have to look at a system where we can make sure that these individuals are employed. They do not have to be red caps. I heard talk of a hundred, but I understand that is not true. Mr. President, we need a policy where they can be integrated into the system so that their families can survive. That is the kind of thing that we should be talking about.

Sir, do not politicise the issue as though these individuals must wear red caps, and push trolleys all the time. Mr. President, I am told that when you engage their services, they ask for X dollars, and if refused, throw your luggage off, that kind of behaviour.

Asides.

SENATOR I. St.C. LINTON: I listened yesterday evening to experiences of persons who called the evening programme to talk about some of the treatment they received. If you do not tip them £5 or a few more dollars, you do not get good treatment. I am not criticising them on this matter. I am simply saying that you want a proper integrated system, for these persons to be able to work for their living, at a new organised international airport. A system has to be put in place in order for these people to earn a living, and better condition of employment. They

need to be employed, but we need to have a better system including the “Red Caps” in the business.

Sir, I return to the point that there is no sense coming to this Parliament asking questions, with no policy of your own, but longing to be the Government.

Mr. President, we have a distinct position with all of the questions raised by the Opposition. Do you know what is the latest? Sir, important matters that concern the electorate of Barbados, members of the Opposition of the various constituencies voted not to bring a policy or anything on board. Sir, at a future date, I will speak to this particular matter. I am simply saying that the people of Barbados are tired of the Democratic Labour Party asking questions, but failing to declare a policy.

Mr. President, I support this measure before us, because LIAT is important to us, the airline industry in the Caribbean must find a system in which it provides the opportunity for us, as Caribbean people, to move around in our area. Sir, Governments, Opposition, and political Parties must find themselves with policies that are important and successful, rather than being critical with just questions. You must have a policy.

Sir, I support this Resolution.

12.40 p.m.

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Senate 55, sequence 50, 12.40 p.m.

Senator I. St.C. LINTON: . . .

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Bynoe.

Senator A. BYNOE: Mr. President, I rise to support the Resolution before this Honourable Chamber. I would like to bring the Chamber back to the Resolution, before I stray, like former speakers.

Mr. PRESIDENT: It is, in fact, the Bill we are debating.

Senator A. BYNOE: Well then, I have strayed, Mr. President.

Asides.

Senator A. BYNOE: But not too far away, because I can change Resolution to Bill.

Mr. President, then, in support of the Bill, I think that a reasonable person would have no objection to what it is that we are supporting because, we are giving an assurance to the public that when they travel on LIAT, all such planes would have met the international standard for maintenance. The Government of Barbados has given Bombardier, a number of obligations to be met, to ensure that LIAT is safe in the skies. I think that no reasonable person in Barbados or anywhere in the Caribbean, can object to that.

Mr. President, as a business venture, LIAT suffers, no different disposition as other airlines, within the Caribbean and within the world. As a matter of face, we have been fortunate that LIAT - as other airlines - has not gone into liquidation. It is still flying and that is because the Government of Barbados and other Governments recognise the importance of LIAT, as a carrier within this region.

Sadly, I would say that we have not yet fulfilled the promise, in relation to movement within the Caribbean. One hopes that with the full implementation of CSME, we will then begin to see the full benefit from LIAT on other carriers, in relation to movement within the Caribbean.

Mr. President, I do believe though, that LIAT needs to look beyond the current routes. I do recall a delegation from Brazil coming to Barbados last year, which included the CEO, if not the owner of a Brazilian airline. They were interested, and still are, in creating a link between Manaus and Barbados.

I say that because every day, I hear and, at some time suffer the comment that prices in Barbados are too high. While that has been said, we do not recognise that the British Government has recognised that Brazil is the next looming economy after China and India. Sir, Brazil is next door to us.

The point I am making is that I am in an industry where I hear the cries of the Barbadians, in relation to the cost of goods in this country, in particular, food. I listened as we just past the enactment, in relation to the increase of Cess, from 3 per cent to 6 per cent. The Government knows that it cannot function without a certain level of revenue. Duties have been removed in certain instances and, therefore, I do support that measure.

The point is, in relation to the cost of food, I believe that greater emphasis should be given to the importation of food and other materials from Brazil. Sir, you might very well find that by so doing, we can reduce the cost of living significantly in this country.

I say that knowing, that right now, there are certain types of merchandise in this country, out of China, which,

if bought next year, will be about 50 per cent more in price, than sold today. This is because in China, the cost of merchandise has increased by 30 per cent between last year and this year. Senator Sir Allan fields is the Ambassador to China and, perhaps, he is aware of this.

Mr. President, we have to understand that in order for LIAT to remain in the skies, it has to be subsidised. While that is the case, I would say that LIAT has also to look for other opportunities, in respect of cargo, perhaps from Brazil, as I have just alluded to.

Mr. President, I would really like to address a remark made in this Senate, with respect to the Chairman of the Grantley Adams International Airport.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator, no mention was made in this Chamber about Grantley Adams International Airport, as far as I am aware.

Senator A. BYNOE: Sorry, Sir, I withdraw that. However, there was the remark that referred to someone as an Ayatollah.

Asides.

Senator A. BYNOE: Mr. President, you cannot choose a weak person as your CEO, or as your Chairman. Sir, a Chairman or a CEO has to be somebody who has some sort of mettle, who has guts, who can stand up and say, no, when it is no and, yes, when it is yes.

Mr. President, within the business environment, there is a boardroom where the policy is set and one would expect that the policy is carried out.

Mr. President, I would like to come to the matter of the Red Caps. This is a situation where, I believe, that we ought to be looking for a win-win out of this.

Senate 55, sequence 50, 12:50:14

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SENATOR A. A. BYNOE: The way that international transport in relation to air traffic is these days, we therefore have to address certain matters. I am sure that when you come to security matters and so on, it may be better that we have less people interacting within that kind of environment. However, we have men and women who depend on conveying passengers for their daily living. I am sure it is not the intention of this Government, and I am positive about it, to dispossess anyone who presently works at the airport as a "Red Cap".

However, we have a business decision to make. Mr. President, we can have a situation where the passenger still

takes care of his own luggage for security and other reasons and we could still accommodate those persons who have been working in that position. We must find a way of accommodating them. I am therefore saying that there has to be a win-win situation.

Mr. President, the Grantley Adams International Airport is a business entity. It is results oriented. Therefore, we should support the actions of members of the Board and the Chairman of that Board because when all is said and done, with clear intentions...

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator, I hate to interrupt you, I have allowed some latitude in this debate and I wish to remind you that we are still dealing with the LIAT matter.

SENATOR A. A. BYNOE: Mr. President, I will come back from the Safari. I think I have said enough that the message is clear enough that I fully support this Bill in relation to LIAT.

I thank you.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 2.00 p.m. today.

The question that the Sitting do now suspend until 2.00 p.m. today was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. PRESIDENT suspended the Sitting accordingly.

Senate 55 Sequence 51 1.00 p.m.

Wednesday, August 16, 2006

RESUMPTION

MR. PRESIDENT: This Sitting is resumed. Senator Nicholls.

SENATOR G. P. B. NICHOLLS: Mr. President, I want to be very brief in my contribution to this debate on the LIAT (1974) Guarantee (Amendment) Bill, 2006. I think it is safe to say that the Government support for LIAT, in recent times, has not come about as a result of any nostalgic feelings about Barbados' role, to lead or to drive any movement towards regional unity.

Mr. President, the acquisition of greater shares in the company called LIAT (1974) Limited, by the Government of Barbados, has been done as a result of a carefully analysed manoeuvre, to secure the future of the Barbados economy and the people of this country, in a way in which

Government's programmes are intended to give effect to bring about greater opportunities for people to develop.

Mr. President, all Honourable Senators have acknowledged that LIAT is important because it carries the role or has the role to transport people throughout the region, that inter-regional transport is important and that LIAT operates as a means of getting people from the North Atlantic to the Eastern Caribbean. Sir, we have not explained that sufficiently for people and that is why some of the questions that have been raised in this debate, have come about.

Sir, to my mind, as a tourism destination, Barbados has to market itself, on the basis of access our gateways into Barbados. Sir, the truth is that a lot of the people, who get on the airlines and come to Barbados, are not coming only to Barbados. They come to Barbados, get on other carriers and go to other parts of the Eastern Caribbean.

Mr. President, the truth is that if those carriers were not available to take people from Barbados, to other destinations, there would be less people coming on international carriers. If less people come on international carriers, it would mean that international carriers would reduce the number of flights and visits they make to Barbados on a weekly basis. If that is done, it would mean that our ability to market Barbados as a destination, through which every international gateway leads to Barbados, would now be somewhat fettered. As a result, our tourism product, which is the backbone of the Barbadian economy, would be fettered as well.

Mr. President, the strategic response of the Government is a sensible one. If the Government is going to give more and more guarantees, we are going to have those guarantees manifested in a corporate environment, in which we get more shareholding in the company. If we have more shareholding in the company, the Government will, therefore, have a greater role, in leading the direction in which LIAT has gone and will go in the future.

Mr. President, the natural concern of the Opposition is that the Government has not articulated sufficiently what is the strategic plan, to bring LIAT out of the rocky road on which it has been but Sir, we must recognise that LIAT is a commercial entity, operating in a highly-competitive environment that is subject to change, almost on a daily basis.

Mr. President, earlier this week, there were several restrictions on air travel. A number of days ago, these restrictions were relaxed. Therefore, as a result of a situation taking place today, in which a United Airlines flight had to be grounded, as a result of a possible or allegedly terrorist link, those restrictions, most likely, would be imposed again, in the space of a week.

Mr. President, the turmoil that is being generated, as a result of these security crises, have, therefore, meant that the airline industry is not one in which predictions and making statements about how an airline would perform. That is not as easy as the Opposition is making it out to be. Therefore, Government cannot come and publicly say what are its strategic plans for a corporate entity, such as LIAT, so that every stakeholder and taxpayer in Barbados could say that he or she understands the specific areas in which LIAT would target for the future.

Mr. President, LIAT operates in a competitive environment and, therefore, Government cannot say publicly what are its strategic plans. Furthermore, if Government were to do that, LIAT's competitors would not tell themselves that this information is only intended for the taxpayers of Barbados and that they would not look at the strategic plans of LIAT. Sir, instead, those competitors would look at those strategic plans and would try to use them to their advantage.

Mr. President, we had a situation in which it was being said that LIAT was under-capitalised, when the corporate structure that it now presently has, had been put in place about four or five years ago. Sir, the truth is that, for many years, LIAT has been funded, as a result of subventions from Government. Therefore, in return for subventions, the Governments of the Caribbean have asked LIAT to perform the role of taking flights into routes, which were not commercially viable.

Mr. President, unfortunately LIAT could not have met a number of its commitments, in terms of its landing fees. When the company was restructured and reorganised, instead of the Governments paying up - and I know that the Barbados Government is not one of them - they wrote-off the arrears that were owed to LIAT, in relation to the landing fees, and the net profit was given to LIAT.

Sir, as a result, LIAT went into a corporate environment, in which it was initially under-capitalised. It had to function in an environment in which another competitor was facilitated, despite the fact that there is a Government of the Caribbean that had a significant shareholding in LIAT, to set up in the same country.

Mr. President, for example, LIAT would love to increase its cargo portfolio but there is no room at the VC Bird International Airport, neither is there any land space available around that airport, for LIAT to extend its cargo facilities. Sir, there was a decision of that Government, to allow the owner of the competitor to purchase all of the real estate around the airport.

Mr. President, these are the hard facts that BWIA must tell the people, and it is not an easy situation that we have to manage. Sir, despite that, LIAT has had to operate

in a difficult environment, therefore, the Government has taken the strategic decision that for the viability of the Barbadian to produce and the sustenance of the Barbadian economy and maintaining the fortunes of the thousands of Barbadians, who depend on their living from the good policies and management of this Government, we have had to make an investment in LIAT.

Mr. President, what the Government is doing, is to make sure that within its means, LIAT is properly capitalised and has available, at its disposal, the appropriate resources, so that it would continue to play an important and integral role, both in the international transport industry, as well as the civil aviation industry in Barbados.

Mr. President, I have no difficulty in supporting this Bill and like the Honourable Senators who spoke, I too would like to see more information but Sir, unless we are going to develop a system in which this Parliament, as the representative of the people, must manage information in relation to LIAT in a sensitive way, we cannot, as a Government, agree that every strategic proposal in relation to LIAT could be brought to the public domain, so that John Public could see it. Sir, this makes no sense.

2.10 p.m.

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Senator G.P.B. NICHOLLS: Nobody is saying that LIAT would continue to operate in a shroud of secrecy but before us today is a Resolution that would accompany this Bill, which we have not got to as yet but, to my mind, that Resolution is very detailed in relation to the commitments that would be given by the Government in relation to some of the issues that were raised by the Honourable Leader of Government Business today.

Mr. President, it cannot be said that a 22-page Schedule to a Resolution, which would replace the Schedule to the existing Act, which we would deliberate on later does not comprise sufficient information to deal with the extent of the obligations of Government.

Mr. President, it is all good and well to say that we want to see the bottom line. Sir, what happens when you are presented with a situation with a bottom line? Does the Government make the commercial decision like the Government of Trinidad & Tobago, that they were not putting any more funding in BWIA or LIAT? Do we make that decision? Do we have that luxury in terms of how the economy of Barbados is comprised? Do we have the capacity to say that we are not putting any more resources into LIAT and to let the chips fall where they may? Are we interested in allowing the market mechanisms to determine the future of the airline industry in the Caribbean and the future of our tourism product?

Mr. President, the Government must take a responsible role and this amendment to the Bill, all of the construct support for LIAT (1974) Limited brought to this Parliament has been in the best interest of this country. Sir, nobody is going to tell you that we feel that LIAT is going to turn the corner and become the best airline in the world because there are challenges. It has been badly capitalised from the beginning, some Governments have got away scotch-free in relation to backing away from the commitments to LIAT because of its present structure and we now have to make sure that this important and viable entity survives in the context of a different international environment. We are not going to renege on our promises to support LIAT and we are not going to bring any Resolution before this Honourable Parliament which does not make sense.

Mr. President, the Honourable Leader of Government Business was very clear in the reasons this Bill is before us. The Honourable Leader of Government Business was very clear to show what the Government has had to do to negotiate and renegotiate with Bombardier in relation to the leasing arrangements so that the financial burden of paying that money into the escrow account does not hurt the financial position of LIAT.

Sir, if Government is going to guarantee that position, it is better that Government does it this way than for LIAT to take cash which it has to meet its other recurring expenditure over the course of the financial year to meet those commitments with Bombardier. Sir, these are the things that everybody would recognise who read the Schedule to the Bills which we bring here. There is no need for any Draft Strategic Plan as requested by Senator Stuart to be brought here so that everybody can debate the viability of LIAT in the future. Mr. President, as I said, that would not make sense and we would only be selling the guns to the Indian.

Sir, with those few words, I am much obliged and I thank you for the time allowed to me.

MR. PRESIDENT: Senator Grant.

SENATOR R.W. GRANT: Mr. President, I rise to give my support to this Bill before this Honourable Chamber. Sir, if I appear at the outset to be a bit cautious in what I say, it is because I sat with some amusement and listened to Senator Stuart speak about LIAT, its history and the fact that we have now discussed this four or five times. What was most interesting for me was to hear Senator Stuart speak of the "Red Caps" at the airport and the concerns which the Democratic Labour Party has in relation to the "Red Caps".

Sir, I will get back to that particular issue a little later only to reflect on what I consider the political hypocrisy of

the Democratic Labour Party as it relates to workers in this country. Sir, continuously, spokespersons in this Chamber for the Democratic Labour Party always seek to convey the impression that this political Party always has the interest of the workers at heart and that this Party in Government does not. Yet the Democratic Labour Party is the Party which inflicted the most pain and hurt on the workers of this country.

Mr. President, before I deal with that particular issue, I want first to deal with some specific aspects of LIAT. Sir, the issue of aircraft maintenance reserves. Prior of September 11th, as the Leader of Government Business pointed out, the issue of aircraft maintenance reserves were dealt with simply by a financial provision made in the accounts of airlines. Mr. President, it did not require any immediate expenditure prior to September 11th, 2001.

Mr. President, after September 11th, 2001, there was a requirement of small, medium-size and some high-risk airlines that money should be put into an escrow account. Sir, the facts have to be put to this Chamber, the Honourable Leader of Government Business has made reference to them but I want simply to reemphasise them. Sir, Bombardier Services Corporation required LIAT to pay US\$49,600 per month for each plane. LIAT has on lease from Bombardier two aircraft which approximately amounts US\$1.2 million per year.

Mr. President, I also wish this Chamber to note that LIAT, as part of its restructuring plan, has sought to renegotiate with its creditors of which Bombardier is one. I believe on a previous occasion that I would have communicated with this Chamber and I will say it again that on June 3, 2005, Bombardier Communicated with LIAT that with a Government guarantee, LIAT would be required to pay US\$247 186 for a period of 12 months. Sir, this takes into account the issue in relation to the restructuring of the debt which LIAT has with Bombardier. It would also require for a further 24 months the payment of US\$172 186 to assist in the settling of the account that LIAT has with Bombardier.

Mr. President, in the absence of a Government guarantee, the monthly payment for the first 12 months would increase to US\$445 762 and for the next 24 months to US\$370 762.

S55/14:20

Sequence 54

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SENATOR R.W. GRANT: Sir, the point that I am stressing is that LIAT's cashflow position is certainly assisted by the guarantee which the Government of

Barbados provides. I think that the point must also be made that the Government's guarantee, does not require any outlay of funds by the Government of Barbados.

Mr. President, we need to ask ourselves some questions, as it relates to air transportation in the region. We have to ask whether as a Government we should provide support for an intra regional carrier such as LIAT or allow market forces to determine what would happen.

Sir, we are aware that there are some people who believe, that if you allow the market forces to determine what will happen, any void in air transportation would be filled by the private sector. I am not sure that it is as simple and straightforward, as that. I think that there are some things that we have to remember. I know that Senator Stuart may not necessarily want me to repeat these things, but I will.

I have to remind this Honourable Chamber, and remind this Chamber, that Barbados' tourism is dependent on an efficient and effective air transportation system. Air transport is a critical success factor, for our tourism sector.

Mr. President, the CARICOM region is responsible for 15 per cent of arrivals to Barbados. We in the Ministry of Tourism recognise that there is potential for increasing the arrival numbers out of the region. In the same way there is focus on growing the US market, which accounts for about 25 per cent, the Canadian market 15 per cent and the United Kingdom 40 per cent, we can also increase the Caribbean market.

Sir, 15.1 per cent of the arrivals into Barbados is facilitated by LIAT. This is between January and December 2005; 18.8 per cent by BWIA; 16.3 per cent by American Airlines and American Eagle and 14.3 per cent by Caribbean Star. For the period January to June, 2006, 15.24 per cent was facilitated by LIAT; 16.73 per cent by American Airlines and American Eagle; 15.17 per cent by Caribbean Star and 13.86 per cent by BWIA.

