
THE SENATE DEBATES

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2008 – 2013

THE SENATE

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

The Senate met in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, on Wednesday, March 26, 2008, at 11.10 a.m.

PRESENT

His Honour SENATOR Dr. B. M. Taitt, M.A., M.B.A., B.A. (Hons) M.P.A., LL.B(Hons.)D.H.L.(Hons.) (President) Her Honour SENATOR K. F. Ifill, M.B.A., B.Sc.(Hons.), (Deputy President)

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN, M.A., M.B.A., B.Sc.(Hons.), (Minister in the Prime Minister's Office), (Leader of the Senate)

SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN, J.P., E.M.B.A. (Marketing), Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development)

SENATOR the Hon. A. B. WALTERS, M.A. DPSA (Oxford), (Minister of State, Prime Minister's Office)

SENATOR the Hon. D.W. BOYCE, M.B.A. (Fin.), B.Sc., CMA, F.C.A. (Minister of State, Ministry of Finance)

SENATOR Mrs. V.I. SANDIFORD-GARNER, M.B.A., CIM, Dip. Mng., (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Community Development and Culture)

SENATOR Rev. P.A.V. MILLINGTON, M. (Theol.)

SENATOR D.McD. Alleyne, M.A, B.A.

SENATOR P.W.B. GILKES

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNIS, B.Sc.(Hons.)

SENATOR D.K.A. GRIFFITH

SENATOR Sir Roy TROTMAN, K.A., M.A.

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

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

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

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

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

SENATOR J.A.C. HUTSON, B.C.H., M.R.A.C.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON, LL.B.

SENATOR K.D. SYMMONDS, B.A., LL.B.

Prayers were led by Rev. Father Errington Massiah.

Mr. PRESIDENT: This Senate is in session.

10.20 a.m.

Sequence 2

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

Estimates - Senate A2, sequence 03, 10.20 a.m.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Honourable Senators, I am in receipt of a letter from the Acting Governor-General, which I propose to read in detail.

A19th February, 2008

Dear Mr. President,

I have the honour to refer to Message No. 1/2008 from the Governor-General, His Excellency Sir Clifford Straughn Husbands, GCMG,KA, informing the Honourable The Senate of His Excellency's inability to perform his duties during the period 9th to 17th February, 2008.

I have the further honour to inform The Honourable The Senate of His Excellency's further absence from 18th February 2008 to 10th March 2008.

In accordance with the provisions of Section 29(1) (a) of the Constitution, I have taken the necessary oaths to

perform the functions of the Office of Governor-General during His Excellency's further absence.

As The Honourable The Senate has been adjourned sine die it would not be possible for the usual formal Message to be sent down to your Chamber.

Will you, therefore, please bring His Excellency's absence formally to the attention of The Honourable The Senate when next it meets.@

I have the Honour to be,

Yours faithfully,

ELLIOTT FITZROY BELGRAVE

ACTING GOVERNOR-GENERAL

His Honour

The President of the Senate

MESSAGE NO.2/2008

HIS EXCELLENCY THE ACTING GOVERNOR-
GENERAL

TO

THE HONOURABLE THE SENATE

His Excellency, the Acting Governor-General has the honour to inform The Honourable The Senate of the further absence from duty of the Governor-General, His Excellency, Sir Clifford Straughn Husbands, GCMG,KA, during the period 11th to 31st March, 2008.

His Excellency, the Acting Governor-General further has the honour to inform The Honourable The Senate that, in accordance with the provisions of Section 29(1)(A) of the Constitution, he is required to continue to perform the function of the Office of Governor-General during His Excellency's absence.

ELLIOT FITZROY BELGRAVE

ACTING GOVERNOR-GENERAL

Government House

BARBADOS.

March, 2008

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR THE PRESIDENT

Mr. PRESIDENT: I have received two letters of interest to The Honourable The Senate. The first one is from Senator Sir Roy Trotman who writes:

AI am seeking your permission to be absent from the Honourable the Senate for any meetings or other duties between March 8 and April 8,2008. This absence permits me to carry out certain duties associated with my office as President of the workers group of the governing body of the International Labour Organisation. I regret any inconvenience my absence may cause.

Yours in service,

Sir Roy Trotman

Mr. PRESIDENT: I take it there are no objections to the acceptance of this request for leave of absence for Senator Trotman.

I thank you for your agreement.

I have also received a letter from the Deputy President, which reads:

AThe Barbados Blind Cricket Association is currently participating in the Third West Indies Championship of Cricket for the Blind. The Tournament is taking place in Trinidad. As the Assistant Secretary of the West Indies Council of Cricket for the Blind, I will be attending a meeting with the executives over the weekend of March 29 to 30. I will therefore be leaving on Friday evening to travel to Trinidad and will therefore be absent from the after lunch session of our Sitting on Friday. I am looking forward to our first Sitting with great excitement and trust that our deliberations will be fruitful.

Yours respectfully,

Miss Kerryann F. Ifill

Deputy President

Mr. PRESIDENT: I am sure that you would like to join me in wishing her well, and hope that the team wins. It is about time some West Indian Team wins something.

PAPERS

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P.O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I am commanded to lay the following:

1. Report of the Accountant General for the Financial Year 2006-2007.
2. Report of the

National Insurance Board for the year 2006. 3. Report on the Operations of the Severance Payment Scheme for the year 2006. 4. Report on the Operation of the Unemployment Fund for the year 2006. 5. Report on the Operation of the Sugar Workers' Provident Fund for the year 2006. 6. The Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, 2008-2009. 7. The Schedules of Personal Emoluments, 2008-2009. 8. The Revised Estimates of Expenditure (Dying Heads), 2007-2008. 9. The Actual Revenue and Expenditure, 2006-2007.

10. Report and Audited Financial Statements of Barbados Conference Services Limited for the Financial Year ending March 31, 2005.
11. Twelfth Actuarial Review of the National Insurance Scheme as at December 31, 2005.

REPORT FROM SELECT COMMITTEES

Mr. PRESIDENT: I have in my possession the Report of the Committee of Selection which met. I believe that all Honourable Senators have received a copy.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P.O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I will move a motion for the adoption of this Report later in the Sitting.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P.O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I beg to move the suspension of Standing Orders Nos. 22 and 45(2) for the remainder of the Sitting.

The suspension of Standing Order No. 22 is in order for the Appropriation Bill 2008 to be placed on the Order Paper for the Sitting.

The suspension of Standing Order No. 45(2) is to enable the Senate to proceed with the Debate on the Appropriation Bill in all its stages during the Sitting.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P.O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I beg to move the first reading of the following:

The Appropriation Bill, 2008.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 1 – THE APPROPRIATION BILL, 2008

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P.O. McCLEAN: Mr. President there are many issues which must be addressed when we discuss the matter of the Government's revenues and expenditures. As I seek to do this, Sir, I will spend some time reviewing the economy over the last decade to 15 years. I will then explore some challenges, and then go on to explain how the Estimates are crafted, in order to address the challenges faced by this Government.

Mr. President, let me first contextualise this Debate. As you are aware, Sir, this Democratic Labour Party Administration made history when it became, as I understand, the first Administration in the post Independence period to have found itself having to present Estimates within less than three months of assuming office.

As such, these Estimates were, in part, an inherited set of documents and, therefore, there were some constraining factors, in terms of the ability to incorporate provisions for many of the critical aspects of the programmes and pledges to the people of Barbados, made by this current Administration.

Senate A2, sequence 03, 10:30:14

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SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: This has basically become a judicious blend of continuity of programmes and the commencement of this Government's own agenda.

Mr. President, let me start by reviewing the economy over the last decade or so. Mr. President, as you are probably aware, this economy has average growth of between 3 per cent and 3.5 per cent over the period to which I referred. However, this has been concentrated primarily on a few export activities, namely tourism and international financial services. This suggests the need for some attention to be paid to the creation of additional avenues for the generation of growth opportunities.

Mr. President, one other area of importance is the question of unemployment and employment. Over the period, unemployment levels have declined to below 10 per cent. The most recently cited statistics speak to unemployment figures of 6.6 per cent among men and 6.9 per cent among females.

Mr. President, I must very early issue a caveat. Sir, statistics have to be explained. The basis on which these are determined also needs to be made clear. Moreover, when we speak of composite statistics, we also have to pay

some attention to the dis-aggregation of those statistics. In the absence of a full understanding of the methodology utilised in the compilation of these statistics, I feel compelled to raise some questions as I seek, and as I am sure as all of us seek, to interpret and use these statistics as they relate to current unemployment.

Mr. President, some of the questions I would therefore want to pose would be, first, who are the unemployed, and who are those persons seeking employment? Secondly, what types of jobs are being created and therefore who are the persons being employed and finding jobs readily? Thirdly, how do we account for persons in the labour force that are non-Barbadians?

Mr. President, as I indicated previously in the discussion of the Estimates, a number of critical issues must be raised. The level of employment is one.

Let me say a little bit, Sir, about the process of collecting information so that perhaps we could get a sense of why those questions that I raised are necessary. The Barbados Statistical Service conducts a number of surveys. One of critical relevance to the issue of unemployment and employment statistics is the continuous household labour force survey. Mr. President, in reviewing the fourth quarter Statistics Report for October to December 2007, there were a number of questions which I feel I need to answer, and that we would need to answer in this Honourable Chamber, as we seek to understand and apply these statistics.

Mr. President, my understanding is that the Barbados Statistical Service collects a range of socioeconomic data from a random sample of households to determine the labour force. Sir, the labour force is defined as persons in the population 15 years and older who are classified as either employed, unemployed or inactive. Sir, "inactive" is described as persons not in the labour force.

Mr. President, in describing this methodology, the Barbados Statistical Service indicates that it excludes visitors to the island. I however was unable to determine the definition of a visitor.

In the context of growing numbers of migrant workers and the anticipated increase of the regional movement of workers, one must question how these numbers of persons will be or are reflected in the statistics of the population of Barbados, in the labour force, and in the unemployment or employment statistics.