In addition to LIAT being a significant intra-region carrier and of arrivals into Barbados, the point also has to be made that LIAT has the most landings in Barbados, approximately 15 LIAT aircraft land at the Grantley Adams International Airport a day.

Mr. President, LIAT has served this region for over fifty years. It has financial difficulties, which has been spoken to before. LIAT has been under-capitalised. It has service routes that have been unprofitable, but if regional air transport is left to market forces, it would have a significant impact, not only on Barbados but the region.

Sir, with market forces operating, the profit motive is what will be at the forefront and this would negatively

impact on Barbados' ability to expand its tourism numbers, certainly it would have a significant impact as it relates to the Caribbean Single Market and Economy. It would have an impact on investment, intra- regional trade and the ability of Barbadians with skills, professionals like Senator Dr. Lowe, to be able to travel throughout the CARICOM region.

Sir, we would wish to ensure that individuals in Barbados are able to earn to their maximum capacity, by having a reliable, an efficient and effective intra- regional carrier.

Mr. President, what would happen if market forces determine the future of air transportation? Those routes that are not profitable will go, and that has an impact, not only on our tourism numbers, but our ability to sell our services in the region, and obviously on our overall economic growth.

Sir, let me spend a few minutes speaking about the profitability of airlines. There is continued talk about financial support and guarantees provided to LIAT and why should we be always putting money into LIAT, as though airlines throughout the globe are making money. Sir, I told this Chamber before that in the first half of 2005, the ten largest airlines in the United States of America lost US\$5 billion. The International Air Transport Association (IATA) in its projection for 2006, was projected that global air transport would suffer a loss of US\$2.2 billion. It is going to be more than that. They projected in 2007 a global profit of US\$7.2 million. It will not be recognised, because IATA assumptions of a barrel of crude oil priced at US\$56 in 2006 and US\$52 in 2007. Sir, we know where the price of crude oil is going, to US\$80 a barrel, so it will not be achievable.

Mr. President, let me just comment on air carriers, that fly out of countries with more resources than we have in Barbados. Sir, US Airways, filed for bankruptcy twice and UAL, the parent company of United Airlines, also filed for bankruptcy.

14.30 p.m.

Sequence 55

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Senate 55, sequence 56, 2.40 p.m.

Senator R.W. GRANT: Sir, I could stop there but I will go on. Delta airlines filed for bankruptcy. Northwest airlines filed for bankruptcy. BWIA in 2003 lost US\$28 million, and in 2004 lost US\$140 million. Air Jamaica in 2003 lost US\$55 million, and in 2004 lost US\$99 million. Sir, I do not know if I should stop yet. I can go on. The

Government of the Bahamas pumps money, continuously, into Bahamas Air.

Sir, LIAT, as an intra-regional carrier, and a carrier that was under-capitalised from the beginning, is on a course of recovery. When I heard Senator Stuart speaking, based on the comments coming from the Honourable Senator, one would have thought that nothing is happening with LIAT, and that the Government is simply talking up the taxpayers' money continuously and giving to LIAT. Sir, that is not the case.

Mr. President, there are significant restructuring initiatives that are taking place at LIAT. I remember, earlier, I believe it was January 1, this year, there was a meeting Chaired by the Prime Minister of Barbados and the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Sir, coming out of that meeting, there was a clear statement that it would not be business as usual at LIAT.

Sir, as part of LIAT's overall restructuring programme, there is a Phase 1, which is to bring LIAT to an operational break even point. We are getting there. The anticipation is that later, in the second half of this year, that will be achieved.

Mr. President, let us be conscious that continually in this environment, in the air transport environment, there are constantly challenges. Senator Nicholls spoke of one, today. Mr. President, we know what happened earlier this week. Continuously, there are challenges, in relation to air transport.

Sir, the Democratic Labour Party continues to speak in such a way, as if to suggest that this Government is not dealing seriously with the challenges that exist, and seeking to ensure that we restructure LIAT in such a way that it becomes, not only efficient and effective, but it is also profitable.

Sir, what are some of the actions that have been taken? There was a time when LIAT had in excess of 700 employees. LIAT made a determination to restructure and reform. There was a reduction in the numbers of staff members. There was the development of a new business plan to improve the performance and the productivity, rationalising the routes, utilising technologies and developing new marketing strategies.

LIAT has had a major sales campaign, targeting the corporate sector, and that is bearing some success. They have launched a new advertising campaign. They are seeking to ensure that they carry out a culture change within the organisation.

Sir, we can talk about the financial aspects, but in order to ensure that we are able to reform LIAT, we have to

take people along, a need for a culture change and they are focusing on that. They are engaging in technical training. There is an agreement with BWIA, for the utilisation of stations in places like, Grenada, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Dominica and St. Kitts. They are improving on their punctuality. At one stage they were 69 per cent and now they are averaging 80 per cent in terms of punctuality. They are not the best and, there is still room for improvement.

Sir, they introduced a new low-cost ticketing systems, which had some problems, like most things, when you introduce them for the first time. They introduced ticket-less travel. Sir, all of those measures were in the effort to make LIAT a budget airline.

Mr. President, there can be no question as to the importance of LIAT to the region. I think I dealt with that, effectively. I know in another place, the Minister made a statement on LIAT, as to where we are in terms of the funding that the Government had provided and where, as a country, we wanted to see LIAT go.

Mr. President, I am not going to finish today, without making some reference to the issue of the “Red Caps” at the Airport, and what Senator Stuart is seeking to communicate as the concerns of the Democratic Labour Party. Sir, I believe that one of the things we need to do is not simply to score political points. I believe that the Democratic Labour Party spokesperson should go to the airport and speak to the “Red Caps”.

Sir, let me make the point here. The Government of Barbados, through the Ministry of International Transport, and the Grantley Adams International Airport, Inc., will look after the welfare and well-being of the “Red Caps” at the Grantley Adams International Airport, and make sure that they are not disadvantaged.

Sir, I made the point that Senator Stuart and his colleague Senator, should go and speak to the “Red Caps”. Mr. President, I went up to the airport and I was speaking to them last night.

Asides.

Senator R.W. GRANT: Mr. President, I believe that you do not simply go out there and talk. You listen to the people who matter, and hear what are the issues that affect them. Last night I went to the Grantley Adams International Airport and I was speaking to the “Red Caps”, they told me that under a former Democratic Labour Party administration, there was an intention to remove the “Red Caps” from the Grantley Adams International Airport.

Sir, Senator Stuart should seek to find out why would the Democratic Labour Party, in the mid-1980s,

make a determination by its leader at the time, that the “Red Caps” should be removed from the Grantley Adams International Airport. Sir, that is what they said to me.

Senator F.J. STUART: Mr. President, on a point of order. The Honourable Senator is misleading the Chamber. Sir, the mid-1980s would be 1985 when the Barbados Labour Party was in office.

Asides.

Senator F.J. STUART: He should say what he means.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator, would you during the next two minutes conclude your contribution to the debate on LIAT.

Thank you.

Senator R.W. GRANT: Yes, Sir.

Sir, I speak of 1986 and beyond. I know this, when Senator Stuart rose, he could not say that what the Red Caps told me last night, was not true.

Senate 55, sequence 56, 14:40:14

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SENATOR R. W. GRANT: Sir, I say to this Chamber and to the people of Barbados that it must be political hypocrisy when you convey an impression of being interested in the “Red Caps” at the airport essentially only for political gains.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Honourable Senator, you cannot accuse an Honourable Member of hypocrisy. I am asking you to withdraw that word, it is unparliamentary.

SENATOR R. W. GRANT: Sir, I withdraw it with haste.

Mr. President, the Government of Barbados recognises the importance of LIAT to the continued economic growth and development of our country. We are fully in support of this Bill, and I give it my full support.

I thank you, Sir.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Mr. President, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to make my contribution to the debate as well. I really understand Senator Grant’s fervour because he speaks as one who has truly been indoctrinated by the Democratic Labour Party, and I am not sure if he now speaks as a member of the

Barbados Labour Party or one who in the past has been a tyrant against the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. President, the truth is that the Democratic Labour Party has never indicated that it does not understand the significance of the continuance of LIAT because we understand that the direction of the region dictates that there is a viable regional carrier that would provide the essential air transport services that would give life to the region's attempt to integrate and to become a single market. We understand that. The Democratic Labour Party does not deny the fact that LIAT is important to the region.

Mr. President, all we have been asking for is that if the taxpayers of Barbados are asked to 'cough up' the kind of money that we have been asked to do consistently to LIAT, that the Government gives a report card as to whether or not these funds are achieving the objectives.

Mr. President, in any kind of management of business, one understands that when you have to place an investment in that business that accountability requires that you continue to inform those persons who are contributing to the investment as to whether or not the investment is meeting its burden.

Sir, the Democratic Labour Party will continue to be vigilant in its request that if the taxpayers of Barbados are asked consistently to support LIAT, that LIAT comes up with a report card to tell us whether or not the objectives that we are funding are being met.

Mr. President, I heard Senator Grant talking about the fact that a significant restructuring programme is on the way. Mr. President, we have not said there is not, but there has been no quantitative or qualitative data presented to this Chamber as to whether or not that restructuring programme is succeeding. Mr. President, if you are a traveller on LIAT from time to time you ask yourself whether or not the investment is succeeding. Mr. President, a lot of what Senator Grant called the teething problems are not being played out in the quality of service that you meet at LIAT from time to time.

Mr. President, all airlines have a difficulty and all airlines carriers have their moments where they lose your baggage and where you have difficulties in making connection et cetera. Sir, the only point that the Democratic Labour Party wishes to make is that it would be considered irresponsible on our part if we do not continue to ensure that these millions of dollars being invested into LIAT are realising the objectives that they are intended.

Mr. President, LIAT has an institutional problem that is rooted in its administration. LIAT has a problem that is contributing to organisational dysfunction. I would have

wished that the Honourable Senator Grant would have articulated what kind of diagnosis and what kind of road map that this airline intends to pursue.

Mr. President, there are issues, and you know that even now in spite of all of the restructuring that is happening, that there are still a number of industrial issues to be worked out with LIAT, there are still a number of issues as to whether or not the new airline doctor is going to be able to prescribe the medication that would solve the problem. Mr. President, we will not sit in this Chamber and allow anyone to discourage us from asking the Government to bring the report card on the progress of LIAT relative the alleviation of some of the problems that have been contributing to its dysfunction.

Mr. President, when you look at institutions and you begin to examine institutional dysfunction, you have to look at leadership, at the deployment of human resources, the overall strategy of the institution, and you have to look at the objectives and the goals of the institutions and see whether or not the strategies are commensurate with those goals.

Mr. President, you have to take a very detailed look at the various spheres of operation within an institution to be able to detect where the real institutional maladies are. I would have hoped, Mr. President, that the Honourable Senator Grant in all of his fervour, in all of his enthusiasm, in the expending of his perspiration...

Mr. PRESIDENT: I am not sure you want to say that, Senator.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: ...well, in his sweating, Mr. President, would have been able to tell us in the best way that here are the issues that we have been able to catalogue as the problems in the airline and here is how our money, the taxpayers of Barbados, would be able to alleviate the problems. I understand the restlessness, but that is okay.

Mr. President, it is important to the man out there on the street who is contributing to this \$22 million, who might never be able to walk into this Chamber and make a presentation, that those of us who are the members of this Honourable Chamber do everything within our power to satisfy their queries about whether or not the Government of Barbados is just throwing good money behind a bad project. We have decided that what is necessary is that we continue to be able to ensure that this airline, which is essential to the region, has an opportunity to recover.

Mr. President, my colleague, Senator Stuart, made an outstanding presentation. Mr. President, we are going to continue to keep vigilance as it relates to the business of Government because we know that this Government

believes that the Opposition should bring proposals but when the Government is asked essential questions on transparency and accountability, the Government does not feel responsible to give us the answers. Mr. President, I make the plea that Government gives us the answers that we are asking for, and then we would be able to do what we have to do to ensure that we are allowing the people of Barbados to know what is important to them.

Mr. President, the issue of the “Red Caps” is a niggling issue. I am very happy that Senator Grant was able to go to the airport last night to see the “Red Caps”. Mr. President, I heard in this Chamber today from Senator Linton that when the “Red Caps” are not paid what they asked for, that they throw your baggage.

Senate 55 Sequence 57

2.50 p.m.

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SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Mr. President, I think that is really the cannibalisation of the “Red Caps” in the worst kind way. Sir, in my experiences of travel, coming through the airport or going out of the airport, whether on LIAT or otherwise, I have never, ever, had a problem in the handling of my bags. The problem with LIAT was that very often, persons would have reached their destinations and their bags would have been somewhere else.

Mr. President, the “Red Caps” at the airport are working-class individuals, who seek to help make the LIAT service a positive experience, from beginning to end. Sir, therefore, for anyone to stand up and to try to vilify the “Red Caps”, by suggesting that if they are not given what they ask for, they would throw people’s bag, is perhaps the reason why they are being treated with such contempt in their profession, at this time.

Mr. President, when we look at how people are treated, whether they are persons using the airline service or persons who provide the services as airline hostesses, it all comes back to the way people are led. It is, therefore, important that when you would want to straighten out an institution, that you would look at the leadership of that institution. You cannot escape the fact that in trying to clean up LIAT and in setting it on a path of continuous productivity and good operational management, that you have to look at leadership.

Mr. President, when one looks at the airport situation, when one looks at the situation with the “Red Caps” one would have to understand why one person has one version of what should obtain and another person has another version of what should be obtained. Therefore, you have to ask yourself, who is really in charge of the Grantley

Adams International Airport. Sir, as long as we intend to address the LIAT issue, as long as we intend to ensure that Barbados sets the best example of management and leadership, we have to address the issue of the “Red Caps” and the leadership of the airport.

Mr. President, it does not matter what the other side might say, the role of this Opposition is not to reinforce this Government’s position that they may stay in office. The role of this Opposition is to make sure that, at the end of the day, every Barbadian should feel satisfied that he or she has been given a fair chance to know what is happening with their money, as it is spent in this country.

Mr. President, it does not matter what other might think the Opposition should or should not do. The fact is that the Opposition is very satisfied that its job is to ensure that what happens in this Parliament of Barbados, that as long as we have a role to play, we will play our role. The Government needs to understand that even if the “Red Caps” service is becoming obsolete, it cannot just dismiss and dump the “Red Caps”, in place of bringing carts and displacing them.

Sir, for all and sundry, they must know this is 2006, and that if a reference to justify the Government’s action has to be drawn from the middle of the 1980s, it is a sad story of where this Government is, relative to the way it is treating the people in this country. Sir, at the end of the day, the people of Barbados would tell their story.

Mr. President, LIAT will always be supported, as long as it is producing the returns. Sir, anybody who wants to invest, without ensuring that the returns are commensurate with the effort and input, anyone who fails to take that level of insight into the management of any company, any organisation or institution, is a person, perhaps, not worthy of being considered in a position of leadership.

Mr. President, as the Honourable Member would have a chance to come back and wrap up this debate, my final question to the Government would be this: Is the Government prepared to come back in a year from now and ask us for another \$22 million, to inject into LIAT, without telling the country whether or not its investment is yielding returns that would improve the quality of service of LIAT and make flying in the Caribbean skies a lot more enjoyable than it tends to be at times now?” Mr. President, I want the Government to tell us about that.

Therefore, in spite of the fact that other people might want to keep noise, that is okay but the fact is that we are the taxpayers of this country and Government has to account for every cent that it spends. In addition, every effort which the Government puts forth, is put forth on the behalf of the people and not just the Cabinet of Barbados or

the people who make up the Barbados Labour Party supporters. It is for every man and woman in this country, regardless of his or her political affiliation or station in life. Therefore, we have the right to question the Government, even at the discomfort of the Government supporters. Mr. President, Government must produce the evidence.

Mr. President, there are too many times when Bills and Resolutions come to this Honourable Chamber, and the Government does not provide supportive evidence to show whether or not what it is doing is working, according to the plan. Sir, in these circumstances, we would have to be an irresponsible Opposition not to question the Government. Therefore, I believe we have made our case. I believe the "Red Caps" have the right to survive, the right to earn and the right to be integrated in a system, if it is perceived that what they are now doing is becoming obsolete in the new world of international transport.

Mr. President, if the Government chooses to say that, then I believe we would be on a good road and that perhaps, rather than contributing to learned helplessness on the part of LIAT, we would be contributing to empowering the airline, to be able to do its business better, to do it more efficiently and to do it more productively, where it could achieve the outcomes that are required.

Mr. President, I thank you.

SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, there is no one on this side, who has a problem with any Opposition Senators questioning Government about how it proposes to spend the taxpayers money. What we have a problem with, is the fact that during his statement, Senator Lowe continued to make reference to \$22 million. Sir, there is no amount in this Bill or Resolution before us. Therefore, it is clear to me that Senator Lowe is a little mixed up in what he is saying, and this does not surprise me.

Mr. President, the matter before us is simply an effort to assist LIAT in its restructuring programme, to enable it to carry on its business, without undue burden. It is now strange that persons who say they are supportive of LIAT, who want to know how the taxpayers money is being spent, do not recognise they have before them the opportunity to assist LIAT in implementing that restructuring programme and in rising above its present financial circumstances.

Mr. President, as I indicated in my introductory speech, Bombardier was requesting that LIAT should put into an escrow account, on a monthly basis, US\$49 600, so that they could have it at the end of the lease arrangement, to repair the aircraft, in the event that they would have suffered any damage. Mr. President, based on the fact that LIAT now leases two aircraft from Bombardier, this

approach would mean that LIAT would have to put that money, US\$1.2 million, into an account on an annual basis, for the life of the lease. Sir, in a situation where LIAT is trying to improve its financial obligations, that was considered to be an enormous burden. Mr. President, what Government is seeking to do, is to provide a guarantee, so that during its cash flow difficulties, LIAT would not have to be putting aside that money. This is an effort to assist in the restructuring programme. Therefore, I cannot imagine how persons on the other side, could have failed to see the matter before us and who would have spent their time talking about matters that we have already spoken about, at the time when Government was increasing its shareholding in the airline,

3.00 p.m.

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SENATOR THE HON. E.R. GRIFFITH: ...that was the time when the Opposition should be raising the issues which they are raising today. Clearly, they have missed the boat and have also missed the plane as well.

Asides.

Sir, that does not surprise me because, Mr. President, when the restructuring programme for LIAT was announced some two years ago, it was known to everybody, there was no secret about it. The airline is now nearing the completion of Phase I of the restructuring so it is not new. I am surprised that persons, who want to speak with such authority on these matters, do not follow what is taking place on the issue. The airline is reaching the end of Phase I and there are a number of measures which have been put in place between 2004 and now as part of the implementation of the restructuring programme.

Mr. President, the first issue which was dealt with relates to the issue before us today, that is, that LIAT sets about renegotiating its arrangements with its major creditors, Bombardier is one. Senator Grant spoke at length about the enormous and extraordinary payments which Bombardier was asking LIAT to make. He pointed out that through efforts like this one before us, LIAT would be saved those burdens.

The implementation and restructuring programme for the benefit of Senator Stuart is reflected in the proposed action before us today, that is, that by providing the guarantee, LIAT would be save the trouble of having to put aside US\$49 600 per month, and that instead the Government would give Bombardier a guarantee that when the lease is out that LIAT would be allowed to return the aircraft in the agreed state because they would have been maintained over the period of the lease.

Mr. President, the first thing which LIAT set about doing was rearranging and rescheduling its debt and other arrangements with its major creditors. I do not expect that every time an issue comes before this Chamber about LIAT that you have to go back and say that. It was said before, and we will say it now but I will bet you that the next time an issue comes up about LIAT that persons would claim that they do not know what is the restructuring programme. Sir, Senator Grant spoke about a number of them.

Mr. President, during the last year, I traveled by LIAT numerous times through the region and I can tell anyone without any fear of contradiction that there has been a significant increase in LIAT's timekeeping.

Asides.

SENATOR THE HON. E.R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, that is because of the decision of LIAT that it would try to make sure that its flight can take off within 15 minutes after the scheduled time at the latest and this is what they are waiting for. The competitors are talking about half hour but LIAT is striving for 15 minutes. Sir, to date, LIAT has improved its records significantly, where on occasions, it is achieving 85 per cent. There is a marked improvement and it is not fair for anyone in 2006 to be judging LIAT and any support for it on 1974. Sir, the problem with us is that we tend to dwell in the past and refuse to acknowledge that the past is not reflected in the present and will surely not be reflected in the future.

Mr. President, there are other issues. LIAT, as part of its restructuring programme, reviewed its entire travel arrangements and identified the journeys which were considered profitable and those which were considered unprofitable and took the decision that certain routes that are not profitable would have to be brought to an end, unless the persons who wanted those routes serviced would provide the funds to cover the losses. This is another effort being made by LIAT to rearrange its business and there are several others.

Mr. President, the point is that the restructuring programme is not about to start but nearing the completion of Phase I and then there is Phase II. Sir, all of us who say that we support LIAT and that we recognise the importance of LIAT continuing its operations in the region, that they want to know about the restructuring programme, do not have any reason not to support this matter before us.

Mr. President, I was amazed to hear Senator Dr. Lowe expecting someone to produce concrete evidence now of how the airline doctor was going to succeed in the future but, Sir, that is an impossible task, even for a genius and not even a soothsayer can get it done.

Mr. President, one would have to give the gentleman time because if I have just conveyed to the Honourable Chamber a number of the aspects of the road map to show that the airline is implementing various measures to improve its operation, working towards the objective, which Senator Grant mentioned, of becoming operationally viable over a period of time and now to be asked to produce a road map for the CEO is really a little difficult.

Mr. President, the road map is already there, so I have a little difficult in understanding the issue, expect that it may be a political issue rather than an issue of proper management of the financial resources of the company.

Mr. President, LIAT continues to provide a worthwhile service to Barbados and to the region. The airline is putting in place measures to improve its operations, it will continue to do so and it deserves our support as it strives to improve its overall in the region.

Mr. President, on that basis, I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

On the motion of SENATOR THE HON. E.R. GRIFFITH, the SENATE resolved itself into Committee on the Bill, MADAM DEPUTY PRESIDENT in the Chair.

S55/15:09

Sequence 59

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Clauses 1 and 2 were called and passed.

On the motion of SENATOR HON. E.R. GRIFFITH, Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT reported to HIS HONOUR the PRESIDENT, the passing of one Bill in Committee and Mr. PRESIDENT resumed the Chair and reported according.

On the separate motions fo SENATOR HON. E.R. GRIFFITH, the Bill was read the third time and passed and cited as the LIAT (1974) Limited (Guarantee) Amendment Act, 2006.

ORDER NO. 7 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE
GUARANTEE BY THE GUARANTEE OF THE
GOVERNMENT, IN FAVOUR OF BOMBARDIER
SERVICES CORPORATION OF THE PERFORMANCE
BY LIAT (1974) OF AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE,
RETURN CONDITION OBLIGATIONS AND
REPOSSESSION CONTAINING THE TERMS AND
CONDITIONS AS SET OUT IN THE
SCHEDULE TO THE RESOLUTION

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Griffith.

SENATOR HON. E.R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, this Resolution is related to the matter which we just discussed and with all the remarks which were made, I feel that we have exhausted all the discussion on this matter. Unless others Honourable Members feel otherwise, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

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

On the motion of SENATOR HON. E.R. GRIFFITH, the Resolution was passed.

ORDER NO. 8 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE
GUARANTEE BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PAYMENT
OF THE PRINCIPAL SUM OF TWENTY-TWO
MILLION DOLLARS AND INTEREST THEREON
IN RESPECT OF A BOND ISSUE BY THE
TRANSPORT BOARD TO RBTT MERCANT
BANK LIMITED

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Griffith.

SENATOR HON. E.R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, I now understand where Senator Lowe got the \$22 million. His mind was at the Transport Board while we were discussing LIAT. I must apologise for saying that he missed the plane. I think that he was ahead of the plane. If he had caught the bus, it was ahead of the plane.

Sir, it is a good thing that he caught the bus, because the Transport Board is an institution which is very often maligned by a number of persons in this country, while at the same time praising it. It is remarkable that at one moment we are all saying what a service it is providing, we are identifying additional services which should be provided and pointing out additional routes which will be covered and so on, then in a twinkling of an eye, we find fault when the financial support that is required, to provide these services.

My view is, we in this country have to make up our minds as to what type of transport system we want and how we view any such system. Do we expect the Transport Board to service every route in Barbados throughout the

day, especially when very few people are travelling, and still operate as if it is a commercial entity? Of course, we all expect it to operate in a manner which will result in little or no subvention from the Government, but I fail to see how we could expect the Transport Board to cover all the routes in Barbados, profitable and unprofitable, to run a scheduled service with no rerouting when it is clear there are no waiting commuters, as experienced with the others. I have also seen them turning around when they recognise that there are no customers ahead and so on. I notice that some of them do not run the routes after a certain hour of the day. The Transport Board is not expected to follow that practice. It is expected to continue service throughout the day according to the schedule. It is expected to go into every nook and cranny, across Barbados, whether there are large numbers of persons living there or not. Yet we somehow expect it to work the miracle that it will still be profitable in the same way as if it was taking commercial decisions.

Mr. President, we have to make up our minds to decide whether we want the Transport Board to be as successfully financial as possible, or to make sure that persons in rural Barbados, in particular, would have access to service that enables them to make their journeys to and fro whenever they choose.

Sir, if we expect it to provide that extra service, which on its own will not be viable commercially, then we will have to give it support by way of subvention. Mr. President, it currently enjoys a small subvention from the Government, small within the context of the operation of the institution, and that amount of money is approximately \$7 million.

Mr. President, what is before us is a proposal for the Government to guarantee a loan provided by RBTT Merchant Bank Limited, to enable the Transport Board to purchase an additional seventy buses. Currently, the Transport Board has approximately 240 buses. Unfortunately, they seldom succeed in scheduling all of those buses on the various routes at any given time. At the moment they achieve in the vicinity of 170 per day, which is still very significant and substantial. The additional seventy buses, when received by the end of December 2006, will bring them to 310 nearer to their goal, for them to have buses in excess of what are required, for their daily journeys and so on. They will get there eventually.

Mr. President, this facility being provided by RBTT, will allow them to make those purchases, improve their operations and to cover the various routes across Barbados.

I have visited a number of countries where there are bus services. First, I would say that in spite of any deficiencies in our system, we do have a good system. There is always room for improvement, no matter what

area of operation we are looking at. Therefore, there is room for improvement here.

Sir, I would like to see the day when the Transport Board implements a schedule, where a person can approach a bus stop on the basis of the schedule, and board a bus at the time identified on the schedule. I certainly lived in countries, where that is done. On a daily basis I was able to travel by the bus. I left home at a particular time, knowing that when I reach the bus stop and at a certain hour I would get a bus.

15.20 p.m.

Sequence 60

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Senate 55, sequence 61, 3.20 p.m.

Senator the Hon. E.G. GRIFFITH: The bus would reach where I had to get off at a particular time, so that I could make my connection. I was able to buy that schedule at the beginning of every year, and it was valid for a whole year. I knew wherever I could get a bus, at whatever time, on every day of the year, including Christmas and Easter. I would certainly like us to reach that stage one of these days. It may be long in coming but I hope that we will work towards that, and I would like to see that for the entire bus service, not only in the Transport Board.

Sir, if we have a bus service that includes private operators, they too, in my view, should be expected to run schedule services. They should not be allowed to stop running when they think they are not going to make any money, or turn back on the route and leave others standing at the bus stop. They ought to be required to provide the service and, if they cannot provide it, let somebody else do so.

Sir, certainly from the point of view of the taxpayers, whose money go into the Transport Board, we would expect the Transport Board to continue to improve its efficiency. Sir, no one can deny that within recent years, the Transport Board has made a significant improvement in its operation.

I am sure, Mr. President, you would permit me to say that a lot the credit for that, has to go to Senator Gooding-Edghill, who is the Chairman of the Board and who, in my view, has been doing a fantastic job, in helping that organisation to rise to the occasion. Therefore, we should give our support to it by approving this Resolution before us, so that the Transport Board can be put into the position, where it has access to an increased number of buses, so that it can continue to provide the required service for commuters across the country.

On that basis then, Mr. President, I support this Resolution and beg to move that the Resolution do now pass.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Dr. Lowe.

Senator Dr. D.S. LOWE: Thank you, Mr. President.

The Resolution before us is very important, in the context of how we see the Transport Board playing its role in the society. Sir, as the Honourable Minister quite rightfully said, that if you view the Transport Board as a revenue generating entity, that somehow would influence how you view how it should be financed and how it should be managed.

Sir, if you view it as the provider of a social good, then one would also have to look at philosophical framework and try to articulate the role of the State, in seeking to keep the operations of the Transport Board efficient and effective, as it seeks to provide such a valuable social service to the country, as it seeks to allow the country to realise its full capacities, relative to human capital, relative to productivity, and relative to the ability to fulfill its mandate.

Mr. President, let me begin by saying that there are scores of very dedicated, very loyal employees of the Transport Board who, during their time, have provided valuable service to this country, through the Board. I want to say that the Democratic Labour Party recognises the efforts of these employees, in seeking to fulfill the mandate of the Transport Board, and applauds them wholeheartedly for the kind of the work they do, at times under strenuous circumstances, as it relates to the operational life of the Transport Board.

Mr. President, I say that because I have lived through, so far in my tender life, public transport when it was operated by the Rocklyn Transport and the Elite Bus Company. I realised that there has been a transition from one level of public transport to the current level we have, in the Transport Board.

I recall very well that in those days, not so very long ago, the bus service in Barbados seemed to be something that when you observe it, was conducted with a certain level of predictability, relative to buses getting to destinations. At the time, of course, the service was managed, not only by a chauffeur but also by a conductor, a person who was also responsible, then, there were persons called checkers. I am quite sure that many of you in this Chamber who are not as tender in age as I am, would remember that these persons would have been a key part of ensuring that the service was conducted with some measure of efficiency.

I grew up in St. Andrew, not too far from the Rocklyn Bus Company. I would recall how, from time to time, buses would get to certain destinations, a little off time and how the checkers, those persons who were responsible for ensuring that those time factors were honoured, would demonstrate a level of disappointment. They would be upset that these important time frames were not kept.

My view is that then, the service was not considered to be as mechanical and as impersonal, as in some cases today, and there was a significant human factor that always almost undergirded the provision of that important public transport, to the citizens of Barbados.

Mr. President, I would like to go on record as saying that, I believe those persons at the Transport Board currently, are genuinely seeking to uplift the level and quality of the service. I would also go on record as to say that those persons who are responsible for making decisions, and ensuring that the fleet of buses remain up to standard, relative to being able to provide the service that is needed to be provided, and that a lot of the management services seem to be pointing in a direction, where those who are responsible for leading the service, understand that there is a national urgency in trying to wean the Transport Board from a lot of the maladies that it has experienced over the years.

We would be less than honest and gracious to say that a lot of the issues in the Transport Board are issues that have lived across political generations. We would have to admit, Mr. President, that if we are going to be able to go forward, because the Transport Board is our business - it is not the Barbados Labour Party's business or the Democratic Labour Party's business, it is the business of this country - to ensure that all the necessary measures are put in place, and all of the services required are put at the disposal of those persons who are responsible for the delivery of the bus service.

Senate 55, sequence 61, 15:30:14

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SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: It is our business to ensure that these persons are given every opportunity to make real the expectation of travellers on the public bus service.

Mr. President, we know that there are people who have come to a position where they would rather drive on a ZR van or a minibus than to take a Transport Board bus. We also know that there are persons out there who, even if they have to wait 15 minutes behind arrival time at a particular location, will wait there for the Transport Board bus to get to their next destination, I think that is important.

Mr. President, that is the kind of expectation that I believe that the Transport Board must be enabled to deliver in order for us to realise the kind of bus service in this country that is predictable, that is undergirded by good customer service and that have an operational level of efficiency that would allow it to continue to move from strength to strength.

Mr. President, as we contemplate this Resolution for the Transport Board, we have to ask ourselves if we see it as a social good. We must ask ourselves what is the level of contribution of the Transport Board to the development of human capital, whether it relates to getting children to school, whether it relates to getting students to university or whether it relates to getting people across the country to various points of training. Mr. President, whatever domain of social development it covers, we have to ask ourselves if we value the contribution of the Transport Board to the level where we understand that building national capacity requires having a viable transit system owned and operated by the State.

Mr. President, I think that is important because it is my view that social development and social enablement require the State to have every possible tier of social service provision so that individuals who may otherwise not be able to get from point A to point B, because they do not have personal transportation, would not be disadvantaged in the society because you have a service that is inefficient and an unreliable.

The second point that I wish to make in terms of this social good is that the Transport Board, in providing its service, also contributes to productivity. Mr. President, we know that if you are scheduled to arrive at work by 7.30 a.m., and depending on your original point to get there, we would have to agree that to be able to predict that the bus is going to get there to pick you up on time to get you to your destination on time is critical.

Mr. President, a lot of things have happened in this society. A lot of issues have impacted upon transportation of all modes and a lot of issues have impacted upon the whole matter of traffic management that also impacts upon the Transport Board's ability to deliver the service. We know now that there are many more cars on the roads than they were when the Rocklyn Bus Company was in vogue. We know that there is a lot of development going on where there is a lot more movement early in the morning of transporting workers and so on that would also impede the progress of transportation. We also know that there are a lot more people on the road requiring the bus service than would have been the case many years ago.

Mr. President, all of these factors have to be taken into account if we are going to be able to come up with a pretty reliable qualitative and quantitative analysis as to

what may be some of the impediments affecting the Transport Board and what could be done to alleviate many of those impediments.

Mr. President, if we see the Transport Board as simply a revenue generating organisation, then our approach in ensuring that it has the capital to deliver the services that are required would be different from if we see it as a critical social service. I would want to suggest that even though we may view it as a social good service that we must still hold the Board accountable for the effective delivery of services and that we must still do our audits within the Transport Board to ensure that those persons who are required to deliver those services are doing so with the highest level of efficiency.

Mr. President, when we talk about workers' performance in Barbados, we cannot just analyse it from a perspective of competence, we also have to look at whether or not the work environment has set any impediments in place that disallow competent people from performing services at the level of competence they are capable. Sir, we have to look at mitigating circumstances within the confines or the culture of the institution and we have to do a serious audit to ensure that we understand exactly what may be impacting upon the quality of service of the Transport Board.

Mr. President, we hear people all the time complaining about this and about that. We hear people talk a lot about the Transport Board and the quality of drivers and the quality of buses. We hear people talk about the numbers of buses you see broken down in a given week in a given area. We hear people talk about route and route management and the fact that sometimes you see the larger buses filling routes that would more adequately be filled by the smaller buses. People complain about these issues because they complain from a position of what they see.

Mr. President, I am happy that we have in this Honourable Chamber, the Honourable Senator Gooding-Edghill, who is the Chairman of the Board and who would be able to shed some light on these operational issues.

Mr. President, I believe that at the end of the day it would be important for us to allow the public to know from a position where the person who is informing the public understands the inner workings of the Transport Board so that they could have a better perspective of how to appreciate some of the challenges that the Board faces and how to work with the Board as passengers in helping, not to exacerbate those issues, but to help to alleviate them, so that when the Board does its quality surveys and its focus groups, it could focus its customers on some of those matters and the customers should be able to give expression to some of those issues.

Mr. President, from our perspective, the real issue is not whether the Government should fund the Board or not or should provide this \$22 million. As a matter of fact, I would say that if the Government of Barbados can be so forthwith, and with careful reason, to support or to prop up LIAT, there could be no question that working to keep the Transport Board viable, in my view, is an equally important endeavour by the Government.

Mr. President, I believe that it is important for all of us to acknowledge that at the end of the day the building of a society, the creating of equality into the society, the enabling of citizens to be able not to be disadvantaged because they do not have certain things in the society and the commitment to ensure that the society is fair and just and that all men and women in the society have an equal opportunity to build up themselves would make it important for the Government to understand that not just saving the Transport Board but to make it as viable and as functional as possible is absolutely critical in this day and age.

Mr. President, I believe that when we begin to look at the catalogue of concerns that have been shared in the public domain are some of which we have experienced ourselves either by relating experiences of other people, or whatever the case might be, that there are some real issue, for example, the whole area of route management.

Mr. President, the Transport Board has been extending itself through its service to reach all quarters of this country, to reach potential passengers and customers. Sir, but one of the things that customers have complained about and one of the things that you may hear coming from employees, in particular operators, is that when a route has been adjusted, it is necessary for the persons who managed the routes to adjust the times that persons have to get to and from those routes on time. Mr. President, and if there is an extension of a route, automatically you would have to extend the time period that the operator would need to be able to manage that route without putting himself, the Transport Board's property, or the travellers at risk.

Senate 55 Sequence 62

3.40 p.m.

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SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Mr. President, I think that is one of the areas, as I have observed in recent times, that the management of the Board has been looking at, in terms of ensuring those important issues are taken care of.

Mr. President, from time to time, one would find there are turning points on some routes, where smaller buses are able to manoeuvre better than the larger buses.

Sir, I am quite sure the Honourable Senator Gooding-Edghill would agree that someone has to be able to manage the delivery of the service, and not simply from Head Office or from a bus terminal but that it is necessary for them to travel these routes themselves, to see if there are any potential impediments that would impact upon the quality of service or that would negatively impact on the perception and the level of satisfaction of the customers.