In other words, if I put it very simply in layman's term, the question to be posed is: When we speak of levels of unemployment, are we including in the numbers employed, persons who are on short or even long term work permits and who may or may not be reflected in the statistics on total population?

To elaborate a little, as we utilise those statistics in planning and in policymaking, we need to understand how we arrive at the numbers for our population and whether as we use those population numbers we are speaking of persons normally resident in Barbados, or persons who may be temporarily resident, and if they are included, that would give us one number. If, on the other hand, we exclude persons who are temporarily resident in the total population, but they are included in the work force persons who are identified as employed, the question therefore is: How accurate are those statistics?

Mr. President, that is critical for the planning and policymaking of this Government and, certainly, any Government in Barbados, as people address issues of housing and a whole range of other services. Therefore, one of the concerns that I want to register as I speak to the issue of the Expenditures and Revenues today is the need to ensure that the methodology utilised in the collection of statistics, especially as they relate to employment statistics, gives us a realistic understanding of our employment and, of course, our unemployment situation.

Mr. President, beyond the number of persons working who are normally resident or permanently resident in Barbados, when we speak to the issue of employment and unemployment, we have to pay some significant attention to the question of the types of jobs that are created.

Certainly, as a person who in another life spent approximately 18 years teaching at the University of the West Indies, I am familiar with the level and range of skills facilitated and developed within the context of the University of the West Indies.

I am also familiar with the concerns often expressed, and increasingly so, by many graduates of that institution who find themselves unable, in the short-term and sometimes medium-term, to find either permanent jobs, or jobs that are representative, or that utilise the skills and knowledge that would have been acquired. I am also familiar with the concern that they find themselves, perhaps, settling for jobs where they do not necessarily have the opportunity to utilise their skills and qualifications to the maximum.

As we have over the years as a country invested substantially in education at all levels, more specifically at the secondary and tertiary levels, and as we have expanded the programme offerings of institutions such as the Barbados Community College, the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic and the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill and, by extension, the other two campuses where we also finance the study programmes of Barbadians, we have also paralleled this expansion of the curricula with the expansion of students intake. The graduates of these

institutions, therefore, are coming on to the job market with high expectations of finding suitable accommodation.

Moreover, the level of expenditure on tertiary education in Barbados must be and, in fact, has been done over the years with an expectation of good returns on this investment. Sir, I must reiterate the point I made before that the return on this investment would be ready employment of our young graduates in positions where they can make significant contributions in areas where they can apply some, or much of their knowledge, in traditional employment fields or, of great importance, in entrepreneurial opportunities that they create for themselves.

Senate A2 Sequence 4

10.40 a.m.

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, there is, however, an apparent problem here, namely there seems to be, in many instances, a mix-match between the kinds of jobs which are being created, and the skills set of school-leavers and university graduates. As we speak, therefore, of declining unemployment levels, we have to tread cautiously. We have to be clear about where the pockets of unemployment are, and we also have to have a proper understanding of the true nature and size of the unemployment situation in Barbados.

Mr. President, to continue my review of the economy, I also want to recognise that in Barbados we have been fortunate to have experienced, over the 10 to 15-year period to which I referred, generally modest levels of inflations. This, from time to time, has picked up where, under pressure of import prices and the Cess with which we are all familiar, which was put in place for some period to dampen the consumption of imported goods, which did not necessarily fully achieved that effect. It certainly did have some impact on inflation, one that represented an increase on the level of inflation. However, I want to reiterate that we have so far been fortunate in Barbados.

Mr. President, I want to say something about the levels of foreign exchange which, of course, will have some impact on the question of how we seek to allocate our resources and how we utilise those resources, both within the public and private sectors. We are told, and we recognise that foreign exchange levels, and the Net International Reserves have risen but again one caution is the source of these increases.

As these foreign exchange reserves have risen, we recognised that they have resulted largely because of foreign borrowing, and this is of significance as we seek to

undertake decisions to move this country forward and to develop our capacity to pay our way in this international economy. Therefore, I think the significance of this growth must be explained.

Mr. President, the fact that our foreign exchange levels have been buoyed by foreign borrowing leaves one to question the level of comfort that could be derived from this source of revenue increases. In other words, foreign exchange borrowing does not reflect the true capacity of this country to earn foreign exchange. In fact, it reflects, to some extent, the lack of capacity of this economy to generate the desired levels of foreign exchange.

Therefore, what this suggests to us is that we have to find significant ways of ensuring that we put in place measures to facilitate, either the increased earnings or foreign exchange. The parallel to that is that we also have to find ways to save foreign exchange. Sir, those are tasks which will be addressed by this Government as it continues its term of office.

Mr. President, I am sure that my colleague, the Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance, will speak to these things in detail, so I will not seek to go into substantial explanation of this.

We have also recognised, over the last several decades that, as a country, Barbados has sought to ensure that it has managed its fiscal deficits prudently. We have been able to maintain these at internationally accepted levels. Of course, variations to that would have occurred when they were unexpected, or unusual expenditures requiring foreign exchange.

Mr. President, I am subject to correction as I would indicate very quickly. I am not an economist but I think I have a working understanding of the subject. I must confess I have never had a love for it as a student, nevertheless, I think I have been able to acquire enough knowledge to have a working understanding of it.

Sir, when we talk about foreign exchange expenditures, foreign exchange earnings and Government budgeting, one issue that has to be looked at and has, to some extent, been deemed to be problematic, is the business of off-budget spending. In other words, where in a budgeted process there are significant expenditures that are not immediately reflected in those budgets, then they become a problem.

Sir, I think the issue of the change in accounting practice that has been introduced, certainly in the last financial year, simply to have moved from what an accounting student would identify as cash-base accounting to accrual-base accounting, has forced Government to account up-front for substantial expenditures that were

done below-the-line or off-budget. The difficulty with that situation is where such spending took place, and it was not instantly identifiable, or immediately recognised within Government's finances, there was a situation where anyone looking at those finances, anyone seeking to plan around the revenues and understand the expenditures, did not have a proper picture of what the financial situation would have been.

Mr. President, having sought to give you that very basic layperson's explanation, I want to stress that this Government has had to address, from its very earliest days, the practice of accrual accounting, as it accounts for its revenues and expenditures. Sir, in doing so, this method of accounting has required, and will require Government to account for all financial transactions when undertaken, whether on a cash basis, or credit, or accrual basis. In other words, expenses are accounted for when they occur, and revenues are accounted for, whether cash is received or accounts receivables are created.

Mr. President, this will bring a level of fiscal prudence and responsibility to the accounting process of the public sector, because you will always be faced, at any point in time, with a realistic picture of what has to happen. This means that two things will occur, the true expenses and revenue of Government will be known at any point in time and secondly, the ability to do off-book transactions should become a thing of the past.

Mr. President, I want to stress that this Government is committed to bringing to book all those transactions, whether large or small, so that, at any point in time, any public sector official, any member of the political directorate, any member of the public, would be in a position to have a clear understanding as to what are our revenues, and what are our financial commitments.

Mr. President, having said that, I want to say something about some of the challenges facing this economy. As we all know, and as we are all proud of the fact, Barbados is now one of the world's leading developing countries, and we have a per capita income which is supposed to reflect that. Sir, the reality is that - and again, as I want to stress some of the economic signs, I trust my brother who is looking down on me would be happy to hear me referring to matters of economic s- one of the challenges is that per capita income is essentially a statistic which is, to a large extent, abstract. It bears little resemblance to the realities of the individual citizen as he or she seeks to survive, or to prosper in this country.

Mr. President, if we look at a per capita income figure, it gives us a simple average, one that speaks perhaps to the reality of no one, or to very few persons in the society, if we were to look at their actual income.

10.50 a.m.

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

SENATOR the HON. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: The point I am seeking to make, Sir, is, as we speak to the question of Government finances as they explain the policies and programmes to be implemented, certainly by this Government, we want to recognise that the true financial situation of individual citizens will vary from individual to individual.

Mr. President, there are many Barbadians who are quite capable of taking care of themselves. I know there are many Barbadians who live ostentatiously but, on the other hand, we have other Barbadians who are finding it next to impossible on a day-to-day basis to survive and have a quality of life which is at a level that is befitting the status of one of the world's leading developing countries. Sir, as we seek to address issues of health, education, social care, transportation, et cetera, those statistics will have to take a background to the realities of the individual citizen. Yes, we will try to maintain that status and seek to use those macro economic indicators, but we will take those macro economic indicators with the pinch of salt which says that we have to move beyond those indicators to have a full appreciation of the realities of the citizens of this country.

Mr. President, I want to go back to a statistic that I quoted before, that is the question of the growth of our economy. Sir, Barbados' economy has been growing perhaps at about 3.0 per annum to 3.5 per annum and that, itself, is an issue that has to be addressed in a head-on way of which I am sure this new Government will seek to address. As it stands, a 3.0 per annum to 3.5 per annum growth in the Barbadian economy I would suggest, humbly so, is insufficient to move the economy to another level, because as we seek to move this economy to another level, we have to think in terms of what it will, in terms of the kind of jobs, take to allow us to do so. Perhaps, Sir, in a roundabout way, you may now understand better why I spent some time very early speaking to the matter of employment statistics and asking questions about the types of jobs that are created, who is employed and who is not employed.

Mr. President, if we seek to engage in high quality job creation, we have to think in terms of ensuring that the opportunities created either with the support of Government or through the injection of investments from indigenous entrepreneurs, joint ventures between foreign capital and indigenous business people or simply through foreign direct investments and other opportunities, that those opportunities for job creation will create jobs that are sustainability; that will provide at the low end of the earning scale the ability to earn a living wage.

I am sure my colleague responsible for labour will speak to those kinds of issue, if not today, at some point in time over the life of this Government. We have to ensure, therefore, that we are not creating transient jobs, which do not utilise the full capabilities and potential of the people of this country, and even the persons who come into this society to assist us where assistance is necessary.

We have to think about a parallel situation that is the improvement of general living standards of the people of this country. Therefore, we have to think about how we make provision for the accommodation of our people; the ability to find housing; the ability to access land and, Sir, I will say a bit more about that later.