Mr. President, another issue is that of maintenance. Sir, I think that perhaps one of the biggest challenges in the Transport Board, in recent times, has been the area of maintaining the equipment, making sure that an adequate number of buses are on the road continuously, and that there is a minimum of disruption in the service, as a result of any breakdowns, sustained breakdowns or unavailability of equipment.

Mr. President, I remember when the transition from the Rocklyn Bus Service to that of the Transport Board occurred. At the time, those buses were red and silver coloured. I am quite sure that history would tell that and that the Chairman is fully aware of that.

Asides.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Mr. President, I remember there used to be a few enclosed Transport Board buses. I remember the Transport Board then had a number of buses called Leyland buses, which were as durable as you could have found them. In some cases, some of them travelled the hills of St. Andrew frequently on their routes. I recall there was another type of buses called the Sedan, which was also another reliable piece of machinery.

Mr. President, I am only making the point that those who are responsible for selecting the buses, must ensure that all of the conditions, under which those buses must operate, are taken into full consideration, so that there would be no need to have incompatibility between the requirements of the buses, to operate in the conditions of Barbados, and the buses capacity to be able to meet those operational requirements.

Mr. President, I am quite sure that those who are the planners of the Transport Board would take those things into consideration but for the record we want to put that on the table. We also want to ask ourselves, when the buses are ordered, is there a suitable ordering of parts for those buses, at the same time. In other words, a total of 71 buses could be ordered, and one of the buses could be used to supply parts, in cases of breakdowns. There needs to be an availability of spare parts. Sir, one of the reasons the Transport Board graveyard is so plenteous with dead buses, is because parts are not readily available.

Asides.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Mr. President, I am not saying this is due to any act of negligence. I am saying that very often, when buses are ordered, there is the need to ensure that parts are readily available. I do not care if, when purchasing those buses, the ratio is 71 buses to 5, where those 5 buses would be used as spare parts. I do not care it is 71 to 10 or 70 to 100 but the Transport Board make sure that the parts are readily available because that would reduce the downtime for buses, when small and minor things happen.

Mr. President, I have certain knowledge that there are cases where small things on vehicles cannot be immediately replaced because of the fact that they are not readily available.

Asides.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Mr. President, I do not know what is the worry amongst the Members on the other side. Therefore, the point is that you have to be able to ensure that there is an adequate supply of parts, whether they are axils, tyres or lights, whatever the case may be.

Sir, frankly speaking, I am tired of seeing Transport Board buses working with one taillight out. I am sure that the Honourable Senator Gooding-Edghill would agree that, from time to time, buses would go into the terminal and would be flagged for some malfunction but that by the time the another shift turns over, that bus would go back out on the road.

Asides.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Mr. President, that is not a story, that is a fact. The reason it happens, is that there might not be the availability of the parts required to work those buses, as immediately as possible.

Mr. President, this Government has said that we do not offer suggestions. We are here seeking to suggest to the Honourable Chairman of the Transport Board, that he needs to ensure that whatever the case might be, to make the Transport Board fully operational or as much as possible, the availability of parts must be there.

Mr. President, if you talk to some of the operators there, they would tell you that one of the biggest headaches they have, is that when small things need to be done, they cannot be done expeditiously and that, from time to time, that bus might have been a good bus, which could be otherwise used but that they have to wait for weeks, sometimes for months before that bus could become fully operational.

Mr. President, I heard the General Manager of the Transport Board say recently that they are now reducing

that time lag because they have been addressing issues related to the availability of parts. Sir, that is something that needs to be looked at and something that needs to be done.

Mr. President, I know it is possible to have a bus service that gets to its destination on time, one that could be predicted. I heard the Honourable Leader of Government Business talking about the fact that, in other places, persons could get a bus schedule and if the schedule says the bus would be there for 9:50, that by 9:50, that bus is going to be there. Sir, this service would be operating in climates where there is winter, as you would be operating here where there is a rainy season. Sir, the worst time of the year is operating during the winter but yet the level of efficiency is unbelievable, relative to how they are able to manage that.

Mr. President, the Transport Board has an arrangement with a maintenance company - and I do not know - but perhaps the Honourable Senator Gooding-Edghill or the Honourable Leader of Government Business could tell us whether or not that contract is producing the level of efficient service, relative to the servicing of the Transport Board buses.

Asides.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Mr. President, I would like to know that and I am sure that because of the level of efficiency of the Chairman of the Board, he would be able to tell us what is the status on that. Sir, we need to know. If that organisation is not producing the quality of service required to keep the fleet functional, then it might be the time for the Transport Board to look at other options, to ensure that the customer does not suffer, while they are waiting on a company that gets paid to do a job, for them not to do the job as efficiently as is required.

Mr. President, in terms of maintenance, there is the whole idea of logging efficiencies on buses. I believe, as I understand it, there should be a catalogue on all Transport Board buses that tells you the date of the last service and the date of the new service and that once those buses have reached that date, even if they are running as well as they could, they should be brought in for servicing.

Mr. President, that is the point I am making because very often, the truth of the matter is that some buses are overworked and are not meeting the maintenance requirements, which could contribute to the unnecessary wear and tear of parts. Sir, this could otherwise be avoided, if there was a consistent maintenance schedule for those buses.

SENATOR G. P. I. GOODING-EDGHILL: On a point of order. Mr. President, I did not want to interrupt the

Honourable Senator, only to reassure this Senate and the public at large, to the fact that there is, in fact, a maintenance programme at the Transport Board. In fact, it is computerised and well-documented.

MR. PRESIDENT: I will treat that as a point of order. Please proceed, Senator.

3.50 p.m.

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SENATOR Dr. D.S. LOWE: Mr. President, I am happy that the Honourable Senator Gooding-Edghill is eager to respond to the question. I am sure he will have a change to address the Honourable Chamber in his presentation but, Mr. President, the question I was asking is whether or not it was in place. I want not disputing that it was not in place and that if it is in place, what can be done to ensure that those persons who manage the catalogue, follow the stipulations relative to making sure that the equipment is spotted, flagged, repaired or maintained and that it gets back on the road in fine working condition.

Mr. President, let me go on to say that the other area which is important in terms of how the Government perceives the Transport Board is the whole area of customer services. Sir, I would go on record as saying that I am aware that the Transport Board has been investing a lot of energy in the area of customer services, not only as it relates to how the operators of the equipment, handle their customer but in terms of the terminal.

Sir, I have travelled by bus in more than one country and I know when you go to the terminal there is an information booth that you can get any piece of information to know where you need to get in the country. There are also booths set up in different location which are strategic points, not necessarily in the terminal where, for example, if tourists leave the Port and on their way out they want to get information on a bus route, they are sometimes placed intermediate booths where such persons can get the information they need. You would not want a tourist or, for that matter, anybody to walk all the way up town to Fairchild Street to find information when it might be more functional in terms of the service provided to allow those persons to have access to that kind of information. Again, Sir, this is a suggestion if it is not in place. I am not saying that it is not in place but I would like it to be addressed because I hear people raised questions from time to time about the efficiency with which information is provided relative to how buses run from place to place in that regard.

Mr. President, I believe that the Transport Board is an entity that has to be put in the best possible position to succeed. I believe it is important that as we go forward in terms of seeking to continue to advance the social wellness

of our people and to bring them into contact with all of the available services and opportunities in the country that the Transport Board plays an important role. The Democratic Labour Party understands that and supports the fact that from time to time the Government has to come on board and make sure that there are the necessary funds available to support the service.

Mr. President, I want to make sure when we talk about customer service that it is also understood that customer service is a two-way street. While we expect the external customer to be constantly studied, to be understood, their needs catalogued and the systems put in place to meet those needs, we also have to look at internal customer services because, often what happens internally, relative to customer service will impact what happens externally. In other words, Mr. President, if an employee feels that he or she is not given a fair opportunity to express concerns about the work they do or to make suggestion as to how the work should be improved, it is quite possible that the disposition of the person could be negatively impacted and the negative impact could play itself out in terms of how the person relates to the customer.

Mr. President, I know from time to time that the Board recognises workers and tries to make sure that those persons who have either served for a long time or persons who do great service get on the spot recognition. Sir, I think these things are wonderful but more needs to be done because there are low-cost efforts that could be put in place to make sure that persons who go the extra mile for the Transport Board are also treated with the same level of dedication from the management of the Transport Board in terms of recognising what they do.

Mr. President, very often what happens is that the Board of the Transport Board may, in fact, be putting all the systems in place but the Board has to deal with the Minister and, very often, the Minister is not on the same page in terms of vision and understanding the operational realities of the system, as the person who is sitting at the head of the Board, the General Manager and those key administrators who deliver the service.

Mr. President, I want to make the point that it is my hope that the Transport Board does not suffer any negative impact because a Minister feels that he or she should control what the Board does to the extent that when the Transport Board identifies service providers that would assist them in helping to build up the human capital of the Board, that they would give the Board the opportunity to be able to bring on board those persons without any impediment to themselves or any impediment to the potential consultant.

Mr. President, very often we talk about trying to save foreign exchange but Barbados brings so many

foreign consultants to this country. There are persons in Barbados who can provide the same service from a position of certain intimate knowledge of the culture and those persons are not given the opportunity to do so.

Mr. President, I am sure the Chairman of the Board, the Honourable Senator Gooding-Edghill, would agree that there should be every possible opportunity should be used to employ...

Asides.

SENATOR Dr. D.S. LOWE: Sir, we have the NISE Programme, you are working on customer service development and I do not see why that programme should not be involved. You have other persons, who are independent consultants, who bring a lot after the process and I do not see why they should be involved. Sir, it is my view that nobody cares about Barbados more than a Barbadian and, therefore, it is my position that when a Minister of Government, because of his own political bias choose to disallow an entity of the State from having the best possible opportunity to be a top-notch operation, then that person has missed the entire vision in terms of trying to create the best possible circumstances for excellent service in Barbados.

Mr. President, the Transport Board is an entity that must continue to do well. It is an entity that we believe is essential to the overall development of the country, especially at the domestic level. It is an entity that needs every possible support to ensure that a lot of the niggling issues that often impact negatively on the capacity of the Board to provide excellent service, those issues have to be removed and that those persons responsible for quality assurance, human relations, marketing and leading at different level, including the General Manager and all and sundry, know that with the backing and the support of the State, that they have every opportunity to ensure that the Transport Board becomes not only viable and efficient but a star quality public transport system in the region that provides outstanding service at every single point of service.

Mr. President, I thank you.

MR. PRESIDENT: Senator Sir John Goddard.

SIR JOHN STANLEY GODDARD: Mr. President, I rise in support of this Resolution because it is important that the people of this country have an efficient public transportation system. I would like to highlight, however, that the taxpayers of this country have subsidised the Transport Board very heavily over the years. Sir, according to the Audited financial Statement, the year ended March 2004, the Transport Board lost \$26 million and since then there have been significant increases in the prices of

gasoline so I would expect that in 2005/2006 the losses to be in excess of \$30 million.

H55/16:00

Sequence 64

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Sir John Stanley GODDARD: The Government has taken the decision, which I am not objecting, because it is an essential public service and therefore it needs to be subsidised, but this raises a more fundamental question. Subsidising the Transport Board is one thing, and I am not saying that it is not important. Sir, to what extent can the Government be expected to subsidise other essential services?

Mr. President, I am referring to tertiary education. In the beginning it was subsidised by the State. I think it was imprudent that it was done at that time. I am talking about around Independence. It was important, because it provided upward social mobility within the society and more people had access to higher education, which otherwise would not be case. Sir, tertiary education is costing Government over \$100 million a year; the University of the West Indies is \$60 million and Barbados Community College \$35 million.

Another important service which we expect the Government to subsidise is medical care. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital, according to the Estimates, would have received \$110 million in the last fiscal year. These are three services I have identified, public transport, tertiary education and medical care, all are essential and important.

Sir, the point I am making is, can the society continue to afford this level of subsidy, when we are seeing the national debt rising, when we are seeing increasing competition throughout the world? This country and every other country has to pay its way. The only question I am asking is, can we continue to pay our way if we want to provide the type of financial support to the three services which I have identified? These are transport, medical and tertiary education, and there are other subsidies in other areas.

Sir, it is a philosophical problem and, of course, it has political connotations as well, but it is basically a philosophical question. Can we continue? I am not criticising that in the past, but conditions have changed. Under existing conditions and the conditions that we expect to arise in the future, can we continue this level of support? I think that it is a very important question, and it needs to be addressed by the Government regardless of which Party is in power. It is not a political question. It is a philosophical and financial question. Can we continue that level of support?

Mr. President, with those few remarks, I support the Resolution.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Eastmond.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss L. V. EASTMOND: Mr. President, I rise to speak in support of this Resolution, for us to approve the guarantee by the Government of the principal and interest, for the redemption of the bond issue in the some of \$22 million. My understanding is that this particular financial transaction will result in the purchase of a number of buses, to be put on the roads in Barbados.

Sir, I do not have that much to say, and would like to thank all Honourable Senators that have already made a contribution to this debate, because it makes my job easier. I would particularly like to congratulate Senator Dr. Lowe, because he has broken new ground on behalf of the Democratic Labour Party. He has gone out on a limb to seek to make suggestions, as to how one might address some of the niggling social issues that affect us, one of them being transportation. He is very brave to do this. He has actually taken the lead, on behalf of his Party and we congratulate him for that.

Sir, I know that he must feel somewhat out there on a limb by himself, as it is not often done. It is very useful to get some practice at attempting to formulate policy, which is a thing that Governments do and not Members of the Opposition, which means that he has some ambition of one day, being able to assist in formulating policy, not that we can take any of the suggestions that he has made, but it was a good start and I commend him for it.

Mr. President, I really rise to speak on behalf of the constituents, especially in the rural communities of Barbados, who are the ones who tend to suffer when there are any shortages. As the Honourable Leader for Government Business pointed out, it is in the rural communities that we really are going to have buses travelling late, with one or two passengers. The issue always arises about the viability of such exercises. Of course, people in rural communities, do have a necessity to travel into Bridgetown or other areas to conduct their business. Therefore, it is necessary for a service to be provided for them. Mr. President, all around the world this type of service is subsidised by the taxpayers in the country. We would expect this to continue.

I notice that Senator Dr. Lowe had the opportunity to speak on behalf of the constituents of Christ Church East as well. He did not do so but I assumed this is because he understands that their case would have been put elsewhere adequately. Therefore, there is no need for him to do it here.

Sir, with respect to St. Philip South, it was abandoned by the Democratic Labour Party a long time ago, so we do not expect that there will be any kind of representation here on behalf of that constituency.

Mr. President, with respect to St. Philip West, we know that, clearly, no representation would have been made on their behalf before, with respect to this particular issue, whether it is intelligent, intellectual or audible. With respect to St. Philip West, nothing is ever said on behalf of that constituency in any other place, because the person that purport to represent that particular constituency, that person is only ever concern with national issues, never with community issues.

Sir, I accept that responsibility happily to represent the constituents of St. Philip West and their concerns.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss L. V. EASTMOND: Mr. President, I am hearing that the people voted for one, and got one free, and that is true. I acknowledge that. Unfortunately, the person who now sits in the Senate, was not able to gain the confidence of the people of St. Philip in 2003, so they voted for one person, I am doing the work and the people of Barbados should know that statement came from the Democratic Labour Party's representatives in the Senate.

16.10 p.m.

Sequence 65

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Senate 55, sequence 66, 4.10 p.m.

Senator the Hon. Miss L.V. EASTMOND: . . .

Mr. PRESIDENT: I do not think the record would confirm that.

Asides.

Senator the Hon. Miss L.V. EASTMOND: Mr. President, I am happy to do it because, at the end of the last election, I said that this is what I would do, that I would do my best to continue to represent their interest, and this is exactly what I am doing. It is so unfortunate that we could not hear from the other side that my contribution was unnecessary, because the people of St. Philip West were adequately represented.

Asides.

Senator the Hon. Miss L.V. EASTMOND: The response that you get somehow is that they voted for one and they got Lynette Eastmond free, but that is okay.

Sir, as I was saying, individuals in the rural communities in Barbados, including St. Philip West are the ones that tend to suffer, when there is any difficulty with transportation, and the availability of buses. I must say to Senator Gooding-Edghill's credit that this issue of transportation has been a major one with some of the constituents in St. Philip West. I have asked him to come to St. Philip West on more than one occasion, to discuss these issues with residents in the constituency, and he has made himself available to do so.

We thanked him for it. He explained to us the difficulties that the Transport Board had been experiencing, over a number of years. The problems that we are dealing with now are not problems that started in 1994. Many of these issues go back well before then and, we are doing our best to make sure that we resolve them.

Therefore, he was able to come to explain to us that part of the difficulty was making sure that we had the appropriate number of buses to do the work that we need to do, in order to make sure that as many of the residents of Barbados as possible, especially those in the rural communities, are served by the Transport Board. We appreciated that and we appreciated the challenge that the Board faces, in meeting these various requirements.

Sir, this is why, publicly, I would like to express my wish, my desire, my hope on behalf of the people of St. Philip West, that some kind of ease can be brought to their situation now, that it looks as though we are going to get an additional bus complement coming to Barbados.

I drew to his attention in the past, and I will not go into all of them because that is not necessary, but we do have circumstances where, for example, the people who live in the Fair View, St. Patricks area had that bus service changed, a number of years ago. When the road accessing Six Roads was being done, all of the buses were diverted to go through Fair View.

Unfortunately, a bus service was never put back on the route of the main from Fair View, up to St. Patricks that would go up to Six Roads. This is something that the residents continue to complain about. I know that no one on the other side would know about that problem, but that is a specific problem that they have. I have written and I have also spoken about it. They continue to speak to me about it and, I hope, that some relief now can be brought. The issue is not with the bus going through the main area of central Fair View. I should make that point very clearly, Sir, that is a very densely populated area. That is to continue. The difficulty is that we are not having a service

on the main road, which leads from Fair View to Grand View up to St. Patricks. Therefore, we hope that we can have that addressed.

The other issue has to do with the establishment of new communities in the area. I am sure that this is not peculiar to St. Philip West. One of the new communities that we have is the Breezy Hill Community, which continues to expand. It is actually a very large community.

The individuals in this area had been promised, and to the credit of the Transport Board, they have already looked at that area and have determined that the area should be served by making some alteration, through the route, which buses currently travel. They would also need additional buses to take up the slack that is created in any other area.

This is an issue that was ongoing before 2003 but since I became interested intimately in the constituency, it is something that has been brought to my attention. I have done my best to make sure that the Transport Board is aware that this matter needs to be addressed, in a very substantial way.

We also know that many of the challenges which the Transport Board has, in terms of meeting the rising demands of the citizens of Barbados, has to do with the fact that the country continues to develop and to prosper. Breezy Hill exists because there are many Barbadians who are looking for new housing solution. Breezy Hill is a large new development of individuals, who can now afford housing.

Prior to 1994, all of this great demand for public transportation would not have existed because people were home. They were not going to work. Now, in every house, there are several individuals who are going to work and they need to use the public transportation system. Before 1994, when the unemployment rate was approximately, I think, 24.3 per cent, people were at home trying to find a breadfruit to cook and that kind of thing. They are going out to work, so there is greater pressure.

Individuals have now moved into new areas and built new houses. Therefore, in areas where before you probably did not need the level of public transportation that you had prior to 1994, you now need it. These are challenges that we are not going to deny exist, because we understand why they have occurred.

They have occurred because the country is continuing to develop. People are continuing to develop. As people develop, they require better and higher standards of service. People are not only going to work but, they are going out more. They are going to events and they want to

use public transportation for it because, often, it is easier to use public transportation.

If you were going to Party Monarch down the East Coast Road, you would prefer to take public transportation and not actually drive your own vehicle down there. Many Barbadians are recognising that this is how they wish to use public transportation. I recognise, for example, that at the Pic-O-De-Crop Finals, public transportation was provided for citizens after the event. Therefore, they did not have to worry about getting a lift down there with somebody, or getting a taxi or something like that. Therefore, this is the good work that the Transport Board is doing, seeking to meet the needs of all Barbadians for their work and their leisure.

The people of the rural constituencies and, in that, I would include Christ Church East for the purposes of this discussion, the Mangrove area and the people of St. Philip West as well...

Senate 55, sequence 66, 16:20:14

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SENATOR the Hon. Miss L. V. EASTMOND: I am sure that they are anticipating, as I am, that with this loan guarantee, which I hope we manage to approve here, that we would be able to benefit directly from this injection of new buses into the public transportation system of Barbados.

Mr. President, in addition to that, we will also have the ordering of spare parts. Mr. President, Senator Gooding-Edghill spoke to us, and I know that the inability of spare parts is a major issue which they are also addressing. I do not think they are addressing it by importing one new bus for every ten buses that they plan to bring in. Mr. President, my business sense tells me that you would not import a whole bus to get a back light. Mr. President, I hope that this is no indication of how the Democratic Labour Party plans to create public policy in Barbados, that for every ten buses that you bring in you would bring in an additional bus, so that you could get a back light.

Asides.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order please!

SENATOR the Hon. Miss L. V. EASTMOND: Mr. President, I apologise that my colleagues are distracting me in this way, so I would wish to end here before they distract me any further. I am much obliged to you, Sir.

Her Honour Senator Dame Patricia SYMMONDS: Mr. President, I intend to be very brief. Mr. President,

when I say that, I always mean it, so those of my colleagues who are anxious to speak need not fear that I am going to stand here and spend an inordinately long time.

Mr. President, I do wish to begin by congratulating the Chairman and the members of the Transport Board on the efforts that they are making and hope to make in improving the transport system in Barbados. It is very, very important, as Senator Eastmond said, as we continue to improve the quality of life of all of our citizens.

Mr. President, there is one area of concern and I know that you would not be surprised or any of my fellow Senators when I say that it is to do with education. It is a problem which has engaged not only myself but my fellow principals and other colleagues for many years, it is to do with the children preferring to use other means of transport than that provided by the Transport Board. I think not only for of course economic reasons but for reasons with which we are all acquainted, that some ways should be found to encourage more children to use the Transport Board buses.

Mr. President, I am aware that the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports and the Transport Board have started discussions. I think they need to discontinue to discuss these problems and to find the best ways of transporting school children across the country. In the United States of America, there are dedicated school buses. I think we may need to look more closely at how school children in other countries are transported to school.

Moreover, in other parts of the world there is a Code of Conduct for the behaviour of children who travel by these buses. We do need to examine a system. where normally nowadays there is only a driver on the bus. I think it may be wise in deliberations between the Board and the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, to consider having a responsible adult on board to keep an eye on the children. I think that is vital not only for economic reasons but for the behaviour of the children nowadays who need more discipline and who would listen to a responsible adult whom they respect and who possesses the sort of values that can speak to and listen to the children.

With those few words, Mr. President, I just wish to say that I totally support this Resolution.

I thank you.

SENATOR Miss P. E. PARRIS: Mr. President, I rise to support the Resolution before us today which is seeking to give the Transport Board permission to purchase 70 new buses. We are all aware that the Transport Board is presently having challenges with the service that it is offering to the public. This guarantee would assist them in its efforts at providing a better bus service.

Mr. President, we hear many stories from persons who get to work late and children who get to school late because they were waiting long for a bus, and this affects the productivity in the country. Sir, I agree with Senator Lowe as it relates to the maintenance programme to be put in place at the Transport Board. I am appealing to them to ensure that an effective maintenance system is in place because these buses are on the road for several hours and if they are not properly serviced and maintained, we could find ourselves in the situation that we are presently having with several buses parked for repairs.

Mr. President, there has been an increase of 8 per cent in the number of traffic accidents by the Transport Board drivers. I believe that the care of the buses should not only be left to the management of the Transport Board, I believe that greater care must be taken by the operators of these buses.

I am aware of the initiative that is being done by the insurance brokers and the Transport Board in recognising operators who were not involved in accidents, and I would like to commend the Board for this initiative and would urge other drivers to be part of this recognition, because the safety of the passengers is very important and they need to try to minimise the number of accidents that occur.

Mr. President, the delays experienced by the commuters are sometimes unavoidable. We hear stories of persons waiting in the bus terminal for some times three to four hours for a bus to take them to their destination. I believe that communication needs to go to the commuters who are in the bus terminal, saying to them that the bus has been delayed and what time they could expect a bus. The Transport Board is providing a service to the public and they need to take their customer service seriously and let the commuters know when they could expect a bus. I am sure that with the increase of the 70 new buses that this would be a thing of the past.

Mr. President, the charter service at the Transport Board is providing excellent service. We oftentimes hear of operators who are requested by persons who are chartering these buses. Mr. President, I would like to commend them because when an organisation, a church, requests a specific driver - because they had them last year and they want that driver again this year - it shows that the Transport Board is doing something right as it relates to its customers service. Again, I would like to commend the management of the Transport Board, and the drivers for this initiative, in training its staff so that they can be requested by individuals.

Senate 55 Sequence 67

4.30 p.m.

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SENATOR Miss P. E. PARRIS: Mr. President, Senator Dame Patricia spoke to the dedicated school bus service. I have spoken to this in this Honourable Chamber, before and I am appealing again to the Transport Board to implement this. We hear school children saying they are getting to school late, as a result of not having a bus service. If this bus service is made available to them, it would help to eliminate some of the deviant behaviour we now have. They would not have an excuse, when they are late for school, neither would they have the opportunity to use another source of transportation.

Mr. President, I believe the matter of vandalism to the buses must be thoroughly investigated by officials of the Transport Board. I also believe that children, who are responsible for vandalising these buses, should be made responsible to pay a percentage of cost. In this way, they would be able to appreciate that nothing in life is free but that there is a cost to what they are doing.

Mr. President, as we look forward to these new 70 buses on our roads, a greater effort must be made by the Ministry of Transport, to maintain the number of bus stops. We are going to have 70 new buses on the roads but the signage on the bus routes would still be in dire need of repair. In some instances, we see buses stopping where there are no bus stops or when a bus stop is present, it would either be illegible because of the fact that it would either be covered with grass or that it is rusty and needs maintenance.

Mr. President, therefore, I appeal to the Transport Board and to the Ministry of Transport, to maintain the bus stops and have them so that persons can read them easily. I know that sometimes, as we drive around the country or sometimes when we are lost, both locals and visitors use these bus stops to guide us as to whether we are going in to or out of Bridgetown. Therefore, these bus stops act as a means of direction for us.

Mr. President, in closing, I am cognizant of the inconvenience being experienced by the commuters and so too is the Transport Board. Therefore, as it goes forward to the purchasing of these 70 new buses, I look forward to an improvement in service. Sir, I would not want to dwell on the past but would like to congratulate the Chairman, the management and staff of the Transport Board. We look forward to them servicing the routes and increasing its fleet.

Mr. President, I thank you.

SENATOR I. St.C. LINTON: Mr. President, I rise to give support of the Guarantee of \$22 million for the purchase of 70 new buses.

Mr. President, I think I could relate to the history of Government's involvement with commuting passengers across Barbados but first I would want to congratulate Senator Lowe for having taken my advice earlier this morning and having put something on the table.

Mr. President, Senator Lowe mentioned the Transport Board as being a revenue-earning agency. He also mentioned it as being a social good to the people of Barbados. Sir, how do we marry these two? Any social good in Barbados has a cost, and I do not think that over the years, when we look at the Transport Board and its subsidies, that we have ever quantified the cost of the social good to the society. Therefore, I think that a study should be taken, to include this as part of the cost of transporting Barbadians across the island, on a public transport system. It is needed, in order to get an understanding that the millions of dollars spent on the Transport Board, include that cost. Therefore, it would relate to a softening of the impact, in relation to the subsidising or spending of so much money on the Transport Board, in commuting passengers, without such an understanding of the social impact on the cost.

Mr. President, the history of the Transport Board, in my view, is one that we should certainly look to pull out of partisan politics in Barbados. It is too important to us in Barbados. It is the same thing we studied this morning when we spoke to the matter in relation to LIAT, is the same matter with the Transport Board.

Mr. President, when one considers how Government has gotten involved with a transport system, one would realise that it came as a result of private concessionaires deciding to pull their buses off, in order to get higher fares. The Government of the day felt that to pay a higher fare, at that time, would have been disadvantageous to the society as a whole, who depended on private concessionaires to bus them all over Barbados. These private concessionaires might have had a good reason but the effort to do so, in my view, was not a correct one. I think in matter such as these, there should be consultation. They should be looking at the whole ramifications of what it would cost and what would be the needs of the society.

Mr. President, persons cannot talk about revenue earning and the social good, while, at the same time, doing some of the things that were done at the Transport Board. I recall, in 1975, before the General Election, the bus fare was reduced on the Transport Board, from \$0.65 to \$0.25. At the same time, the Government had decided to subsidise the private concessionaires with \$0.40 to each passenger, which meant that the Transport Board and Government were being stifled of funds. Sir, if bus fare is reduced to \$0.25, while the private concessionaires are being subsidised by \$0.40, that would not be a revenue-earning

exercise. That would be putting money into private business.

Mr. President, another interesting occurrence was in the 1990s, when the Transport Board had to face a situation, introduced by the various Ministries, where the major earning routes of the Transport Board were given to private enterprises. I recall that on the road, from Bridgetown to Oistins and Silver Sands, buses used to move every 15 minutes, and it was working. People knew that they could have gotten a bus on time. They know that they could come out at a particular time and a bus would be on its way up, either from Bridgetown or from its point of destination.

Mr. President, it also happened in the Pine, the Ivy and in Bank Hall, where I live. In other words, when such a decision was made, the Transport Board was literally stripped of its revenue. Sir, to my mind, that impacted on the revenue on the Transport Board, to a point where it has not yet fully recovered.

4.40 p.m.

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SENATOR I. St.C. LINTON: I am simply saying that it is time, when we look at matters like these, to be able to sit together in some way and work out a system which is best for Barbados, best for the consumer and best for the operation of the Transport Board along with the private sector and one should not disadvantage the other.

Mr. President, we bring new buses to Barbados and in no time, either by careless driving or whatever, you can hear that new bus is damaged to the effect that it cannot go back on the road. I am disturbed at a time in this country when we are looking at having new traffic arrangements in Barbados because I believe that any responsible Government and responsible Opposition would rally to this cause. I am disturbed to hear that the matter of looking at the traffic laws of Barbados has come before Parliament of Barbados and that the Ministry and Government decide to establish a Select Committee in this important matter relative to what happens on the roads of Barbados with traffic, with the buses of the Transport Board and with what happens to the private sector buses and things of that sort.

Mr. President, it disturbs me that a serious Opposition decides not to participate in that Committee. Sir, they cannot be serious when on the streets of Barbados, at this time, there is road rage. Recently, in the area where I lived, we were getting trouble because vehicles were coming down the street quickly and they introduced a system where for two hours, 7.00 a.m. to 9.00 a.m. traffic would not be able to come through those areas.

Mr. President, you want to know something, some people still came down the street between 7.00 a.m. to 9.00 a.m. at greater speed than they did before because they knew they were breaking the law and that a policeman cannot be every where and in their haste to get off the road which they should not be on, they travel faster.

Mr. President, I am simply saying that at this time, the entire Parliament system should be looking at the matter of what happens on our streets in relation to driving vehicles. There are two things which I want to suggest and I hope that the Chairman, Senator Gooding-Edghill would take these two matters into consideration. Mr. President, I believe that we should introduce a system in Barbados where at least you should be able to have a transfer ticket to two rides. For example, a person coming from one part of the country and then have to travel by another route should at least be allowed to pay the first \$1.50 and the \$1.00 to transfer. It will improve the revenue of. Secondly, I believe it is time for us to have at least two buses dedicated by the hour, one to leave Grantley Adams Airport and travel the whole highway to St. Lucy Church and, at the same time, one leaving from St. Lucy Church to run the whole highway. I think it is an opportunity to help persons who have to travel between the airport and St. Lucy. It would make a lot of sense, and it could be viable and if Barbadians know that there is this system, they would use it.

Mr. President, I want to support this Resolution with the points I have made and would like to ask the Opposition to reconsider its position on the new traffic regulations in Barbados. They need to make a contribution and it would be crucial at this time for them to participate. It disturbs me because they have signaled that they would not but I am hoping they would change their mind.

Mr. President and Honourable Members of this Senate, I support this Resolution wholeheartedly.

MR. PRESIDENT: Senator Dr. Chandler.

SENATOR DR. F.L. CHANDLER: Mr. President, like LIAT in the air, I think that the Transport Board buses are necessary on the ground but I think that we need to ensure that the bus system is run efficiently and with some discipline that would control the vandalism which we have at the moment and also to properly maintain and service the stock, if not the 70 buses would just go the way of those in the very unsightly graveyard at Weymouth.

Mr. President, I have always wondered why parts of some of these out of service buses, if we could not cannibalise some of these buses which are out of service to get parts and put some buses back into service - I think I have mentioned it to Senator Gooding-Edghill at some time. The bodies of the others along with other scraped

vehicles from around the island could be used to start a very lucrative recycling business while the useful engine and other parts should be stored neatly in a warehouse somewhere similar to the warehouses used by the private sector people who run second-hand parts businesses.

Mr. President, if you put all the carburettors here, all the distributors and the different parts together, it would be easy to find them and use them in repair rather than having the whole bus in the parking lot at Weymouth. This would free up space at Weymouth and improve the untidy appearance there.

Mr. President, I hope too that the Board would ensure that the company which is supplying these buses will stock parts since my own experience with that company does not give me much confidence that it will. Sir, recently I had to replace the back door of my jeep, the door was in stock but not the glass which fits into the door. If you damage your door so badly that it has to be replaced, I would think that the glass would be shattered. Sir, the glass had to come in from Trinidad and I had to wait for many other simple parts and I trust this would not happen with the buses.

Mr. President, also on that same subject, I think we need to look into some amendment for the Consumer Guarantee Act, which ensures that when you sell someone a vehicle that you carry the parts.

Mr. President, with these few words, I support eh Resolution.

S55/16:50

Sequence 69

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Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Barker.

SENATOR T.E. BARKER: I rise to give my wholehearted support to this measure, where Government seeks to guarantee a loan of \$22 million, to be used by the Transport Board for the provision of more rolling stock.

Sir, the question of a guarantee, is one of great importance. The Transport Board will use the guarantee, to access a loan from the commercial bank. As we all know, the Transport Board is a statutory corporation and they have the right by law, to enter into these arrangements. Sir, not only will the guarantee allow them to acquire the loan, but also it can have a positive effect on the interest rate, at which the loan is secured. The use of a Government guarantee in this regard is commendable and it makes sense. It strengthens Transport Board's financial position to access the loan market.

Mr. President, it is expected that the Transport Board, over time, will repay this loan. This brings us to the question of the transport sector, especially in relation to the Transport Board and also the question of subsidies or lack of subsidies.

Sir, it has been stated that in order for the Transport Board to break even, we will have to double bus fares. That is a fact. Sir, as we are aware, bus fares have not been increased for the last thirteen years or so, from the present \$1.50. As we know, everything else has increased.

The Government has taken a decision, that given the need for an efficient and stable transport system, it would use State funds, to meet the needs of the Transport Board. For example, last year \$45 million was the subsidy to the Transport Board, and in 2004, \$23 million. The Government is putting a lot of money into the Transport Board, and doing so consciously, because the alternative, is to increase bus fares to a very high level. We know that the persons who use the Transport Board are in general the local workers. That is a fact.

Sir, to call upon them, to pay more especially, those who have to take two buses to work, we can see the tremendous effect it would have on their pockets.

The Government has taken a decision, and one which makes economic sense and this is how this Government seeks to order its affairs, especially in relation to transport - that the State will subsidise transport, in order to keep the cost at a level which the users can tolerate. Sir, the alternative would be a \$3 bus fare and we all know the chaos and hurt that will result from such an imposition.

Mr. President, I have no fundamental problems with a subsidy. As I said, it makes economic sense and it is consistent with the way we do things. This is one of the reasons, in terms of all the indicators of the Human Development Index, we are at a high level. We have decided that health, education and transport, those social services, would be subsidised, in order to keep the cost to the consumer at a reasonable level.

I think that most Honourable Members here would agree with that approach to the transport sector. It has brought tremendous benefit in the past and will continue to do so in the future.

Sir, I remember as a boy, and Senator Dr. Lowe would have had that experience, that the last bus to St. Andrew was 7 O'clock and that the fellows who attended the 4.30 p.m. shows, very often had to leave, just before the last shot was fired in the western. They had to leave 'stupsing' and quarrelling, to rush down town to catch the 7 O'clock bus. The fellows would always complain. As a result, a lot of people have left the countryside, the

resultant urban shift, because services were not readily available in the rural areas. The resultant urban shift has not helped this country, there is a now a lot of neglect of agricultural land, because of the exodus of people away from the rural areas into town. Sir, a lot of it could be the result of services, including transport, not readily available in these areas.

Sir, I want to suggest that the same problem is happening now in another way. When we think of it, we are moving from a 7.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. to work shift. That is a fact. A lot of new businesses operate with different hours. For example, supermarkets are now opening until 10.01 p.m. Sir, when the worker leaves at 10.00 p.m. or there about, unless you have a bus service operating to midnight and so on, that person will have tremendous difficulty getting home.

Mr. President, do not forget that the buses running those hours are not going to be full, because the demand is not going to be that great, at that time of the night, so the buses are half full. That is why the private sector does not run their vehicles after 8.00 p.m. or 9.00 p.m., primarily because after that time, there are less passengers available. Therefore, the Transport Board has to fill that gap, to make sure that although it might be in a sense, uneconomic so to do, they have to ensure that buses are there so that workers in the hotel sector and other sectors who finish work at 10.00 p.m. and 11.00 p.m. can get home.