Mr. President, in the medium-term, we have talked about moving Barbados from the leading developing country to developed status that is often touted. Sir, we have to focus a lot on what is done for Barbadians. Our economy, therefore, cannot grow in a lopsided fashion. There has to be a balanced approach, taking into consideration not only economic issues, but issues which speak to the socio-economic, to the spiritual, to health and the general well-being of the persons who occupy this country, first Barbadians and others.

Sir, I will say something later about the issue of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy as we talk about ensuring that we have in place policies and programmes financed by the measures that we will speak of today.

Mr. President, therefore, in the medium-term, we have to push for an annual growth rate of around 5.0 per cent and that, Sir, might be challenged by the real economists. I do not pretend to be part economist. This, Sir, is a task which this Government recognises and will certainly address with vigour. To that end, I want to place before you the notion that the economy cannot achieve this goal by relying only on the present economic structure. Sir, that present economic structure, I will refer to as the traditional economy.

I am talking about our traditional means of investing, our attraction of foreign investment et cetera and generally, like many developing countries, that traditional reliance on the issue of foreign direct investment, et cetera.

I believe, Sir, that this Government, as it seeks to put in place its plans and programmes will do so in a way that recognises the true potential and capacity of our indigenous entrepreneurs, particularly our young people to contribute in a significant way, with the right support from Government to the earning of revenues and certainly, because we are not a country with a hard currency to the earning of foreign exchange, or the savings as we parallel to earnings the savings of foreign exchange.

In other words, there needs to be greater attention paid to the diversification of activities and the development of the niche markets, which would allow us to earn foreign exchange by taking advantage of comparative and competitive advantages in certain areas.

Mr. President, we have heard a lot about the development of the petroleum sector with its various spin-offs. While that is important, we have to go beyond that. We have to be multi-focussed, multi-pronged in our approach to financial and revenue generation.

As I mentioned before, investment in our young people in our secondary and tertiary institutions must bear fruit. To this end, attention has to be made to building what would be termed the Anew economy@. Sir, I have talked about the old economy and I want to suggest that as we strive to expand and strengthen that old economy there has to be an effort at the creation, sustaining and expansion of what I called the "new economy".

Mr. President, one of the areas in which significant attention will be placed by this new Administration, by this new Democratic Labour Party Government, is that of utilising e-commerce to the advantage of a lot of our young and existing entrepreneurs who have often had to forego opportunities because of the absence of simple arrangements. I can report that efforts will be made to ensure that our banking and other financial services sectors are so equipped as to facilitate those transactions.

Mr. President, if I may illustrate. We have talks about cultural industries. We have seen the utilisation of modern technology in assessing products and services and I know that many Barbadians are very comfortable shopping on the net. There is the other side of the coin where many persons have, because of the available technology, been able to assess the products and services whether it be music, artistic designs, technical advisory services, et cetera via the worldwide web.

11.00 a.m.

Sequence 6

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: In many instances when queries are made, individuals are unable to capitalise on those opportunities, because a matter such as the settlement of payments by a small entrepreneur becomes a major challenge. That, certainly, is something which can be addressed, and will be addressed with some level of alacrity.

Sir, beyond that, much has been said in Barbados and beyond, about the importance of participating in this

international economy. However, we cannot seek to participate in that international economy, or ignore the realities of the opportunities made available to us as members of the CARICOM family of islands.

Sir, as the Minister assigned the responsibility for CSME matters, I want to put very early on the table, the importance of information, as we seek to make decisions. It is critical that Barbados, as a leader, has been and will continue to be based on the allocation of responsibilities for CSME and related matters. Barbados has to play a leading role. However, I want to caution that in the process of playing that leading role, we need to have a proper understanding of the implications of a number of issues, which emanate from participating in the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, eventually.

Mr. President, I want to speak specifically to the need to have information on the movement of people in the Caribbean. That is critical. It is somehow unfortunate that, at this point and time we have been unable, certainly, when the Government sat in Opposition and certainly now a decision maker, to ascertain statistics, simple statistics, which speak to the arrivals and departures, not only of visitors to this country, but even of our nationals. The question is, why is this such a problem? Of course, there will be a solution.

Sir, the importance of these statistics has to do with the fact that, as we seek to plan, as we seek to budget, we need to know the basis on which, and the basis for which we are budgeting. These are issues which will challenge several key areas. It will challenge issues of health service provision. It will challenge issues of housing. It will challenge issues of education, and the list can go on and on. In other words, as we seek to provide social services, we cannot do that in a situation where we are not in a position to explain, or to utilise the basis on which we are doing that.

Sir, if I can use some very practical examples, I am not sure that anyone right now can tell me how many persons who are not normally not resident in Barbados or who are temporarily resident in Barbados, utilise the services of any of our health care facilities, namely the Queen Elizabeth Hospital or Polyclinics.

We are not able to say, and I say that because, as I came into the new responsibility that I have been asked to assume, one of the first things, I think because of the nature of my management training, was that I asked for numbers, so that I can understand and so that I can assist the new Government in doing a proper situational analysis. I was not able to get, as I said, that kind of information, neither have I been able so far, to identify a ready source of information on the number of persons who are currently enrolled, for example, in our primary or even secondary

public schools, who are not normally resident in Barbados, or who are the offspring of persons temporarily resident in Barbados, and so on.

Sir, those numbers are not asked for to penalise anybody. Those numbers are asked for, as I said before, to assist us in the financing and execution of the very elements of the very treaties, that relate to the Caribbean Single Market and Economy. Sir, put very simply, those issues are asked for to facilitate in budgeting, in being able to predict our expenditures, in being able to predict how we must utilise our revenues, and how we will grow our revenue base. Therefore, as we look to address those issues, I want to reiterate, that a critical element of us making sense of any budgetary process is that we have proper statistics on which to plan our activities.

Sir, it is critical because, as I suggested the free movement of labour will mean that there will be additional strains on our local, physical and social infrastructure, and provision has to be made for this. Provision has to be made, certainly first of all with the necessary finances to support this.

Sir, certainly in the context of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, let me suggest that when we think in terms of the various countries Barbados has, in fact, been the most attractive destination country. That is a reality, and we have to work through the implications of that. Therefore, it is critical that we pay some attention to those numbers, if we are to make sense of how we fit into the business of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy.

Sir, as I move through the whole business of reviewing our economic situation, I want to move a bit away to talk about the important role of the Government as an entity, and the Government support, that is the public sector, its role as a catalyst in facilitating this growth, that I said, is necessary. If we are supposed to achieve the level of development, and this targeted developed country status that we have been putting forward for some years, it is critical that all the mechanisms be in place to facilitate this.

In that sense, the public sector will have to be a true catalyst for growth in Barbados in this new millennium. Sir, in other words, the Government of Barbados and the persons who represent this Government, that is the political directorate, and the individual persons who staff the various agencies servicing Government, have to recognise that their roles and responsibilities are very much centered in shaping and sustaining an enabling environment to facilitate this growth.

Sir, the public sector, therefore, has to ensure that they put in place the necessary support services. First let me talk a bit about the people, because we have to recognise that all the numbers we will speak about today,

all the budgets and all the revenue generation opportunities, all the expenditures are done by, through and for people.

It is critical, therefore, for all of us, from the political directorate, down through the various levels of the Public Service recognise that these exercises are intended to impact on the quality of life, and the creation of the right environment, whether it is the enabling environment which facilitates the proper socialisation of our children; the proper education of our children; the creation of a proper enabling environment for business; creating a proper enabling environment for our senior citizens as they seek to bask in the glory of their senior years, having made a significant contribution to this country. It is necessary that we are charged with and recognise, accept and take on the responsibility of facilitating that environment. Sir, I am suggesting that as we seek to look at these numbers, we do so against the background of appreciating that the role and purpose of this exercise is to ensure that there is adequate financing for the business of Government which, as I said in very broad terms, is to create a set of enabling environments which will ensure that this country, and by this country I mean the people of this country, are able to achieve what is considered the best and appropriate life which, as we should define it ourselves, is certainly, the status of a developed country.

11.10 a.m.

Sequence 7

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

Estimates - Senate A2, sequence 8, 11.10 a.m.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P.O. McCLEAN: I want to reiterate the point that when we talk about developed status, I believe it is important that as a country, we also determine what constitutes for us, developed statue.

Sir, in terms of the creation of that enabling environment, I spoke about the importance of the various actors in that process. I want to say a bit about the members of the Public Service, who are charged with this responsibility. As we look at the revenue figures, as we look at the expenditure figures, as I said before, the persons employed in our central Public Service, the persons employed in our Statutory Corporations, and the persons employed in the range of "satellite" - for want of a better word - agencies that would have been created in the last decade, all have to recognise and assume responsibility for the prudent expenditure of Government resources.

When I say Government resources, let me stress that the resources of the Government resources translate into the resources of the people, because the funds that we talk

about and we allocate today, and we discuss today, are funds contributed by the men and women, the boys and girls of this country. Therefore, these persons have to assume the responsibility for ensuring that they manage these in a prudent way.

On the other side, it is important that there is also a serious effort to ensure those measures that are put in place to generate revenue, are pursued in a similar fashion. And so, the whole question of proper internal controls is important.

Mr. President, I want to say what is the importance of proper controls. It certainly has been of significant consternation, not only of myself, and I am sure the Honourable Members of this Chamber, but to the people of Barbados that, as recently as yesterday, we would have read about the findings of the Auditor General.

Sir, one major concern has to be that there is a concerted effort to bring those kinds of situations to an end. Clearly, the conservation and the efficient and effective utilisation of the people=s resources cannot be realised, if we continue to read of bad decisions, mismanagement, misappropriation - and the list goes on - of the kinds of deviations from good practice, which have been demonstrated over and over again, across a range of agencies and entities, charged with the responsibility of managing and utilising the funds of the Public Service.

Sir, what I have said, perhaps, can be summed up in the notion that in Barbados, as it is well known for many small developing countries like ours, the management of the Public Service can make or break the system. This is why it is crucial that we put proper procedures in place to ensure that when we hear of infractions and deviations from what should be the accepted norm, we have a situation where corrective action is taken.

Mr. President, any member of a standard audit committee of a private sector entity, whether it is a publicly owned company or a private entity knows that when you get your management letter from your external auditor, before you can even present it to your Board, you have to speak of corrective action. Sir, I believe that philosophy of immediate action to correct is important.

Sir, it is therefore important that as we talk about efficiency, effectiveness and immediate corrective action, that a practice which seems to be fairly common across the agencies of the public sector in the wider sense of the word, has to stop. Sir, by that I mean that in my very short stint as a Minister of Government, I have seen very late reporting. When I say "late reporting", the ability to lay annual financial reports, in many instances, renders that information useless.

In the best of times, an annual report, reports on historical information but in the worse of times, when it comes four and five years after the fact, it is a total waste of time. Therefore, as we seek to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in the use of our resources, those are the kinds of things we have to put in place to ensure that there is prudent, effective and efficient use of Government resources.

It is crucial, therefore, that as we look to put in place measures of taxation and spending, that careful attention is put, not only in the estimation of these amounts but, in the management of how these amounts are utilised, collected, et cetera.

In essence, if these things were to happen, it would allow us to develop a situation where Government operations become much leaner and meaner, and meaner does not mean evil and vindictive. It talks about operating, as we would want an efficient machinery to operate. The parallel, of course, is that we do the same with ourselves as individuals.

In other words, Sir, as we seek to develop a lean and mean operation, we want to ensure that there is zero tolerance. I do not use the word loosely or frivolously because we hear that we must have a serious commitment to zero tolerance for waste of any type. The parallel, of course, Sir, is that we have in place systems that make the best use of our scarce financial resources.

In that case, Sir, as we look at these figures before us, today, the focus should be on, how do we ensure as we debate these and move from debates in the future into the utilisation of these actual dollars and cents that we will discuss, that we bring to bear prudent governance on all of our undertakings?

Sir, I anticipate, as I look to probably speak about the trends in revenue, as I move away from the general discussion of the environment on which the economic condition will prevail, I want to make a few brief comments on the trends in revenue and expenditure.

Mr. President, I anticipate, as I probably said before, that my colleague, the Honourable Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance will speak in some detail about the matters of revenue and expenditure. However, I will point out in summary that for the financial year 2007-2008, projected revenue was \$2 308.8 million, as approved by Parliament on March 23, 2007.

This figure was subsequently revised, and I trust that my figures are the most accurate and up-to-date, to \$2 469.7 million. Similarly, total expenditure for the same period was estimated at \$2 905.9 million and later revised to about \$3 205.4 million. Sir, while it is recognised that

supplementals and revisions will have to be made, based on the foregoing comments I made in terms of prudence and efficiency, it is anticipated as we go through this term of Government, we will find ourselves being in a position to identify or to require those kinds of supplementals, which are not required because of wastage or ridiculous cost overruns, but of necessary exigencies of Government.

Sir, if I could look now to the financial year 2008-2009. The projection of expenditures is \$3 408.8 million and total revenues are projected at \$2 692.3 million. As you are aware, these expenditures are intended to finance the programmes of Government. Sir, I want to say a little about some of the key Ministries under which these allocations will be made.

Mr. President, under the Ministry of Health and Social Security, there is an allocation of \$381 057 823 million.

Senate A2, sequence 08, 11:20:14

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: As you would recognise, Sir, this is the largest component of the Government's budget. It clearly recognises the importance of investing in the health and social security needs of our citizens.

It is unfortunate, however, Sir, that in the context of the levels of expenditures, we have situations - and I regret that I have several instances of first hand examples of this - where persons are, perhaps, forced to endure less than adequate conditions at many of our health care facilities.

Mr. President, I want to hasten very quickly to say, however, that notwithstanding infrastructural and other shortcomings, I also am in a position to praise, based on very short term memory, the quality of service delivered by the people charged with delivering health care. I speak specifically this morning about the staff of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. I had to be there over the last month visiting a relative and I saw the conditions.

Mr. President, I certainly anticipate that if we pursue, as I indicated, a strategy of prudence, efficiency and critical care in terms of how we spend our money, that we would see those circumstances changing somewhat. I however want to raise a caution and, perhaps, make a link with something that I spoke about before.

Mr. President, as we seek to render critical care and medical care to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, if I could use such an analogy, we have also to recognise that unless we have a good basis for projecting who would require care at the Hospital, we would have significant difficulties.

Sir, it is my understanding that in many instances we have persons who have found themselves almost destitute, having come to this country and for whatever reason decided that they would remain in this country illegally, having to look after themselves and therefore finding themselves at the mercy of our taxpayers and, certainly, competing with persons who pay taxes for that service.

We as CARICOM Members have a responsibility to our brothers and sisters, but we certainly have a responsibility to ensure that those persons who come here are not here to be exploited, and to find themselves facing uncertain situations, and finding themselves at the mercy - and therefore putting strain, in this case, on our health institutions.

We also have a situation where we need to pay attention to the burden that is placed on our health care services, certainly, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital because it is the single institution of its type.

I certainly will not get into a long discussion on the pending Report of the St. Joseph Hospital, Sir. I trust that in a short term, we can see that Report and if there is anything we can learn from it that would contribute to the improvement of health care services, we would want to take it on board swiftly. I think I felt free to speak to that, and I would leave it there for now. Our Polyclinics have been identified by our current Honourable Minister of Health to be in for some medical resuscitation. I think I should use medical analogies as I speak about medical institutions. That is certainly welcome. Again, it is important that we look at how those services are utilised. Mr. President, I sympathise again with persons who are finding themselves seeking through honest, sometimes, but often dishonest means, to utilise those services because they find themselves in Barbados, because we have not found a way to manage the migration of persons.

Mr. President, I will move away a bit from health to say something about Social Security. As a preamble to that discussion, I want to raise a personal concern about recent stories of malfeasance at the National Insurance Office. Sir, that, perhaps, has to do with another point I made before and, perhaps, people could see some connections between some of the wide-ranging points I made before.

We have a situation where, I think, there was a report of, that is subject to correction, and I suppose I can use the word "theft", the theft of at least \$1 million. Sir, the concern is, how could that happen? Sir, my response to that is that if we do not have proper auditing on a timely basis, those things would be picked up years after the fact. Sir, that is a manifestation. Let us hope that it is not the tip of the iceberg. Sir, I fear not that it is. I suspect it may be the tip of the iceberg of the kinds of improprieties that could take place where the systems are not functioning

maximumly in terms of efficiency. Sir, I speak to that as an issue.

Sir, I want to move away from the issue of the Ministry of Health, National Insurance and Social Security and turn to the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development. Sir, like health, that is a major pillar of our society. It is the launching pad from which we are able as Barbadians to achieve a lot of what we are able to achieve. At this point in time, I would want to at least recognise that in my personal situation that it is through education, from primary to tertiary, at the cost of taxpayers, that I am able to stand before you today.

The allocation for the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development is \$280 694 106. Again, that is a significant chunk of our budget. That however, properly utilised, will continue, as it has done in the post-independence period, and I am sure before, to make a significant difference to who we are as Barbadians and what we are able to contribute within Barbados and outside of Barbados. Therefore, it is important that we invest in education.

Mr. President, I want to issue some caveats, or to raise some concerns. Mr. President, as I mentioned previously, I spent approximately 18 years as a lecturer at the University of the West Indies. Over those 18 years, and subsequent to that, in another institution where I utilised my skills as a trainer, I have come to recognise two things. On the positive side, the investment in education has pretty much seen significant returns. On the positive side, we have benefitted as a country in ways that are obvious to that investment.

On the other hand, I am seeing the other side that we are reaching a point where the beneficiaries of those investments are, perhaps, not recognising the significant contribution that each and every taxpayer in Barbados is making to their education. I speak now not only as a person who spent years teaching at the University of the West Indies, but as a person having served as President of the Alumni Association, which say that my heart is with the University of the West Indies and certainly the Cave Hill Campus.

Sir, I am concerned that as we move forward, and as we allocate a significant percentage of our funds to tertiary education, that we are starting to see diminishing returns. Perhaps it has to do with situations which need to be analysed. Sir, it takes me back to the need to generate information and statistics to inform decision-making.

Senate A2 Sequence 9

11.30 a.m.

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I have been observing a trend in our university education, where a number of persons who have not been able to find the place in the Sixth Form schools, or who have not been able to find a place at the Barbados Community College, are opting to go to the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, straight from doing their CXCs.

The problem with that is that, unfortunately many of them are not emotionally ready for university. They are not academically ready and they are basically creating a situation where the University, in some instance, is becoming the last resort. Sir, that is not what we want to see happening.

Mr. President, given the difference in cost of a sixth form education versus a first-year part-time education at the University, I believe some serious attention has to be paid to this. Sir, I can say that in my desire to ensure that my alma mater, and I am happy to say the alma mater of many of us around this Table, continues to maintain the excellent record and standing it has regionally and internationally. This matter should be looked at and addressed as speedily as possible. Sir, I have indicated this to the Minister of Education.

I want to say that beyond the issue of persons leaving secondary school at the age of 17 and entering the University, I want to signal a concern about the quality, notwithstanding the fact that I have seen and can see the benefits and the results of those persons who have had the opportunity to attend the university, I have seen also a falloff in the quality, to some extent, of some of our graduates. Sir, perhaps it has to do with their preparation, prior to university.

Mr. President, I want to say that as we allocate funds to the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, we need, in a lot of instances, to go back to some of the basics, to ensure that people are equipped with the essentials that would allow them to take advantage of our educational opportunities and to maximise their ability to use that investment in their education, in ways that are beneficial to them.

Mr. President, I want to speak about the issue of our primary and secondary education, which is linked to our focus on the family, et cetera. I want to express a concern, as we seek to educate our young people, about the need to educate Barbadians about matters relating to health. I have observed, in recent years - and it is a worrying trend - that many of our young people at ages under 15 are developing many of the so-called lifestyle diseases that typically

manifested themselves in older people. I am talking about issues relating to diabetes, hypertension, stroke, et cetera.