If you are looking for the same profitability for the public transport sector, you have to take all of these into consideration. I am contending that profitability cannot be the sole criterion, by which we assess the public transport system.

Sir, I am saying that they must be efficient, and they must operate properly, but at the same time we must not judge the public sector transport, on just the criterion of profitability alone. We have to look at it in a holistic way. The provision of buses at those hours where the buses are unprofitable, are providing a much needed service, to keep the rest of the economy going. Therefore, the rest of the society should pay for the shortfall, which the public transport will incur, as a result of the fact that it has to run at uneconomic times. Sir, that is something we need to understand and appreciate.

If we go on strict profitability lines, we will have a bus service which ends at 8.00 p.m. or 9.00 p.m. and we are back to square one, in terms of our social services, et cetera. Mr. President, as we move to what we call a twenty-four-hour work day, these things become critical. These are critical and crucial.

Sir, I would like that when we are looking at the operational deficit and other deficits of the Transport Board to take these factors into consideration.

17.00 p.m.

Sequence 70

Wednesday, August 16, 2006

Senate 55, sequence 71, 5.00 p.m.

Senator T.E. BARKER: Sir, I know that the money is to help the sector with the new rolling stock. I want to suggest that the Transport Board needs to have a better policy with respect to the acquisition of rolling stock. Sometimes one year, they buy 100 buses. Then, they do not buy for two to three years and then, they buy another 100 buses or whatever.

I believe that if we know what the useful life of a bus is, then it is very easy to work on a mathematical model. There are many models around, where you say, look, in order to keep the fleet going, I need to have this replacement policy, so that every year, I should be replacing 20, 30, whatever the figure is, based on the calculations.

Sir, when you do that, two things will happen. You are not going to have the buses available and, secondly, those buses that are working well, you would tend to overuse and create even more problems. Sir, rather than the bus getting a breather, so to speak, because it is working, you have to keep it working, in order to satisfy the demand out there on the road. Therefore, we need a better replacement policy, so that you would not have this spasmodic system of buying.

Sir, we should be buying every year, whether 20 or 10 or whatever, in order to keep the fleet going. What I think would very well happen, if this was properly done, we may even get another year or two of useful life, out of the bus. Sir, with a proper replacement policy, you may be able to extend the life a little more, which would obviously be to the benefit of the Transport Board. I say useful life, because sometimes, it might be uneconomical to keep a unit going just because it is going. All of these are issues we have to take into consideration.

Sir, on the question of staff training, I believe that the Transport Board has to pay a lot more attention to training the drivers. For example, a bus may cost, approximately, a quarter of a million dollars, a fellow goes and he is backing down every minute and so on. Now, he is showing off. He has a new toy, so he goes down the hills and parade, and in 'two-twos', as the saying goes, the bus has transmission problems. Sir, I do not know what it

would cost to get a replacement transmission but you see the difficulty.

Now, from the start, if that driver was trained, and I do not only mean trained today, but every year, or two, you call him back in for a couple days of training or whatever, so that you reinforce what he has been taught before. Then, above all, we have to pay special attention to the drivers and the operators and how they react with the buses.

Sir, if a particular driver, every bus that he is driving, very often is in the workshop, you know the problem is probably not the bus. The problem is the operator. He may be doing something, which ensure that every time he takes up a bus, within a few weeks or months, it has to go into the workshop. Therefore, we need to keep proper records of, not only how the bus works, but who is operating the bus. Sir, if we could get the efficiency up, then I believe we may be able to get a couple more years out of the same vehicle.

Sir, when I a boy, the Federal Bus Company was the one that I grew up on, and some of those buses last for many years. If you live on the 22 route, you may meet two or three drivers. Obviously, they are going to change shifts but, year in and year out, you have the same fellow driving the bus and you knew them by name. It is almost a personalise service. Even now, when I see some of them, we strike up a conversation, so that you got to know your bus driver. He became part of the community, so to speak.

Probably, I wonder if the Transport Board might not want to go back to that sort of system, where drivers are identified in their routes. All these are things they can look at, but the point is that the bus system to the community, was seen in a slightly different way in those days. It was a little more than making money. It was providing a service, and the drivers and conductors were part of the community, and we need to get back to that sort of system.

Sir, this is the age of technology and I believe that it is easier now, than it was then, to keep track of the buses. I am not sure if the technology is available to the Transport Board but I know it is available, worldwide, a tracking device, where one can stay in his office and say, for example, that Bus No. 50 is in Horse Hill and it is moving at 30 miles per hour. Or, Bus No. 45 is going down Horse Hill and moving at 60 miles per hour. This way, when the driver comes in, the superintendent could have word with him, and say, "sonny, you were...and you were trying to kill people". I think we are going to have to use these sorts of techniques, in order to improve the efficiency at the Transport Board.

Sir, I support this measure. It is an important measure and we need to do every thing possible to ensure that the transport service in this country, is at first world

level. We should be able to set our clocks, so to speak, by the buses.

When I was a boy, and this was not too long ago, you knew that the bus was going to be at your bus stop at five minutes pass the hour or whatever. Sir, come rain, come shine, you know that virtually, that is going to be the case. I believe that we can get back to that system. If we can get back to that sort of efficiency, than a lot more people will say, yes, I have a car but at the same time, the bus is so comfortable and efficient, I am going to leave my car home, as is done in a lot of countries, and take the bus. Obviously, that would have the effect of easing congestion on the road, to some extent. Therefore, it is key that we get this transport system working properly.

As for the place of the private sector, they have a place but there is a need for them to be responsible and to be responsive to the needs of the society. At present, I am not sure that they are. Sir, just as the Transport Board can be more efficient and can provide a better service, I believe that the private sector can provide a better service than they presently providing. Therefore, I am calling for the Transport Board to increase their efficiency and more so, calling on the private sector, within the transport system to also do their best to ensure that this country has a much better transport system.

Sir, I also want to say that, yes, we have a good system. It is not the worse. In spite of what we are saying, it is working to some extent but there is room for improvement. If we are to maintain the sort of society that we all want to see, transport must be a key element in all of that.

Sir, I support this Resolution and commend it to this Honourable Senate.

I thank you, Sir.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Senator the Hon. E.R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, I beg to move that this Senate be suspended until 5.30 p.m. today.

The question that the Senate be now suspended until 5.30 p.m. today was put to the Senate and agreed to and Mr. PRESIDENT suspended the Senate accordingly.

Senate 55, sequence 71, 17:09:03

Wednesday, August 16, 2006

RESUMPTION

Mr. PRESIDENT: This Sitting is resumed.

SENATOR A. A. BYNOE: Mr. President, I rise to support the Resolution before this Honourable Chamber in relation to the \$22 million to purchase 70 new buses. The Guarantee for the loan is for 10 years at an interest rate of 7.25 per cent.

Mr. President, I would like to dwell a while on the interest rate to make the point that we have to watch interest rates in this country.

Senate 55 Sequence 72

5.30 p.m.

Wednesday, August 16, 2006

SENATOR A. A. BYNOE: Mr. President, in today's climate, the business cannot survive if we find interest rates escalating. Therefore, I am somewhat pleased that Government has been able to negotiate an interest rate of 7.25 per cent.

Mr. President, Senator Goddard was somewhat concerned about the national debt, which, according to the Barbados Economic and Social Report, 2005, shows that the domestic debt reached \$3. 250 billion. Mr. President, Government is a significant borrower within the local market and, therefore, it is in Government's interest to operate and to create the fiscal environment that would contribute to interest rates being as low as possible.

Mr. President, in supporting this Resolution, I would like to make a plea to the commuters and would ask that they pay close attention to the upkeep of the buses. Experience has shown that a lot of the buses are disfigured, from time to time, because of vandalism. We, therefore, have to send a strong message to such persons, to desist from such practices and to consider that they too are taxpayers, who are contributing to any cost of repairs that would ensue. There is, therefore, a civic responsibility on the behalf of all persons using the Transport Board system, to safeguard these assets. Similarly, those who do the repairs, et cetera, as workmen, also have a civic responsibility to do the best job possible, in maintaining the stock at the Transport Board.

Mr. President, I would also like to take a look at our bus terminals. Sir, this Government spends a considerable amount of money in providing modern bus terminals in this country. However, I am not so sure that Bajans realise how important it is and what a responsibility they have, in ensuring that they respect the property of the Transport Board, for example, its bus terminals.

Mr. President, furthermore, here is a plea to all those persons who use the terminals, to make sure that they use them in the best way possible. Sir, that not only relates to

the actual disfigurement of the compound but also to the manner in which they take care of certain urges. I think too much disposal takes place behind corners, when people ought to be more responsible and do what they have to do, in the places that are designed for such disposal.

Mr. President, it would seem as though I am pleading again, and this is perhaps a term that should not be forgotten. Sir, there is one, who was elected and there is one, who has come freely. Well, I am sure that Senator Eastmond would be happy to consider herself a 'Freebie' in such circumstances but my plea would be to the goodly Senator, to put in a case for a bus terminal at Six Roads, St. Philip.

Mr. President, it was 5:01 p.m. when Senator Barker spoke of a supermarket that closes at 10:01 p.m. There are two such supermarkets, one being located at Six Roads. Sir, I am somewhat concerned that when employees, not only from this establishment but from others within the Six Roads area, have to get from St. Philip to St. Lucy; from St. Philip to St. George; from St. Philip to St. Thomas; from St. Philip to parts of Christ Church, they have to go to Bridgetown. They then have to catch one or two other buses, before they could get to their homes.

Mr. President, in this day and age, I believe we should be able to construct a route system that would allow commuters from Six Roads, to take a bus to Speightstown, where they could then take a bus to St. Lucy or for that matter, take a bus from Six Roads, straight to Oistins or for that matter, from Six Roads to St. George Church or for that matter, from Six Road, to somewhere in St. Thomas or somewhere in Belleplaine.

Mr. President, the point I am making is that Six Roads is now developing into a commercial hub and, therefore, attention has to be paid to the transport needs of the area.

Mr. President, it is with these few words that I lend my support to this Resolution before this Honourable Chamber. I thank you.

SENATOR R. O. MARVILLE: Mr. President, I too rise in support of this Resolution and to say that I do think there are some things at which we need to look.

Mr. President, I think perhaps we tend to look at items a little bit too narrowly, in the sense that we would look at the bus service now, at traffic offence another time, we tend to avoid looking at cars, and we would look at the question of schools and the school bus service at some other time. Mr. President, fundamentally, I believe there are so many questions or issues relating to the whole scope of transportation that need to be dealt with, that we ought to think of setting up a committee, to deal with these matters.

This committee could then put up a body of recommendations.

Mr. President, we are in a situation where oil prices are spiralling and that means, whether or not we like it, that everything is going to cost us more but perhaps what costs us most, is the number of vehicles that run around our roads in Barbados.

5.40 p.m.

Wednesday, August 16, 2006

SENATOR R.O. MARVILLE: This is an area where the bus service would serve us more cheaply and more efficiency if it were organised along the right line. I do not myself believe that there is any country in which at least some element of the bus service is not subsidised.

We cannot fool ourselves into believing that given the circumstances of having to serve distant areas where very few people go but where people live and where people have to move from that point to work somewhere else that we can do without providing some means of getting back home. We are a country with one vehicle to every two persons. What is interesting is that less than half of us own vehicles. It means that almost invariably, we have vehicles running all over the place with only one person. Undoubtedly, we need to reorganise the bus service. We need to have schedules that make sense and to know that you can go out on the highway at 5.23 a.m. and know that there would be a bus at 5.23 a.m. or whatever time that the schedule says.

Mr. President, we also need to have successful maintenance of the buses and some guarding over the property. There must not be the vandalism that exists now, et cetera. We need to reorganise a few other things. Senator Linton mentioned the possibility of transfer. I would not say \$1.50 or \$1.75 but I would say \$1.50 or \$2.00. In other words, if you are in St. George and need to go to St. James, you have to go to town and take another bus to St. James but you could use the same ticket if you pay \$2.00 for a transfer ticket as long as it is done within one hour. This is done in several countries.

Mr. President, there is another alternative where you could buy a ticket for one month which is cheaper than if you pay day by day. Sir, all these measures would make it a lot easier for the Transport Board to compete with the private sector in ways they would not come up with because nobody would accept another person's transfer, et cetera.

Mr. President, let us get back to the point about cars. We have all these people travelling one in a car all over the place. We really have to deal with that. We have to say that

no car will come into Bridgetown between 7.00 a.m. and 10.00 a.m. with one person in it.

Asides.

Senator R.O. Marville: Sir, this would require some sort of system where you had short bus rides into town but it would be possible, or, some of us who have cars could pick up people who do not have cars, we would have much less traffic on the road and, therefore, a considerable saving on gasoline. The bus system itself does need support and reorganisation.

Mr. President, I have noticed that when school is out that it is terribly easy to travel and that when school is in that it becomes extremely difficult and it is practically the same vehicles on the road only running different routes with parents ferrying children in and out of school. There has to be a school system that is a bit more properly organised. In other words, if you are from St. Lucy, basically there is no reason why you should be going to St. Leonard's School and if you are from Christ Church, no reason why you should be going to Coleridge & Parry School, then we could have a rational school bus system which takes children from school and back. Again, this would take a lot of the traffic off the road.

Mr. President, we need to look at these things. While I approve of the Resolution in front of us, we have to look at the broader picture. Again, when we are talking about penalties on minibus drivers, the same offences practised by them are practised by other vehicles. There are some occasions when I stop on the road, I have a car that weights three tons and it shakes because the person behind me has his music up so loud that the bass is actually shaking my car. He is not a minibus driver but is committing an offence in much the same way.

Mr. President, I think we have to cover everybody in the legislation and not just look for specific areas. We have to try seriously to rationalise the total problem of transport, which is a problem in itself.

Mr. President, I thank you.

MR. PRESIDENT: Senator Gooding-Edghill.

SENATOR I.G.P. GOODING-EDGHILL: Mr. President, I too rise to support the Resolution before this Honourable Chamber to approve the guarantee by Government, principal and interest necessary for the redemption of the bond issue in the sum of \$22 million. Sir, I must also disclose my interest as well as Chairman of the Transport Board.

Mr. President, we know that from time to time the Transport Board comes under fire, that some people attack

it unnecessarily, that some people often speak often on issue relating to public transport - not in this Honourable Chamber - not based on any fact but often times, based on feeling and emotion.

I think it is important that from time to time, we have a debate on public transport because it is necessary and specifically in this case, the Transport Board.

Mr. President, the Leader of Government Business did an outstanding job in presenting the Resolution before the Senate not so long ago and certainly, the presentation would have captured in a broad way the issues relating to public transport in Barbados and, indeed, other Honourable Senators have spoken.

The lead spokesperson for the Opposition spoke in measured terms and I am not going to be too political on this occasion, except to say that when contributions oftentimes are made, that it is important to sit and listen to those contributions, dissociate fact from friction and try to put the record straight.

Mr. President, as I said not too long ago, there is always the preception that the Transport Board is the 'whipping boy' in the public domain albeit the exceptional service that we offer to communities in Barbados. Sir, this Resolution is essentially born out of a commitment. If we go to page 43 of the Barbados Labour Party Manifesto, 2003, there is a commitment and a social contract, which we have to honour, to reequip the Transport Board to enable it to extend its service. When you go to the Manifesto and see where we are, we can certainly say that the Barbados Labour Party is indeed honouring its commitment to Barbadians.

Mr. President, the Resolution before this Chamber is for \$22 million and provided for within that sum is the purchase of 65 buses, five wheelchair units and parts.

S55/17:50

Sequence 74

Wednesday, August 16, 2006

SENATOR I.G.P. GOODING-EDGHILL: Sir, earlier there was discussion and the issue of parts was raised by Senators. I am going to speak to that, not in a very detailed manner but I will speak to the issue of it as well. Sir, to assure Honourable Senators, that within the provision of the \$22 million bond issue, we have specifically allocated \$2.3 million of that \$22 million for the purchase of parts. Those parts will arrive with the units and it is also intended that we have enough parts to service the units as we go along.

I must also add that the wheelchair units, that the Transport Board, as part of its consultation process, met with the Disabilities Unit, the Council responsible for the disabled and other parties and other partners and discussed the requirements. We got the Council to sign off on those requirements, and those will be built specifically for the disabled community, that is very important. One thing that we have taken as a policy within the Transport Board, and adopted by Government, that with every bus purchase, there will be provision for units for the disabled in our community. It is part of our social responsibility and on each occasion we will enter into consultation with the disabled community, to ensure that we are purchasing units that would fit the requirements.

The remaining 65 are in production. These buses will be coming out of Brazil. I should also say that there are new units, because it is often this perception, not in this Honourable Place but outside of this Honourable Place, that we are buying either old buses, used buses or reconditioned buses, again, I have to put a lie to that. The buses that we are purchasing are new buses, like we have done in the past. There is a production process that they must follow, from the chassis through to the bus body. There are different stages, and there are very secure in terms of the coating and specs that we require.

Sir, it is also important that you just do not go out there and purchase buses. There is a process involved. Again, there are some people who believe that we just take up money to buy buses like that. That is not the case. There is a process and the process is, the Board has to agree with the specifications for all units. In the case of the disabled we would discuss their specifications and amend them accordingly; we sign off on those specifications. Sir, we meet with the bus agent and go through the whole process, to ensure that whatever we ask for in terms of the specifications, that those specifications are factored in and we also sign off on agreements with the bus supplier, to ensure there is no variation from the contract.

Sir, I just want to spend a little time taking us through that process. Once that is done, a prototype is built. That prototype has to be inspected by the Transport Board officials and/or the bus agent. We do that to confirm that everything we asked for contractually, the bus manufacturers or builders have committed to and they have delivered, so it is a process. Sir, even to the point where the units have been produced and shipped, and in this case I must reveal to the Chamber, they will be shipped in what we call an underground shipping bay, so that they are fully protected as well.

Mr. President, these new units will also, for the first time within the history of the Transport Board, meet Euro III emission standard. Sir, from time to time, not any of the Transport Board, I am pleased to say, we will see

oftentime, emission that you should not normally see, particularly from other private units within Barbados. It would be a first for Barbados in terms of Transport Board meeting the new Euro 3 emission standards, the highest standard out there.

Sir, the other thing that we have asked for on this occasion is an electronic engine. In the past, the Transport Board had to install speed limiters, because there has always been this problem of speeding in Barbados. We have, in this case, gone with a new engine, an electronic engine, and that engine will help us to control speed. The speed limit would be set by the bus manufacturer, and only the bus agent can change it. I think that would go a long way in addressing any complaints with respect of speed.

There are several enhancements with the new fleet. We will have, not only the electronic engine and the repositioning of the compartment for the driver to make him more comfortable, but there will be additional seating within the units. We are aware that the Transport Board units carry in excess of the required limit, that is because of the situation we now find ourselves in.