Mr. President, these are issues which bore no relevance to most of us when we were children. Sir, the reality is that those things tie into very much to some other issues. They tie into, perhaps, our focus on nutrition in the schools, where, for example, we are providing school meals. School meals did not happen in my lifetime as a girl in primary school, but what I can tell you is that in talking to persons who were the initial beneficiaries of such a programme, what seemed to have been the greater focus seemed to have been the quality and nutritional contents of those meals. Therefore, we have a situation where, perhaps, even in our school system, we are falling short, in terms of addressing the proper nutritional needs of our children. In addition, it is perhaps compounded with the failure within the structured school curriculum to build proper health, education and physical fitness into that curriculum.

Mr. President, that is compounded by the failure to do the same things in the home. We now have a technologically-driven set of pastimes which, perhaps, do not do much more than challenge our mental faculties or maybe challenge our physical health, in terms of how we manipulate these things.

Mr. President, the key thing I am suggesting is that as we expend these sums of money on education, that we focus on the second part of this Ministry, that being the issue of human resource development. Sir, if we seek to ensure that we have the human capital necessary to ensure that we can take this country forward, we have to pay special attention to this.

Mr. President, in addition to our health issues and our desire for tertiary education, I want to touch on the question of values and attitudes. If I recall correctly from my days in behavioural studies, we are often told that we probably cannot change attitudes. Sir, when we talk about changing attitude, I am talking at the level of the adult in the workplace. However, I believe it is important that outside of the academic curriculum that we will finance in our schools, we have to pay some attention to focussing on values.

Mr. President, there has been much talk in the past about values, and I am talking about going back to some very simple things that we, as Barbadians manifested and exhibited and became known for, not only across the Region, but internationally. Sir, we must focus on those things because we see the lack of proper attitudes being manifested in the workplace, in the field of play, on the streets, in the stores, and in the interaction with each other.

Therefore, I believe it is important. Sir, to this end, I believe that the Minister of Education and Human

Resource Development has previously reported, as was a Manifesto pledge of this new Government, that there will be public consultations on education. Sir, I recall that the Honourable Member has already put in place the initial mechanisms to get this process going. I am, therefore, happy to hear that is happening and I trust that we would all support such a petition and that the public becomes seriously engaged in this exercise because the quality of what transpired on a day-to-day basis is important.

Mr. President, while I am on the subject of education, I want to touch on something that is very basic. I suppose it touches me as an educator at heart and as a Barbadian, as I travel around the Region, and as I used to travel outside the Region in my past life. Sir, I am appalled at the inability of many of our young people, even those who are perhaps the creme of the crop, so to speak, who have significant difficulty in articulating themselves, even simply communicating in basic English.

Mr. President, this is a recurring problem, but I believe that as we talk about education and as we spend large sums of money, almost \$300 million, we need to recognise that all the bells and whistles would mean nothing, or that they would ring or blow needlessly, wastefully or uselessly, if we do not ensure that we go back to the basics at all levels of the education system. Sir, it is on the basis of those basics that we are able to develop and to become who we want to become, to be citizens of this developed country that we so aspire to become.

Mr. President, I want to move to the issue of the Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Urban Development, where the allocation is \$73 498 105. In respect of that, it is important to recognise that in the carving out of that particular Ministry, there is clear recognition of a number of important facts. This Ministry and the work that it will undertake in this Budgetary period this first year and over the life of this Government is work that recognises that a society is perhaps best characterised by how it takes care of the vulnerable in that society.

11.40 a.m.

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Similarly, Sir, I want to suggest that the efficacy of a democracy is best demonstrated to the extent to which there is meaningful engagement of the populace. This Government recognises the importance of these two realities and it is through the Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Urban Development that it has committed itself to spending approximately \$74 million to undertake the multiple task of empowering the population while supporting the vulnerable.

Sir, let me say quickly that one major plank of this Ministry and, certainly, of this Government will be the establishment of Constituency Councils and I will say a bit about that in general terms.

Sir, let me say very quickly that the establishment of Constituency Councils is not a mechanism to distribute partisan, political largesse, but it is to foster initiatives within communities to take ownership of a process that addresses parochial issues.

Mr. President, I want to go back to that statement. It is not a mechanism to foster partisan, political largesse or patronage. It is intended to be a mechanism where individuals will have an opportunity to have a say. I note with interest that recently a Government source said there will be the establishment of "Constituency Councils". I am not sure of the definition by the establisher of that Council. I would have also heard responses to and initial allocation of the sum of \$100 000 to those Councils.

Sir, let me say that my understanding is that \$100 000 will not be handed out to any set of persons willy-nilly. In fact, my expectation is that monies will not be handed over in that way. Members, of the community, because they are seeking to address parochial issues, which are, perhaps, best addressed in the community, and at the community level, will identify and prioritise those things and will bring them to the attention of the necessary agencies, so it is a mechanism which facilitates, but is not a mechanism which is like a runaway train with sums of money to dispense to whosoever will may come.

Mr. President, it will allow citizens to become part of the political process beyond the once in five year election exercise. As we move forward, there will be consultation on this, and the terms and conditions, and the terms of reference. The parameters within which it will operate will be established.

Mr. President, while I am talking to that, I want to move to the issue of Government's approach to doing business. Sir, I spent some time talking about some of the programmes of this Government, and I think it is imperative that I spend some time now addressing, not what they will do, but how the Government will do what it seeks to do.

In other words, I want to spend some time speaking to the approach to doing business which will characterise this Democratic Labour Party Administration. I will just recall references that I have made previously to the findings of the Auditor General in his most recently published Report.

Sir, in terms of that Report, specifically, Barbadians, no doubt, have done more than raise their eyebrows at the

many cases of mismanagement of public funds because, of course, as I have said before, this is the taxpayers' money.

This Government has been very clear on its intention to bring some sanity and greater integrity to the expenditure of public funds. It has signalled its intention to move beyond the rhetoric of good governance to the actual operationalisation of this idea. Sir, to this end, I want to spend a few minutes speaking about my role as Minister of State in the Prime Minister's office. Sir, in my capacity as Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office I have been charged with the responsibility of establishing a governance unit. Again, it is not a matter of form. It is intended to be substance.

Sir, this Governance Unit will have very clear terms of reference, and I want to report that as we seek to engage in the expenditure of Government's funds over the next financial year, it will be done so against the background of this Government having established such a governance unit.

The Governance Unit, in the short-term, will be advised by an Advisory Board, and Cabinet has already approached the appointment of such a board. This Board will, through public consultation and other exercises, undertake to identify a set of legislation which speaks very specifically to issues relating to good corporate governance within the public sector, specifically focussing on declaration of assets. For example, it will focus on the whole issue of ensuring that there is accountability and transparency in Government.

It will seek to address the issue of legislation relating to defamation and freedom of information because if we are operating in a manner that is transparency, and is characterised by integrity, there should be no reluctance to speak to the issue of making information freely available to the public.

It will do so in a manner that is befitting of a commitment to undertake the work of Government seriously, to undertake the work in a manner that is truly transparent; that is truly accountable and that will set the standard for good governance, not only in the public sector because, certainly, not only will the political directorate be called to account and be held responsible and liable under these pieces of legislation, it will apply to persons in public office generally.

Mr. President, as I indicated, in doing so, this will also seek to set the standard for this nation. Sir, good governance in the private sector has become a very critical issue. We have seen the issue unfolding in several jurisdictions where persons have fallen short of good governance and the consequential impact it has had on the lives of people.

Therefore, I want to reiterate that this commitment to governance is not a trivial or passing issue. It is one for which this Government has committed itself, and will stand by its word, and will deliver and, certainly, I have been charged with that responsibility, and I will do the best to ensure that it is done in the speediest of times.

Mr. President, I want also to speak about the issue of our Housing because that is an area in which it is important that we pay some attention and in which we also have to ensure that we make best use of our resources. Clearly, in an island of 166 square miles and one in which a previous Administration, the immediate past Administration sought to realise the greatest economic gains for our land resources, we have seen a major shortcoming as far as the needs of Barbadians are concerned.

Sir, Barbadians have pretty much found it necessary to demand of a Government that they establish mechanisms to address their housing needs. It is ironic that in a country where only this week I heard of an overbuilding of certain categories of accommodation. There are thousands of Barbadians who find themselves unable to own, to rent, to lease or to find accommodation that is suited to the needs of lower income persons and lower middle-income persons. The reality is that land in a land scarce country like Barbados has become a major stumbling block for many of our citizens.

S/A2/11:50

Sequence 11

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Therefore, this Government has committed and, has certainly, put in place initial resources to address one of its 100-day pledges, to make available to Barbadians, who will become first-time homeowners, land at the price of \$2.50 per square foot.

The reality is, for many of those persons, and certainly that initial 500 lots that will be made available. That is a significant lifeline, because without that piece of land, without that piece of the rock, as we like to say in Barbados, there will certainly not have opportunity to ever own a home.

Sir, to this end, there has been put in place the mechanism to ensure that this process is expedited speedily and, certainly, I anticipate that those persons who have sat on a list for a long time, those persons who have been butting themselves against visible and invisible obstacles, will find there is some solution in place.

Sir, it is anticipated, beyond that, that there will be several other housing solutions, and this will require new approaches to home ownership, to home construction and to the development of housing solutions. It takes me back, when we talk about housing, to the issue that I raised before, and here again I want to make a necessary link when I talked about the need for statistics.

Sir, beyond the housing needs of the average Barbadians, persons who are Aborn and bred in Barbados, @ they are many persons who are either recent residents of Barbados on the short or long-term or even medium-term basis, and the issue of housing is, of course, very compelling in that instance as well.

Sir, we have a situation where we had some unfortunate tragedies in recent times, and part of that has to do with, perhaps, the level of demand for accommodation that is put in place. Therefore, as we seek to offer housing solutions, one of the areas of housing accommodation that will, of necessity, occupy the minds of this current Administration, is the need for housing for persons who are here as migrant workers.

I believe that as the Minister responsible for Immigration, I want to signal very early that one of the conditions I would want to recommend to Government and certainly to Cabinet, is the need to require persons seeking substantial number of work permits simultaneously, that they indicate clearly how these persons will be accommodated. It is one thing to solicit work permits, and I will use an arbitrary number, 50 or 75 persons, but another thing to have those persons come into this country, and be uncertain as to where they may reside, because we recognise that it is creating a problem.

That situation of the demand for labour, and the situation of the increasing number of illegal immigrants in the country have created a very serious situation, a situation where people are being exploited at the level of those persons seeking accommodation. It is creating health risks, because of the sheer physical conditions under which people are forced to live. It is creating other kinds of risks, because an accommodation which was essentially established to accommodate, let us say eight persons in a three-bedroom home, is now being almost converted into, I cannot even find a decent term to use for it.

Sir, I am understanding that we are moving away from rooms to rental or sale of beds, and it is a frightening spectre, because at the end of the day, let me go back to this notion of a leading developing country, aspiring to be a developed country by the year 2010, we have to recognise that we cannot compromise the standards that we have become accustomed to as Barbadians to allow individuals to exploit others, because of their unfortunate

circumstances, or to allow people to exploit others for their own personal financial gain.

Therefore, as we talk about housing, we have to speak to addressing the housing needs of those Barbadians who, because of recent developments in terms of land prices, now find that the one element of a home, which used to be a reasonable component of the total cost, has now become not only a significant component of that cost, but has become, almost, a component which renders the aspiration, one that cannot be realised.

Sir, I want to speak a bit about the issue of tourism. I have chosen to speak on tourism, and I will do so briefly, because I would have spent the last 14 years directly involved in an aspect of the tourism sector. I certainly spent that period within the cruise sector. I want to say that while tourism generally has contributed significantly to this country, we also want to be sure that as we build that sector which has significant potential, we also want to ensure that as we seek to build the corresponding aspect of that, that is land-based tourism, we pay some serious attention to all aspects of our industry, to what I would describe as the carrying capacity of this country.

I think that notion of carrying capacity, while I am speaking of it in the context of tourism, has to apply across the board. I talked about immigration just now and there is a connection. Sir, we have to recognise that there is a carrying capacity, in relation to the number of persons we can accommodate in this physical space.

Sir, in looking at the question of carrying capacity, I want to also echo a concern that I would have heard in recent times about the shift in the direction of the infrastructure, that is the accommodations aspect of our tourism. We have seen the expansion of the condominium townhouse. I have heard the expression used, condo hotel, et cetera.

I just want to echo, that as we seek to move in those directions for whatever are the compelling reasons, we recognise that we have to address the question of carrying capacity in terms of physical space, carrying capacity in terms of the ability of the new directions of tourism to earn us foreign exchange, to minimise the leakage for foreign exchange, and to offer employment to our citizens. Sir, it is important that we pay attention to those things, as well as the creation of jobs.

Sir, as the Minister responsible for immigration, in recent times, I have been noticing a trend, because I am now in a position to see the statistics, or incidents of applications before me, where I have to question the extent to which we are pursuing a strategy of preparing Barbadians for some key positions.

In other words, as we approve, as a country, work permits for non nationals, and certainly persons outside of the Region, the question I want to pose is: To what extent are we ensuring that those persons on whom we have expended significant sums of monies - I spoke about expenditure on education a short while ago. The question I am asking is, to what extent are we, having expended that money, ensuring that our employers are demonstrating a serious commitment to developing our human resources, to developing the capacity of our young people and, in many instances, not so young people, through retraining, et cetera, to take advantage of opportunities that may exist?

Sir, my concern is, if we find ourselves resorting to the arguments, that a person does not have X amount of experience in an international institution of the calibre of a particular operation, we cannot hire a Barbadian. If that is the argument used to secure work permits, et cetera, then we will find ourselves never being able to produce the kind of capable persons.

12.00 p.m.

Sequence 12

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

Estimates - Senate A2, sequence 13, 12.00 a.m.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P.O. McCLEAN: Therefore, one of the recommendations that I would certainly be making to our Cabinet and to the Government is that we ask and stress the importance of employers building into their human resource development strategies, opportunities for developing our locals, especially in key positions, managerial and otherwise.

I am referring to the tourism sector but I see it in other kinds of institutions. Sir, it takes me back to the question: How are we capitalising on our investment in our young people, and how are we taking advantage of our investment in education?

Mr. President, I want to say something about the allocation for the Ministry of Transport, Works and International Transport. In the 2008-2009 Budget, we have allocated approximately \$85 million. As we allocate these funds, one of the issues that comes to mind readily is the issue of traffic congestion. We would have seen the failure to date of several of the high cost solutions that have been proposed, and it begs the question, why do we not perhaps, as a country, focus on some of the less grandiose but more basic simple, less costly solutions?

Sir, it is nigh impossible now, notwithstanding some of the solution I have heard in recent days, that we can move freely around Barbados, without having had to spend

inordinate amounts of time sitting in transportation, either self-driven or driving in the public service vehicles. I want to suggest that as we look to spend these monies, we cannot focus only on large infrastructural solutions, but that we focus on other kinds of issues.

To date in Barbados, there are few institutions which have sought to introduce flexible working hours. I know of some organisations that do that successfully. I believe that we have to rethink how we do business. Certainly, this Government has made a commitment in its Manifesto pledges to seek to decentralise certain services, in order to ensure that we do not all have to converge on common locations to do critical services with Government.

Sir, beyond that, we also have to think of providing services at times and places that are of convenience, and which will serve to reduce the traffic loads on any of our Highways at any given point in time.

Sir, we also have to think in terms of addressing a problem which many of us face and that is because of the quality of much of the public transportation, persons feel compelled to acquire their own vehicles. As we talk about saving foreign exchange, and the issue of continuously rising oil prices, we have to recognise that we have to find ways to conserve.

We have to address public transportation in a way that will seek to ensure we can reduce the incidence of vehicles driven by a single occupant at critical times, and find ways to encourage persons to leave their vehicles at home. Sir, we can do this, if we can come with proper systems of transport, not only for the adults in our population, but for our young people.

I believe it is important also that we pay some serious attention to the quality of our Works Programme. I would have seen in the period very close to the last Election, towards the end of the last calendar year, a lot of frenetic - for want of a better word - road works. We have to think in terms of the importance of a proper maintenance programme.

Again, it is a commitment of this Government to ensure that there is systematic and ongoing maintenance of our roads, across the length and breadth of Barbados. Certainly, I would have to say, Sir, that while this is the case, there are some areas that would have to be given priority, such as St. John and St. Lucy.

Sir, I talked about systematic maintenance and I want to move to an area which in part falls under, in terms of budgeting, the Works component of the Ministry of Transport, Works and International Transport. Again, as part of my mandate as Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, I have been asked to chair a subcommittee on

accommodation, and on my shoulders - I suspect that they are fairly broad for my height and size - that is a fairly big task.

The Sub Committee on accommodation translates into the responsibility for the accommodation of our public servants. This is a responsibility, like all the others, that I have taken very seriously. As I have lived in this country over several decades, I have observed the failure to address the issue of systematic and preventive maintenance of Government buildings. Sir, the corollary of that is that you have witnessed, certainly - and in looking at the figures close up in the last couple of months - an increase in the use of rental solutions to accommodate Government agencies.

Sir, my recollection is that in the last financial year, the figure that I saw - and I believe that it probably would not be the total figure - was \$25 million expended on rental accommodation in the Public Service, or for the public sector entities. Sir, to me that is something that cannot and should not continue, particularly in the context of a situation where the Government, as owner of properties, has a number of buildings that are not fully occupied, and are in need of significant repair.

Sir, it is not only about the buildings, but the conditions that we are asking our public servants to work in. Let me say very quickly that the conditions under which they work, in the Government-owned buildings sometimes are no worse than some of the conditions, under which they work in rental properties. Sir, that is a big shame because I believe that if properties are to be rented, they certainly should meet the minimum standards of safety and health. Sir, this is not excluding Government.

Therefore, in my capacity as Chair, of that Sub Committee, part of the programme we are seeking to put in place is one in which we will identify key buildings owned by Government that need to be retrofitted, repaired, gutted if necessary and rebuilt.

I believe that when the financial analysts do their numbers, they will find that if there is a systematic programme of renovation, resuscitation and maintenance, we can certainly in a very structured way, reduce those expenditures and, I think, it is important.

Sir, unfortunately, I have to indicate that in the attempt to exercise that duty, there is one stumbling block which seems to befall decision making in the public sector, and I would hazard to say in some other sectors, is the absence of information that is readily available. It is amazing, Sir, that based on what I presume to be the structures, mechanisms, or systems that exist at the moment, it is difficult - at least people seem to suggest to me that it is difficult, because I have not received the

information having requested it for several weeks - to give me comprehensive listings of where people are and how many people are employed.

Sir, I want to commit now that as we look to utilise part of the budget of the Ministry of Transport, Works and International Transport, that informing the decision to manage the accommodations of the public sector, there will be a database of current information. Sir, this will allow the Committee, or any agency seeking to accommodate additional numbers of personnel, et cetera, to have available to them, information which would assist in the process of decision-making.

Senate A2, sequence 13, 12:10:14

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Mr. President, it is a crying shame that right now I am unable to get that information because I am being told that it is not readily available, that it is being compiled, et cetera.

Mr. President, a lot of the repairs currently fall under this Ministry, supported by the Ministry of Housing and Lands. Therefore, as part of the work of the Ministry, we would certainly address this issue. I want to say to the public servants that this is a matter which is being given the urgent attention of Government because it is a firm belief that in the absence of quality working conditions employees cannot be at their most productive. Therefore, it is critical that we make sure that those persons who are there to exercise the mandates of the public sector and to ensure that the programmes and activities to be funded by these numbers that we talked about today are in a position to do their work and, in a worst case scenario, that they are not in a position to be harmed in the process. We have to ensure that we have healthy buildings and buildings which are equipped in appropriate manners. We would spend some time doing these kinds of things.