Sir, it is important to note that, there is a warrantee on the units and a maintenance clause. We had this situation in 2004 when we required thirty units, that programme has served Transport Board well. Regrettably, part of that, even though there were service agreements, there was the reluctance to have that in place, because there was an agreement with UCAL. Sir, if you have a maintenance agreement, in accordance with any warrantee agreement, and there is a problem with the bus, it would be returned to the supplier to be inspected. If you violate the maintenance agreement, like we do with our personal cars, then there is the risk of violating the warrantee. Mr. President, we have successfully managed the warrantee with the 2004 fleet, and on this occasion we will also have a warrantee on these buses, including the chassis and bus body.

Sir, the buses should arrive in Barbados on or about December 31, 2006. If everything goes well, obviously, the shipping is critical, those buses should arrive on time. Those buses would certainly improve bus availability.

It is instructive for me to point out to this Honourable Senate, that we have an aging fleet of buses at the moment. Currently, within the Transport Board we have 42 per cent of the fleet approximately nine years old; 46 per cent six years old and the remainder under twelve years old. I recognise that some Senators made the point that we should have a fleet replacement policy and we should not buy buses in such large quantities. It is in the best interest of the Transport Board, at this time to order such large quantities.

I also want to let the public know that the Transport Board has a fleet replacement policy. Obviously, the shareholder, and in this case the Government, has a number of priorities and we could only submit requests as required and await the appropriate funding to supplement the purchase of the units.

Sir, I do not want it to be said, that we do not have a fleet replacement policy. In fact we have a fleet replacement policy, and I think that we are one of the first Government institutions, unless I am corrected, that has a fleet replacement policy. I know that the Sanitation Services Authority, has followed the Transport Board's lead in terms of having a fleet replacement policy.

Sir, the fleet replacement policy goes a long way in ensuring that the Transport Board, does not purchase buses in such large numbers. As I said, in 2004, we purchased thirty units, and again, that was in accordance with the fleet replacement policy at the time.

Mr. President, often we get a lot of criticism about public transport, but mass transit management any part of the world is very complex. It is important that we recognise that in managing a complex mass transit operation, you will have challenges.

18.00 p.m.

Sequence 75

Wednesday, August 16, 2006

Senate 55, sequence 76, 6.00 p.m.

Senator I.G.P. GOODING-EDGHILL: Fortunately, I had an opportunity to visit several bus companies - not paid for by the Transport Board, I assure the Senate - and I saw the other bus companies at work and the challenges that they have. Therefore, I do not want the impression to go out there that it is just something you jump into a seat or a bus and drive. There is a whole process, including passenger safety, that you have to go through.

Sir, the new buses will help to improve scheduling, route extensions into new housing estates, and will improve service delivery. There is a demand in Barbados for route extensions. The Transport Board has accommodated several requests. Often, when I hear people condemning the Transport Board, who would have a political advantage and should know better, we often work with those persons, in terms of improving public transport. It is a bit disheartening sometimes when you have to hear some people criticise the Transport Board, who should know better from their political perspective.

Nonetheless, Sir, there are a number of extensions that we have taken into new housing estates. I am pleased to say that with the response we have got it is quite encouraging. Certainly, there are a number of areas, where we would have to improve. However, we can only do that, if we improve the size of the fleet, and that is what we are seeking to do with this purchase to improve service delivery, and to improve route extensions into new housing estates. As our demographics change, we would have to respond accordingly.

Sir, it would also certainly improve customer satisfaction. This is really an area where we have spent a lot of time. We have analysed it and we recognise it, but once we get the fleet to the required standard, we will improve customer service, through improved running times. By running times, I mean that the time it takes for a unit when it leaves the terminal to get to its destination, and back. This has been a challenge in Barbados. We have been having some road works, and we must have road works to improve our infrastructure. We have accepted that it has created a problem for the Transport Board. Sir, because we suffered by not having enough available units, we often had to double up routes, particularly in the north of Barbados.

Sir, with the purchase, we will certainly return to short haul routes, and we will improve service to those short haul routes that we do not now serve. Certainly, we will seek to improve the charter bus segment. I must point out that the charter bus segment is worth more than \$2 million in additional revenue to the Transport Board. Therefore, in addition to passenger fare revenue, we have an additional \$2 million that we get, as a result of improved charter service.

I believe it was Senator Parris who made the point that there are numbers of organisations, who prefer to use the Transport Board for their charters, compared to going to other private operators. We have seen that in the numbers of the Transport Board, in excess of \$2 million. Certainly, when we get the additional units, we will ensure that we satisfy all of our route requirements, our extensions and then, we will still have some buses to assist the Transport Board in earning some additional revenue.

Sir, the decision to purchase the 65 additional units was based on the exceptional performance of the 30 buses that we acquired back in 2004. I know there is always a lot of confusion. I believe, it was Senator Lowe who asked whether or not we are purchasing the correct units. I want to assure Senator Lowe that, as I said, there is a process involved, in terms of meeting the specs. It is important that in Barbados, we purchase buses from a supplier who can service the units, and if there are any problems or issues concerning the units that we have somebody to whom we can turn.

The Transport Board had the sorry experience in the past, where they have entered arrangements where they have bought the Leyland buses from Portugal and within 12 to 24 months they were rusting and then we could not get the parts to repair those buses. The Transport Board is replete with examples, where people came to Barbados, and sold the Transport Board buses, with no service agreements whatsoever. They got the sales and after that they did not look after the fleet. This will not happen, certainly, while I am the Chairman of the Transport Board because I will engage in anything like that.

Sir, people reserve the right to criticise the fleet. They could criticise the producer, the manufacturer or whomever, but at the end of the day, it is important that you have a locally based supplier, in the event that there is any problem. Sir, the lesson we can learn from the problem at the Sanitation Service Authority is one for the record.

The other thing that I want to mention, Sir, is the whole issue of bus maintenance. Again, there is a lot of misinformation out there. Often, people suggest that the buses are not maintained. I believe it was Senator Chandler who said that we have a graveyard of buses but I am going to come to those things individually.

I want to say on the whole issue of maintenance that the Transport Board has a maintenance policy. Sir, when I assumed responsibility for the Chairmanship of the Transport Board, I ensured that we had certain standard operating policies in place, which bore fruit for the Transport Board, and that is a fact.

Sir, the Transport Board buses are checked. There are several maintenance standards that we have to meet for passenger safety. We have M-services (maintenance services) that we have to follow. All the Transport Board's units are serviced in accordance with the bus manufacturer's requirements and specifications. We are using the correct lubricants on all of the units. When the buses come in, after they have finished their shift, they are checked, cleaned and fuelled.

Sir, I do not want any misinformation to go out that the Transport Board does not have a system for maintenance checks. The Transport Board has a proper maintenance system. There is also a system known to the Transport Board as a Meridian Computerised system where we also keep history on the units. There is also a manual system in part that we use to check on the maintenance of the units periodically. At least, once a year, these units have to be prepared for inspection.

Therefore, I do not want the impression to go out there and, certainly, the misinformation being communicated that the Transport Board does not maintain its fleet. Sir, for as long as I have been there as Chairman, I

can say to this Chamber and the public that Transport Board has an efficient and proper maintenance system in place.

Sir, I want to deal with some of the issues affected bus availability. Often, you will hear that the Transport Board will have from 110 to 150 units. Sir, some people would get confused and give the impression that the buses are no good, or we are not maintaining the buses.

There are several factors, funding for parts is a concern, the Government continues to meet its obligation. That has not been a significant problem at all. Within the last year, we have been getting supplementary funding from the Government. This year, we have built into the Estimates, some \$7 million. Last year, we benefited substantially in excess, I believe, about \$40 million, as a result of supplementary funding.

Sir, if we have an inadequate fleet replacement policy, you would have some challenges, but vandalism is a major headache for the Transport Board. There are people who would vandalise the units, and then would condemn the Transport Board for not providing an efficient and timely bus service. This is one of the criticisms. Of late, certainly, we have the management out there, putting out the information in the public domain but this was a problem for the Transport Board for sometime. It is true that they have been late in coming to the public and explaining the impact of vandalism to them. Sir, vandalism is a significant factor, in the reduction of buses on the roads of Barbados.

We also have the issue of running defects. Those of you who are familiar with bus operations, will tell you that you will always have a running defect. Sir, at the international standard, as I said before, in the Estimates Debate, in transport, is 20 per cent of your fleet. For example, you will have a situation, where you will have to change a tyre. You will have a situation, where the battery goes dead, and we have to go out there and change it, so there are several running defects with an aging fleet.

Senate 55, sequence 76, 18:10:14

Wednesday, August 16, 2006

Senator G. P. I. GOODING-EDGHILL: I made the point not so long ago that we have in excess of 42 per cent of the fleet in excess of nine years, so we would have some defects as a result of an ageing fleet.

Mr. President, I must say that when you look at the condition of buses today you cannot help but say that the Transport Board is doing a very good job in trying to maintain bus availability.

Sir, I also want to draw the Senate's attention to the usage because there are a lot of people who believe that you just go in and you start the buses. Mr. President, when the buses come in, there are a series of maintenance checks that must be performed and a series of health and safety issues that must be addressed. Mr. President, oftentimes the buses return to headquarters or to the various terminals at may be 2.00 a.m. in the morning or sometimes later and those buses are parked and then at about 4.00 a.m. or 4.30 a.m. the engine has to be rolled again to get that bus on the road.

Mr. President, bus manufacturers globally recommend at least 60 000 to 70 000 kilometres a year, but these buses that we have in Barbados do in excess of 120 000 kilometres a year. Sir, that is the pressure that we have to face in Barbados in respect of the kilometres, so we have to ensure that the buses are maintained. Mr. President, an engine should be changed every 300 000 kilometres, and if you are running at an average of 120 000 kilometres a year, you would imagine that you would have to have some significant repairs.

Sir, when we look in the Transport Board P&L, I am pleased to say that we are up to date and the one for the last financial year should be coming very shortly, you can see that you would have some issues. Sir, all you have to do is to look at the ageing fleet, look at the kilometres and then you could reconcile it and audit it and you can determine whether or not the Transport Board maintenance cost is significantly higher than most bus companies.

Mr. President, the depreciated bus life is for 10 years. I can assure you, Mr. President, that come next year we will have buses that will be ten years old, but I know that those buses would give us in excess of 10 years life on the roads, I am very confident about that.

Mr. President, the question was asked about the issue of maintenance. We have the maintenance arrangement. When I got to the Transport Board, we had a very lopsided agreement where you had to go to United Commercial Autoworks Limited (UCAL) for everything, it was an exclusive arrangement. We no longer have an exclusive arrangement as such because we have a small L&N body repairs workshop that would assist us and we also have Simpson Motors that would assist us. That has contributed, and substantially so, to the output of units at the Transport Board. Mr. President, bus availability is where it is. On Monday, August 14, the Transport Board achieved a bus availability of 170 buses. That is as a result of the combined efforts of UCAL, L&N Workshop and Simpson Motors.

Mr. President, I want to thank them because it is a lot of hard work. We have contracts in place with the service providers. We also have warrantee provisions. Sir,

gone are the days when anybody including UCAL can repair a transmission or an engine and not give the Transport Board a warrantee, they have to give the Transport Board a warrantee for the life, so that if they change the transmission or the bus engine they would have to replace it at no cost to the Transport Board, so there is no issue of double invoicing or the Transport Board having to pay twice for the service, that is not the case at the Transport Board at all.

Mr. President, the Transport Board is not and should never be in the business of stocking a substantial amount of parts. You should have a system of just in time inventory. Mr. President, we know what are the fast-moving parts, we have a list of those fast-moving parts and we order accordingly and in accordance with our financial resources. Other parts are supplied from the bus supplier who are in the business of supplying parts. We negotiate prices and we have an arrangement so that we get cheaper parts in terms of getting those parts out of Brussel into Barbados to the buses. Sir, we get discounted parts at the Transport Board.

Mr. President, in the past there was an issue where the Transport Board never had enough funding to support the payment plan for parts and so on, especially when you have a letter of credit. I am pleased to say that we buy parts, we have credit, and oftentimes if we are in a financial bind, the bus agent would go overboard and would help us at no interest charge.

Having said all of that, Sir, I want to also make the point that the shareholder continues to meet its obligation. In this case this is another example of the shareholder meetings its obligation in terms of its capital expenditure and they will continue to meet their obligations in terms of our required supplementary funding.

Sir, I have spoken to the whole issue of inadequate maintenance. There is no issue at all about inadequate maintenance in terms of the Transport Board, I have dismissed that and the myth should stop. On the financial side, I have spoken about the wear and tear of the ageing fleet and as a result you would be required to purchase more parts if you have an ageing fleet, but you would do that in a very disciplined way.

Mr. President, as it relates to the issue of cost containment, the Transport Board saved in the financial year 2002-2003 in excess of \$2.14 million, I believe that is the correct figure, I do not want to mislead the Senate. Sir, there is so much that we can do within the framework of cost containment.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Within the constraints of time, one minute, please.

Senator G. P. I. GOODING-EDGHILL: Sir, I want to disabuse those out there who believe that the Transport Board is anywhere that... We have done almost everything to do that.

Sir, I quickly want, in my five minutes to...

Mr. PRESIDENT: I make that five seconds for you to complete.

Asides.

Senator G. P. I. GOODING-EDGHILL: Sir, I want to quickly talk about the vehicle monitoring programme. Some persons spoke to the issue about knowing exactly when the bus is going to arrive. I am pleased to indicate to the Senate that we are in discussions with a company, there are only two such companies in Barbados. We had a pilot project on one where we could see on a computer screen where the bus is at in any part of Barbados, the speed that the bus is being driven at and we can also tell how many stops within that route that the driver has stopped. This will help us in terms of measuring fuel, it will help us in measuring driver productivity and in other factors.

Sir, I am so sorry that I do not have enough time that I could take Honourable Senators through other things including the implementation of a smart card system that we will be implementing in terms of bulk fares in Barbados, the terminal improvements that we will have to make and the park and ride system. Mr. President, I am sure that I would have another opportunity at some time to speak.

Sir, with no disrespect to the Chair, I am indeed grateful that the Government has brought the Resolution before the Honourable Senate. I fully support the \$22 million bond issue and I know that it would go a long way in alleviating much of the concerns and issues we have in respect of public transport in Barbados.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, I wish to thank Senator Gooding-Edghill for that very detailed presentation. It is clear to all of us that there have been substantial improvements in the management and functioning of the Transport Board under his watch and I wish to commend him for that and to commend also the Board and the management and staff of the Transport Board.

Mr. President, we in this country always have the tendency to underestimate our potential. Mr. President, it is easy for us to believe that other people from far away can do things and know how to use technology to their advantage and so on, but we are always reluctant to believe

that we can do it ourselves. This is a perfect example of an understanding effort on the part of the Transport Board to use the technology to the advancement of the institution's operations and they deserve our commendation and our continued support as they strive to bring the much needed improvements to the functioning of that institution.

Senate 55 Sequence 77

6.20 p.m.

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SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, we all recognised that while we expect the Transport Board to put measures in place, to reduce its reliance on the public purse, that we cannot expect it to provide coverage to the entire Barbadian community and not provide some measure of support for it. It is not possible for it to perform the role that it is asked to perform, without some support from the Treasury.

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

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

ORDER NO. 9 – TO MOVE THE SECOND READING OF THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2006.

SENATOR the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, the Telecommunications (Amendment) Bill, 2006, is seeking to make provision for:

(a) the duty-free importation of telecommunications and radiocommunications apparatus during a state of emergency; (b) the importation of telecommunications and radiocommunications apparatus without a licence during a state of public emergency (c) the giving effect to the Tampere Convention on The Provision of Telecommunication Resources for Disaster Mitigation and Relief Operation; (d) the creation of offences with respect to the unauthorised reception of broadcasts and cable programmes, the theft of or tampering with multi-channel video or information systems; and

(e) for related matters.

Mr. President, in other words, the Bill before us is a consolidation of two Bills, which were prepared initially, one to do with the accession of Barbados to the Tampere Convention to provide for the provision in that convention. The Tampere Convention, as you know, is essentially to facilitate and to expedite telecommunications assistance in a disaster relief operation amongst State and non-State parties.

Mr. President, the provision, as set out in the Tampere Convention, is important for us because we live in a region which is prone to disasters, and in the event that we, in Barbados, suffer a severe disaster, we would naturally expect other States to provide assistance to us, during the recovery period. This Convention places obligations on the parties to it, to provide assistance to member countries. Therefore, it has become necessary for us to put provisions in the legislation that would allow that assistance to take place within the context of the Convention.

Mr. President, at the present moment, there is no legislation that would allow us to accommodate the provisions of the Convention, and that is why it is now necessary for this amendment. Barbados has acceded to the Convention, in 2003. We are now seeking to put it into our legislation, so that we could exercise our functions and obligations under the Convention, and that we create the framework that would allow countries, which would be coming to our assistance in a state of emergency, to operate. It would also allow such necessary equipment to come in, free of duty, and to go back out without any undue delay. Mr. President, in essence, that is what is being provided for, in relation to the duty-free importation of radiocommunications and telecommunications apparatus.

Mr. President, the other part has to do with the question of putting in place anti-signal theft legislation. Sir, I trust that all persons hearing my voice would take note of this piece of legislation. I know it is fashionable for persons to look for a deal and that they do not mind entering into such an arrangement, as long as they would benefit, even though it would be at the expense of someone else. Sir, that is exactly the issue before us.

Mr. President, as an example, the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation provides service through its Multi-Choice programming, is an agency that is suffering from signal theft, by a number of persons in this country. The corporation has about 17 000 legitimate paying customers but we have estimated that there are about 5 000 persons, who are stealing the signals of the corporation. Apparently, it is easier for those persons to pay someone else, to provide them with the equipment that would allow them to access the signal, and they are happy doing that and would want to continue doing that.

Mr. President, the legislation before us is seeking to create offences in such circumstances. Therefore, as soon as the legislation is passed, the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation would be in a position to monitor the situation and to take legal action against persons found stealing its signals.

I trust that when the legislation is in place, the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation would pursue those

cases vigorously and that those persons, who are now benefiting from that activity, would be brought within the net and would either now, on their own, accept that they have had a free-for-all for a long time and that it has come to an end. I do hope that persons would now willingly follow the legal route of obtaining the signals. If they do not, it would then be left to the corporation to proceed, within the provisions of this legislation and to take action against such persons, and to bring some order to it.

Mr. President, I do not think it is fair for persons to be accessing the signals of the corporation freely and to be benefiting from the services provided, without paying the corporation any money. Therefore, in due course, the corporation would have to take control over that.

Mr. President, on that basis, I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

SENATOR F. J. STUART: Mr. President, I have listened with care to the contribution of Senator Griffith, as he introduced this Bill, the Telecommunication (Amendment) Bill, Cap. 22B, which is to make provisions for the items identified from (a) to (e).

Mr. President, once again this Honourable Chamber is being called upon to zero in on the issue of a state of public emergency, now within the context of making provision for the duty-free importation of telecommunications and radiocommunications apparatus.

Mr. President, the importation of telecommunications and radiocommunications apparatus, without a licence and - of course, Senator Griffith has spent some time on this - the Tampere Convention on the Provision of Telecommunication Resources for Disaster Mitigation and Relief Operations...

Mr. President, what I find troubling about this preoccupation with state of public emergencies is that within 40 years of Independence, Barbados has not had one occasion or any reason to declare a state of public emergency, and in any event, if it had reasons so to do, the legislative mechanisms for so doing, have always been there.

6.30 p.m.

Wednesday, August 16, 2006

SENATOR F.J. STUART: Recently, Parliament passed an Emergency Management Bill and Parliament was told then that for all practical purposes, that Bill would govern issues relating to states of emergencies in Barbados. The Bill, it would be recalled, amended the Emergency

Powers Act to make provision for the declaration of a state of emergency on the basis of civil unrest. I thought that since we now had an Emergency Management Bill in place that any legislation succeeding that Emergency Management Bill which deals with states of public emergency, would be incorporating by reference, the Emergency Management Bill. Mr. President, if one goes to Section 2 of this Bill, it reads:

“Section 10 of the Telecommunications Act referred to in this Act referred to as the principal Act is amended by adding the following Subsection (3) notwithstanding paragraph D of Subsection 1, where the Governor-General has, in accordance with the Emergency Powers Act...”

Sir, not in accordance with the Emergency Management Act, which is now law in Barbados but still in accordance with the Emergency Powers Act which deals with the issue of civil unrest.

Mr. President, I do not understand why there is this preoccupation with states of emergency and making provision for states of public emergency in circumstances where for 40 years, Barbados has not had to confront this issue. Sir, I am not suggesting that because it has not happened for 40 years that it cannot happen now or some time in the immediate future but the Government needs to explain its preoccupation with states of public emergency and making provision for them and still using the Emergency Powers Act, which has been amended to deal with civil unrest rather than dealing with its own Emergency Management Act passed by Parliament just a few weeks ago.

Mr. President, I think there is some inconsistency in the position of the Government, having declared that the Emergency Management Act would now deal with all natural disasters, emergencies and so on, and we were told that in this Chamber. I remember members of the Government speaking with a certain amount of fervour on this issue when I raised the amendment to the Emergency Management Act. This legislation, rather than referring to the Emergency Management Act, 2006 is still referring to the Emergency Management Act, which was amended a few weeks ago in this Chamber to deal with the issue of civil unrest.

Mr. President, I should like the Leader of Government Business and all other members of the Government to explain to Barbadians if we now have so comprehensive a piece of legislation to deal with emergencies, whether as a result of natural disaster or otherwise, why are we still relying on the Emergency Powers Act that is supposed to deal with civil unrest. Mr. President, that question needs to be answered. Sir, if the Resolution has anything to do with World Cup, it does not say so. I really cannot say it does because there is no

indication that it does and if it has anything to do with the World Cup, it does not say so and, in any event, the World Cup legislation has a life which comes to an end at the end of June. This legislation, in its present terms, has no lifespan and incorporates, by reference, the Emergency Powers Act and not the Emergency Management Act, which was recently passed and which was supposed to be a more comprehensive piece of legislation dealing with all the issues previously covered by the Emergency Powers Act.

Mr. President, that is an area of concern for us on this side and I await the explanation of the Government on this because it is certainly not consistent with what was said in this Chamber a few weeks ago when we debated the Emergency Management Act.

Mr. President, I am obliged to you, Sir.

MR. PRESIDENT: Senator Sir Allan Fields.

SENATOR A.C. FIELDS: Mr. President, I rise to support this amended telecommunications Act. I must confess that I put particular emphasis on paragraph No (d), "the creation of offences with respect to the unauthorised reception of broadcast and cable programmes, the theft of or tampering with multi-channelled videos or information service systems." As most of you would know, I was recently appointed as Chairman of the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation and, Mr. President, it has been a real eye-opener as to the extent that some people would go to steal the signal of the corporation. The sad thing is that it seems very flippantly to be referred to as piracy which is almost romanticised and almost like Robin Hood and is not recognised for the blatant theft that it is.

Mr. President, this Act would go a long way towards curing some of the ills at CBC. The Caribbean Broadcasting corporation always produces a huge amount of airtime as a public broadcasting service from which it receives no revenue. In addition to that, the revenue aspect of CBC which is most important, is the TV system which provides a signal for which people pay. Mr. President, I am very happy to see that there seems to be little discretion in the penalty which is fixed at \$25 000 and presumably, anybody who obtains the service system without the authorisation also has to hook it up to their TV, which is another \$25 000.

Mr. President, I would like to make sure that the people out there who are stealing this system recognise that the receivers are stolen goods and, in effect, if and when they get caught and have to pay \$50 000, that it would buy them 20 years of MCTV premium channel for two boxes in their homes and that they should not treat this lightly. In fact, it will buy them 64 years of the basic system in their house, the penalty for which they are going to have to pay.

Mr. President, I would like to send a clear signal to those people in the heights and terraces and various places of Barbados who sit with their doors and windows closed and think that CBC cannot identify them but that, in truth and fact, that the technology now exists, that they will be able to be identified, that the management of CBC is not going to sleep happily until they are identified. Mr. President, I want to make it very clear to the public of Barbados, who have been stealing this system for many years, that they are going to be caught now that the legislation is in place.

Mr. President, between the years 1996 and 2004, there were over 10 000 boxes in this island fraudulently stealing signals which caused CBC revenue of \$11 million. Sir, in 2004, CBC changed its analogue system to a digital system and the theft had to stop for a period of time. While CBC dreams of catching these people, these people are using dream boxes to capture the signal but, Sir, their dreams are about to come to an end and CBC's dreams are about to be fulfilled.

Mr. President, since 2004 with the advent of the new digital system, there are over 2 500 people out there stealing \$3 million from CBC on an annual basis which would certainly put CBC in a profitable situation. Therefore, there is a lot of incentive for CBC to stop this theft.

Mr. President, once again, I reiterate that these people who are ordinary thieves, who are receivers of stolen goods should truly thank their lucky stars.

S55/18:40

Sequence 79

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SENATOR Sir, Allan FIELDS: Sir, Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation has been able to identify the boxes coming from the United Kingdom, China and Taiwan. They came in satellite receivers and Customs had no option but to let them in because satellite receivers are not banned from coming entering Barbados, once the requisite duty is paid. When they come into the island there are reconfigured to steal the signal from the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation, so that people can have their own enjoyment. It is almost as if it is something to boast about. Those days of boasting have to stop.

I sincerely hope that everybody will support these additional items in the Act, from 89 (a) to 89 (e). Mr. President, I can assure you and Members of this Honourable Senate that the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation will do all in its power to use this Act for good purpose.

I am much obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Griffith.

SENATOR HON. E.R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, I have listened carefully to Senator Stuart. I am sure that he will pardon me for saying, that I think the fixation is with him rather than with the Government. My recollection is, that Act, when passed, did not remove the responsibility for the declaration of the Emergency Powers Act. In any case, this section I will read for the benefit of other Honourable Members, because Senator Stuart read only a part of it.

“Notwithstanding Paragraph D. (1) of section 1 where the Governor-General has in accordance with the Emergency Powers Act, declared that a State of public emergency exists, the importation of all telecommunications and radio-communications apparatus with a non-governmental organisation or a non-State entity for the purpose granting assistance in disaster mitigation, and emergency relief, shall not require the issue of a licence and shall not be subject to payment of any duties or taxes...”

Those are the points that I was making, when I introduced the measure, stating that what was being proposed here, was an amendment to the Telecommunications Act to facilitate the application of the provisions of the Taipei Convention.

Sir, it further states:

“For the purposes of this section non governmental organisation and non State entity have the meaning assigned by the Taipei Convention.”

Sir, the issue here is that the Government is trying to facilitate the operation, by any of these entities here in the event that Barbados is affected by disaster and persons are coming to assist with mitigation, and providing emergency relief. Sir, Senator Stuart has other things on his mind, while we are dealing with disaster management and so.

Mr. President, to me, the matter is fairly straightforward. On that basis, I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to without division.

On the motion of SENATOR HON. E.R. GRIFFITH, the Senate resolved itself into Committee on the Bill, HER HONOUR Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The Senate is in Committee.

Clauses 1 to 6 inclusive were called and passed.

The Schedule became the Schedule to the Bill.

On the motion of SENATOR HON. E.R. GRIFFITH, MADAM DEPUTY PRESIDENT reported to His Honour the PRESIDENT, the passing of one Bill in Committee and Mr. PRESIDENT resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of SENATOR HON. E.R. GRIFFITH, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Telecommunication (Amendment) Act, 2006.

SENATOR HON. E.R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, in response to the announcement which was made earlier this morning, about the need for five members to be nominated by the Senate, to sit on the Select Committee to deal with the Road Traffic Act, I which to indicate the names of those persons. As you are aware, the Members of the Opposition, have decided that they do not want to be involved in that exercise. Therefore, we will have to proceed to make up the five persons in a different way than was anticipated.

Therefore, on the Government side there will now be three Members and two Members from the Independents. On the Government's side the Members are Senator Eastmond, Senator Grant and Senator Gooding-Edghill. I have been advised that on the Independent side the two persons are Senator Newton and Senator Sir Alan Fields. Those are the five persons who are being proposed.

18.50 p.m.

Sequence 80

Wednesday, August 16, 2006

Senate 55, sequence 81, 6.50 p.m.

Mr. PRESIDENT: As the Leader of the Senate has indicated, five Members of the Honourable the Senate have been nominated to serve on a Joint Select Committee on the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill. These are: Senator Eastmond, Senator Grant, Senator Gooding-Edghill, Senator Newton, and Senator Sir Allan Fields.

The position of the Opposition has been noted. That stated, can I take it that this Senate concurs in these nominations? That being so, I will direct the Clerk to forward the appropriate message to the Other Place.

ADJOURNMENT

Senator Hon. E.R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, we have come to the end of business for the day and for this Session. Sir, before moving the adjournment, I wish to thank the Clerks and staff of Parliament for their assistance during the past Session, to thank all Senators for their contributions to the various debates and to thank you, Mr. President, for so ably conducting our affairs. I look forward to our resumption sometime around the middle of October.

Mr. President, I beg to move that the Senate be now adjourned sine die.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Stuart will speak on the adjournment.

Senator F.J. STUART: Mr. President, in speaking on the adjournment, I just want to associate myself with the comments of the Honourable Leader of Government Business, in thanking Members of Staff of this Chamber and the Clerks for so ably assisting us, during this Session.

Our tasks were made considerably easy because of the cooperation which we were able to secure from the Clerks who went out of their way to accommodate us, whenever we requested their assistance. Sir, members of staff, seen and unseen, have also contributed, in no small measure, to our comfort in this Chamber and to the ease at which we were able to do the public's business.

None of this would have been possible, Mr. President, without Your Honour's mature and always alert steering of the deliberations of this Chamber. I have sometimes had to marvel at the seemingly unending attention span of Your Honour, during these debates. Today, was no exception. I was amused and at the same time overwhelmed by the intervention by Your Honour, pulling an Honourable Senator back from what he himself described as a very long safari. It calls for a certain amount of alertness to be able to do that so that.

Sir, This Side, we want to thank Your Honour for steering these deliberations as maturely and as impartially and as ably as Your Honour has done and always does. Of course, in Your Honour's absence, Madam Deputy President certainly steps up to the plate, if I may use one of these rather clumsy Americanisms. It certainly does not subtract from the quality of Madam Deputy President's management of our deliberations.

I should like to wish all Honourable Senators a restful Summer and hope that on our return, we continue with seriousness do the public's business, and to make Barbados a better Barbados.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Before putting the motion, let me first of all thank Senator Griffith, the Leader of the Senate and Senator Stuart for their kind remarks, which I accept with great humility.

I also want to associate myself with the tributes paid to the work of the Clerks and staff of Parliament, who certainly today, had a long stint with us, running into something like eight hours.

It remains only for me to wish all Honourable Senators an enjoyable Summer recess. I am sure you will all be back here in the middle of October, feeling refreshed and ready for the next battle.

The question that the Senate be now adjourned sine die was put to the Senate and agreed to and Mr. PRESIDENT adjourned the Senate accordingly.

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SPEAKERS IN THIS ISSUE

BARKER, Senator T.E.

BYNOE, Senator A. A.

CHANDLER, Senator DR. F.L.

CRICHLLOW, Senator the Very Reverend H.E.

EASTMOND, Senator the Hon. Miss L. V.

FIELDS, Senator A.C.

FIELDS, Senator Sir, Allan

GODDARD, SIR JOHN STANLEY

GOODING-EDGHILL, Senator G. P. I.

GOODING-EDGHILL, Senator I.G.P.

GRANT, Senator R.W.

GRIFFITH, Senator the Hon. E. R.

LINTON, Senator I. St.C.

LOWE, Senator Dr. D. S.

Marville, Senator R.O.

NICHOLLS, Senator G. P. B.

PARRIS, Senator Miss P. E.

STUART, Senator F. J.

**SYMMONDS, Her Honour SENATOR DAME
PATRICIA**

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

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

EDITORIAL QUERIES

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

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

Q2. Opening. The source begins at a resumption ('This Sitting is resumed'), under the take-slip 'Senate 55, sequence 40, 11.00 a.m.', and the business starts at Order No. 5. There is no PRESENT list, no prayers, and no record of papers or of Orders Nos. 1 to 4; the earlier part of the Sitting may be missing. Please confirm.

Q3. Order No. 8, Take-slip Sequence 69, about 4.50 p.m.. The President's call 'Senator Barker.' appears on both sides of the take-slip; the first instance has been left out (two words). Please confirm.

Q4. Order No. 8, Take-slip Senate 55 Sequence 77, 6.20 p.m.. The sentence 'Mr. President, all of us have recognised that while we expect the Transport Board to put in place measures to reduce its reliance on the public purse...' is typed on both sides of the take-slip; the shorter first copy (about 50 words) has been left out and the fuller version after the take-slip kept. Please confirm.

Q5. Order No. 6. The President calls 'Senator Challenor', but the speech that follows is by Senator Dr. F. L. Chandler. Two speeches of the Leader of the Senate are labelled 'Senator the Hon. E.G. GRIFFITH' rather than E. R. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Take-slips about 11.50 a.m. and 6.50 p.m.. Two take-slips read 'Senate 55, sequence 45, 11.50 p.m.' and 'S55: 18.50 p.m.'; both are presumably the morning and evening times shown on the slips beside them. Printed as in the source.

Q7. Order No. 7, title. The title of the Resolution reads 'THE GUARANTEE BY THE GUARANTEE OF THE GOVERNMENT'. In Order No. 8 the bank is given as 'RBTT MERCANT BANK LIMITED', but as RBTT Merchant Bank Limited in the debate. Printed as in the source.

Q8. Order No. 9. The record that the question on the second reading 'was put to the Senate and agreed to' appears straight after the Minister's opening speech, before Senators Stuart and Sir Allan Fields spoke, and again after the Minister's reply. Printed as in the source.

Q9. Speech labels. Senator Sir Allan Fields is labelled 'SENATOR A.C. FIELDS' and 'SENATOR Sir, Allan FIELDS' (and 'Sir Alan Fields' in the nominations); Senator Sir John Goddard is labelled 'SIR JOHN STANLEY GODDARD'; and Senator Gooding-Edghill's initials appear as both 'G. P. I.' and 'I. G. P.'. Mrs. Downes-Parris is also spelt 'Downs-Parris'. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The Senate's record for Wednesday, 16th August, 2006 opens at 11.00 a.m. with the President resuming the Sitting. He read a message from the House of Assembly, dated 11th August, committing the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2006 to a Joint Select Committee and inviting the Senate to nominate five members. The Leader of the Senate, Senator the Hon. E. R. Griffith, then led tributes to Mrs. Marjorie Dora Downes-Parris, mother of Senator Miss P. E. Parris, and Mrs. Bernice Crichlow, wife of Senator the Very Reverend H. E. Crichlow; other Senators and the President joined in, and the Senate stood in silence for two minutes.

Under Order No. 5, Senator Griffith explained that the Export Promotion and Marketing Fund (Amendment and Validation) Bill, 2006 provided for the continuation and validation of the cess on extra-regional imports introduced in 2005. It passed all stages without debate, Madam Deputy President taking the Chair in Committee.

Under Order No. 6, Senator Griffith moved the LIAT (1974) Limited Guarantee (Amendment) Bill, 2006, explaining that instead of LIAT paying US\$49 600 a month into an escrow account for the maintenance and return of aircraft leased from Bombardier Services Corporation, the shareholder Governments of Barbados and Antigua and Barbuda would give a guarantee. Senator Stuart said the Democratic Labour Party had saved LIAT in 1974 but complained that Senators had to rely on Ministers' word without seeing the restructuring plan. Senators R. O. Marville, Dr. F. L. Chandler, I. St. C. Linton, A. A. Bynoe, G. P. B. Nicholls, R. W. Grant and Dr. D. S. Lowe followed; the President reminded Senator Bynoe that the Bill, not the Resolution, was being debated, and Senator Grant withdrew the word 'hypocrisy' at the President's request. The Bill passed, and the related Resolution guaranteeing LIAT's obligations to Bombardier (Order No. 7) was agreed to without further debate.

Under Order No. 8, Senator Griffith moved the Resolution guaranteeing a \$22 million bond issue by the

Transport Board to RBTT Merchant Bank Limited for 70 new buses, which would bring the fleet from about 240 to 310 by the end of December 2006; about 170 buses were running each day. Senators Dr. Lowe, Sir John Goddard, the Hon. Miss L. V. Eastmond, Dame Patricia Symmonds, Miss P. E. Parris, Linton, Dr. Chandler, T. E. Barker, Bynoe and Marville spoke. Senator Gooding-Edghill said more than 42 per cent of the fleet was over nine years old and described the Board's vehicle monitoring programme. The Resolution was agreed to.

Under Order No. 9, the Telecommunications (Amendment) Bill, 2006 gave effect to the Tampere Convention, to which Barbados had acceded in 2003, allowed the duty-free and unlicensed import of

telecommunications equipment in a state of emergency, and created offences of signal theft; Senator Griffith said the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation had about 17 000 paying customers and an estimated 5 000 people stealing its signal. Senator Stuart questioned the preoccupation with states of emergency, none having been declared in 40 years of Independence. Senator Sir Allan Fields supported the Bill, which passed all stages.

The Senate approved the nominations of Senators Eastmond, Grant, Gooding-Edghill, Newton and Sir Allan Fields to the Joint Select Committee, the Opposition having declined to take part. At the end of the Session Senator Griffith, Senator Stuart and the President thanked the Clerks and staff, and the Senate was adjourned sine die.