Sir, as we look at the workings of Government, we will continue to address the critical needs of the population. Sir, as we look to speak to the expenditures that are being discussed this afternoon, we understand that it is important that we commit ourselves to doing so in a manner that is efficient, and in a manner that recognises that even though we operate, and we allocate funds sectorially, that those funds are collectively intended to work for the overall well-being of the people of this country, that they are intended to ensure that our citizens are properly housed and are well educated; that we are in a position to focus on aspects of our lives that are over and above the physical by providing good physical conditions; that we are able to address our spiritual needs; and that we are able to ensure that our children, our young adults, our elderly, the well to do and

the poor in our society are able to find a place in this country.

Mr. President, we want to ensure that as we do business we do it in a manner that is characterised by good governance and the manifestations of good government so that, at the end of the day, we would all benefit in ways that would make Barbados a better place.

Mr. President, we will do this in the context of being part of a family of CARICOM countries. We are part of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy. We have been the ones who have been put in the position to champion the cause of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, and we will do so in a way that is befitting of good Barbadian manifestation of responsibility.

Mr. President, we want to ensure that as we do so, we do so in a manner that is not harmful to Barbadians. There has to be a balance between the concerns of the citizens of this country and the wider concerns of the Caribbean family. We want to do so in a way that provides an opportunity for every citizen to see Government functioning in a way that should be emulated.

We want to see it done in a way that seeks to operate on the principles of great integrity, transparency and openness in a manner which says that we will take our responsibility to manage the resources that have been entrusted to us in a manner which ensures that the people of Barbados could continue to be proud of being Barbadians. We will bring back to the management of our finances in this country a level of fiscal prudence that should characterise a country of the stature and status of Barbados.

Sir, I know that I am allotted two hours to speak, but I think that I have laid the groundwork for this day's Debate.

I am obliged to you, Sir, and therefore beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Does any other Honourable Senator wish to speak?

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, I am wondering though if I should prevail on the courtesies and the stomachs of Honourable Senators. We are very close to the luncheon hour, 10 minutes away from it, and with your Honour=s indulgence, I might want to suggest that perhaps we should take the break now and then resume after lunch and I will start at that time.

Mr. PRESIDENT: If the Honourable Senator had not made reference to the stomachs, I might find it a lot easier to accede to her request, because in my own present

situation I was not sure if the Honourable Senator was speaking about the rotundness or something else as she was talking about the stomach. However, Honourable Senators, I think the suggestion by the Honourable Member is reasonable and it is one to which we should give some consideration. I believe we have to find out if the caterers are ready.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 1.30 p.m. today.

The question that the Sitting do now suspend until 1.30 p.m. today was put to the Senate and agreed to, and Mr. PRESIDENT suspended the Sitting accordingly.

Senate A2 Sequence 14

12.20 p.m.

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

RESUMPTION

Mr. PRESIDENT: This Sitting is now resumed. Senator Miss H. E. Thompson.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, I must confess that this is a new place for me and that I have found this to be quite an interesting exercise. Sir, certainly the decorum of this Honourable Chamber is a departure from that to which I am accustomed, so I will seek to adopt the manner and manners of this Honourable Chamber, under your guidance, and indeed to emulate the speaker before me in speaking to broad philosophical issues.

Sir, the issue of governance is concerned at the core with broad philosophy. How we achieve the philosophy is a completely different issue, but there has to be a concern with philosophy. Sir, we are all here, and I think it is worthy of note, following a General Election in which a new Administration has a large and popular mandate, and an obligation to fulfill the many competing interests falling under that ambit.

It is a salute, I think, first to the last Administration that, generally, even after having been in Government for three terms, that unlike the accusations elsewhere around the Region and outside, there have been no allegations of Election rigging, no attempts to pervert the cause of democracy or anything of that sort. There will always be flaws in the system. The system we use is not perfect. Somebody on all sides would always find a matter over which they could complain but, generally, the transition

from one Administration to another, and the whole manner of the election is one which I believe has done credit to the country and to our broader democracy.

Mr. President, in addition, I think I must make the point which occurred to me only yesterday evening, that Your Honour is presiding over a historical moment. This is the first time in the history of the country that the response to the Estimates Debate in the Lower Chamber is being led by a female Member of the Opposition. It is the first time that it is being presented by a female Leader of Government Business in the House, and it is the first time that a female Opposition Leader of Government Business will respond. Sir, those three coincidences represent a historical landmark in this country.

Mr. President, I am very pleased to be in this Honourable Chamber at this time and to have an opportunity to speak, coming out of a democratic process from which we have all been birthed, and consequently upon a historical juncture in the achievement of women in the life of that democracy. Sir, I will try, I promise, not to speak in too partisan a political way today, but thereafter, I will revert to character.

Mr. President, coming out of this mandate, I heard - and I will refer to her as my colleague only for today - the Honourable Senator and Leader of Government Business, speaking with all the innocence of those newly coming to Government. Mr. President, your eyes and mine met at one time but I must tell you, I smiled at the zeal with which the Honourable Senator spoke, when she spoke about the issue of governance, of propriety and of ensuring that Reports are done in a timely manner. Sir, I will say to the Honourable Senator: AMy dear, His Honour tried, I tried, all before us have tried and will continue to try.@

Mr. President, what you are going to find is that no matter how good your management skills are, no matter how good and well informed you are, the reality is that the span of management is really extremely wide. In addition to that, within the public sector - and I do not mean this pejoratively - we have a lot of managers who manage in a reactive and retroactive way, outing fires rather than bringing proactive leadership issues.

Mr. President, the issue raised by the Leader of Government Business of seeking to get statistics to underpin her developmental planning is not new. I tried it at the Ministry of Health. I tried to have them generate certain types of data to form the basis for policy planning. I tried it at the Ministry of Housing, to get the Planning Department of the Ministry of Housing to generate statistics and information on which you could do planning, not only for a short-term but for long-term developmental planning.

Mr. President, therefore, as broad as the Honourable Senator=s shoulders are, physically they are not as broad as mine and I know that the Honourable Senator will come to the point to which I have now come, which is that a lot of the issues with which we grapple and where there are errors of failings, are not the failings of an administration out of malice. They are not the failings of an administration out of a will to do good but are the failings of management systems themselves, and that the problems are systemic and entrenched. Sir, I will speak to more of that during the course of my comments.

Mr. President, like many Barbadians, I wish the Government well, not because I am a supporter, but because I am a Barbadian, and we all must live in this country. Therefore, the quality of governance has to be such that even if we agree to disagree on approach or on philosophy, at least we must agree on what the outcome needs to be. Sir, how we accomplish that might be differently approached.

Mr. President, I must confess that having been trained in management in addition to law, though I cannot speak to the broad experience of the Leader of Government Business, that I was somewhat concerned. Sir, I was concerned because while as a good manager the Honourable Senator spoke of what needs to be done, I thought the Honourable Senator was deficient in telling us how, which is the second platform of the management philosophy. The Honourable Senator also failed in the third platform, which is telling us when, because like a project manager, the Honourable Senator must see it in the context of a number of disparate and discreet projects that you have to manage.

1.40 p.m.

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SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Those three planks are going to determine, if, how and when the Government=s agenda is delivered. Sir, I would have hoped to hear you speak not only in the context of a few snippets of policy, I know you did seek to set some broad parameters, particularly in the context of human resources but I would have wanted to hear you speak in terms of what the vision for the Government is for taking Barbados forward, Mr. President, relative to some of the major challenges which we are going to be faced as an economy, and a small open society, and not to fall like those students.

Mr. President, therefore, I would want to hear before the course of the day ends something that tells me in that broad vision where we are located in the context of the new Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and what the intentions of the Government are in relation to that. There are recent surveys done in the United States of America

which tell us that 77 per cent of Americans have now come to the agreement, finally, nearly everybody saw it before they did, that the US economy is in recession. What, therefore, are the implications for Barbados and our governance; our social and economic development in the context of that recession, and in the context of our revenue and foreign exchange earnings, coming from a tourism market where a lot of our tourists come out of the United States of America?

Mr. President, there is a crisis in the mortgage market in the United States of America and, to a lesser extent, in the United Kingdom. Sir, that also speaks to a loss of confidence in those economies. Again, what would be the implications for us and how are you locating, as a new administration Government policy in the context of these economic challenges, which are external, exogenous to us?

Mr. President, finally, and this is not the sole challenge but, certainly, one that I would have wanted to hear tackled by the Leader of Government Business. Sir, having regard to the fact that the price of oil is an unprecedented US\$113 as about 10 days ago, and where the predictions in the marketplace as far back as two years ago, I have asked the Ministry of Environment to do planning on that because the analysts in the market were then saying, even though prices were under US\$60 per barrel, that prices were going to go to US\$200, or US\$250 per barrel. What are Barbados' macro economic and social choices in the context of an international price of oil remaining at US\$100 per barrel, or going to US\$200 or even, God forbid, to US\$250?

Mr. President, these are some of the macro challenges that face Barbados at this time and, truly, I would have wanted to hear you locate your development vision in the context of our relationship with the rest of the world and those major challenges with which, as a Government, you are going to have to grapple and which are going to impact on your policy agenda and policy delivery, because the extent to which you have income, foreign exchange and revenue available to carry out your policy agenda is going to be contingent on a lot of the issues to which I just alluded.

Mr. President, I made some notes. You will forgive me if I fish them out about some of your concerns, and I want to speak on them because I also share some of them.

Mr. President, I thought that the Leader of Government Business could not be questioning how the statistics are formulated. They come out, indeed, Sir, of her Ministry and, therefore, she should be telling us if they are deficiencies in the formulation, and how they propose to address them, but some of the broad concerns which she raised, I would have to agree with.

There has to be continued growth, I do not accept that the growth was an average 3.5 per cent, I think it was closer to 4 per cent plus, but that is something that could easily be debated. If we are to move to developed country status, yes, the economy needs to grow, and jobs need to be created, and they have to have high valued jobs in the context of the economy. But how are you going to achieve that? I did not hear anything which told me how these jobs would be delivered to the people of Barbados so, Sir, we are listening.

I feel too that the point you are making about the graduates of the University is an interesting one. It is one that I have spoken to for some considerable time. There is no coincidence of planning for the labour market between the University of the West Indies and the Government so the University trains in isolation from Government planning, and this is a critical issue. What is going to be the shape of the marketplace in the future? Is Government going to be a regulatory or operational agency, because the nature of services that Government performs, you are going to need persons with different kinds of skills?

Is the University of the West Indies, therefore, planning for what the market is going to need, or can a small economy absorb the graduates especially if we go to one graduate per household? A small economy cannot absorb all those jobs. We have to think in terms of how we export trained labour because everybody cannot stay and get the jobs that they have been trained for.

Mr. President, I have watched with great interest that persons from the eastern Caribbean who trained with me as a lawyer, were able to go much further than I went in the legal profession by going into societies where there were fewer trained people and, therefore, the opportunities for upward mobility were significantly greater.

Mr. President, there was a time when Barbados used to supply the Police Force in places like the Cayman Islands, Bermuda and many Caribbean countries and we have to be prepared to train for export. Sir, the United Kingdom routinely does not any longer train enough nurses to satisfy its own market. It looks to train nurses to import. Similarly, in the United States of America, there is a dearth of health care professionals so that our trained nationals can go to markets where they will be earning significantly larger salaries than we pay here, provided that they have the training.

Mr. President, while the point is being made that graduates sometimes take some time before they can be absorbed by the labour market, the reality is that in a small society, even if the economy is going well, the rate of absorption will not necessarily match the rate of training and there has to be scope for graduates to go elsewhere.

Mr. President, I have watched with very keen interest as Latin America and Africa have sent their graduates into all of the international development institutions, and all the international financial institutions, and very few Caribbean nationals are working in this institution. Now, the agenda of a lot of these institutions is focussed on Latin America and Africa. That is the reality. Sir, if we want to strategically position our people, people have to be trained for export, they cannot only be trained for absorption within the local labour market.

S/A2/13:50

Sequence 16

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SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: In relation to your comments on e-commerce, I agree with you, I believe that the liberalisation of the capital markets, advanced by the former Prime Minister in the last Budget, put a lot of the mechanisms in place, which will help with the development of e-commerce significantly, but we also need in Barbados, to engage those agencies which are the middle players in the market, and to facilitate e-commerce transactions, because there is a whole range of conduct within the e-commerce market, which we are not necessarily buying into.

We should not also assume that the scope is immediately large. There are surveys which have been done, and I know that the Honourable Senator likes statistics and data, but there is research that shows that less than 10 per cent of Barbadians are willing to buy via the Internet, even though 70 per cent of Barbadians are technologically literate and use computers and the Internet regularly.

Less than 10 per cent of Barbadians are interested in using the Internet for e-commerce, because of trust and confidence issues. So the core who will get a niche in that marketplace is not large, but it needs to be pursued because the confidence issue can be addressed. Sir, like you, I share a concern. Sir, in fact, when I did my MBA, e-commerce was one of the areas that I opted for my elective modules.

Sir, I spoke already about the bad practice and the late reporting. The same civil servants which served the last Administration, whether they served them well or whether they served them poorly, are the same ones that are going to serve you, and whatever faults they had then, are the same faults they are going to have now. That is the reality, and you must not believe that there was an absence of will, or an absence of policy direction when it came to doing the right thing, and I will speak to that later on.

Sir, in relation to the whole issue of governance and the Auditor General's Report, it is a fact that the then Prime Minister, himself, required and commanded that special audits be held of a number of Government institutions to address the very issues of concern, expenditure, wastage, accountability for public funding, and to ensure that the expenditure matched the policy direction. In that regard, we will all be watching to see what happens.

Sir, one of the other issues raised, with which I completely agreed, is the whole issue of carrying capacity study for tourism. I have made at least four speeches on that over time. It is an absolutely critical issue, and I truly hope that this Administration will embrace it, because it is a critical issue for planning for the future.

Sir, you will find that there are issues about which you are going to be passionate, and issues about which you are going to be concerned, that will not necessarily realise the kind of success over time, that you would have hoped, nor in a Cabinet will you get everything that you want. Sometimes there are going to be trade-offs.

Sometimes colleagues are going to disagree with you. Sometimes there is going to be a challenge between the policy formulation, clear as you thought it may have been, and the policy implementations.

Those are issues with which you will have to grapple. I believe that you will approach it with every good intention. Sir, therefore, having spoken to the issues that you have raised, I will return to the focus of the comments with which I would want to continue.

The Governor of the Central Bank, unless you are going to take issue with her as well, has indicated that the economy is a strong resilient one, on a good footing, and that is the economy that this Administration has inherited. I am going to speak to the issue of waste and squandermania, all those allegations later.

In fact, many of the policies of the incoming Administration, a lot of the give-a-ways, have to be predicated on the economy being strong. There has to be money in the economy to accommodate the policy direction. If it were not so, you could not have committed to some of the things to which you spoke, Sir, if it is facile to say that the answer is the reduction of waste. Ministers are policy directors. They are responsible for the direction of policy. Your Parliamentary Secretary and civil servants are the ones who do the day-to-day hands on management. The extent to which you will be an interventionist or non interventionist minister, I have always watched with great fascination, because when it suits the public they talk about political interference, but when the Minister is non interventionist, you hear why the Minister does not do something, what the Minister is doing, what they think the

Minister is there for? So there is always a very fine line between taking control of the management yourself, and doing what civil servants like to define as micro managing, and allowing them to have complete charge. I am going to speak to this issue of civil servant management in another context, so I will come back to it.

Sir, I did not hear, during the course of the Honourable Leader of the Senate, very much about what appears to be the now abandoned 100-day agenda. On the matter of the handing over of the National Housing Corporation units within 100 days, there was silence today, and generally, on the matter of the removal of VAT on building materials of houses up to \$400 000, that is to be the course of a study. We have been told; on the matter of the Agriculture Protection Act, which was to happen within a hundred days, there has been silence on that. I will come back to the Agriculture Protection Act.

On the issue of the declaration of assets, which the Honourable Prime Minister has assured us that all of his Ministers would have to make immediately on assuming Government, that is now the matter of a study. I believe that a Member of this Chamber is to lead that study process that, has to do with the Integrity Legislation. Sir, that is what I heard the Honourable Prime Minister say with my own ears in the Lower Chamber last week.

Sir, on the issue of constituency empowerment, I heard that too is to be the subject of a study, to determine what the mechanisms of operation will be. Until I hear what those mechanisms are, I am not going to speak to that in any detail. I would simply say, it has within the making, an opportunity for great promise of delivery of benefits at the level of the community, if in fact it is carried out in a non partisan way. Equally, it has the makings of peril not for the Opposition, but for the very Government, because you will fall on the sword of accountability, if the mechanisms for carrying that out are not transparent and very rigourously applied, because where you have community interest, with people in communities having divergent desires and opinions, there is always going to be conflict over whether the breadfruit tree with the wood ants that is overhanging Miss Smith=s house should be cut down, before the well next to Miss Bishop gets cleared.

14.00 p.m.

Sequence 17

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Estimates - Senate A2, sequence 18, 2.00 p.m.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Therefore, if it is going to do all these community things, there is the potential for tremendous peril and confusion.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Sir, it has in it some of the colouring of local Government, but local Government does not necessarily mean better Government, and those who call for the days of local Government must also consider the wastage, the problems inherent in the local Government system that caused, I believe, the Leader of the Democratic Labour Party to help with the dismantling of that system and to establish central Government systems.

Sir, this does not mean that we would not benefit from some decentralisation of some of the Government services, but how it is done is another issue. Sir, as I indicated, until I hear what the mechanisms are, I am not going to anticipate them.

Mr. President, lowering the cost of living and extending the basket of goods, that too, is the subject of a study. The duty-free cars for civil servants - all of this is the 100 days agenda - there is now silence on that, although the Throne Speech advised that where we were led before to believe that all civil servants would be entitled, it is now, "designated civil servants". What is the Civil Service group?

In fact, I can send for the speech of the Honourable Member in the Lower Chamber, who spoke to this issue of classifying the beneficiaries as, "the broad Civil Service", at that time. If the policy has changed, then tell us.

I am waiting to hear on child care for nurses, police and civil servants, because again today, there was silence on this issue.

On the matter of alien land holdings, where legislation was to be introduced immediately after the change of Government that has not been heard about anymore. The Neal and Massy deal which was to be stopped if the Honourable Member for St. John from the Lower House was Prime Minister, has gone through the eddoes since he was Prime Minister. Not a comment from him on it, Sir.

Mr. President, he complained bitterly that the Arthur=s Cabinet was the largest Cabinet in the history of Barbados and was way too large, and that his would be smaller. He specifically said that in his last Budget Speech reply. In fact, his Cabinet is now significantly larger.

The interest-free loans to public servants is now the subject of a study. There are two things that strike me about the risk of all these studies. The first is that while the grass is growing, the horse is starving. The second, the fact that these have now got to be the subject of so many studies, if this was the 100-days agenda, really suggests that they

were not clearly thought out, or the mechanisms for delivering them, were not clearly thought through.

Mr. President, it is all right to talk about people-centred Government, and please do not think that I do not want them to be delivered. I do not agree with all of them from the policy perspective, and as they come to the Senate, one after the other, I will have the opportunity to say what my own views are, and what are the views of the Party that I represent. Mr. President, certainly, you would want to see a government deliver on its agenda.

I note that there has been reversal of the then Opposition's position in relation to EduTech. They said they would get rid of it, but I am now hearing that it is here to stay.

The Energy Programme that was much scoffed at in the Lower House, I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central say that the oil had been in the ground for 15 million years. He did not know what we wanted to take it out for. It was an election gimmick, and a DLP column in December said that the whole energy agenda was an election gimmick.

In fact, the Honourable Member for St. John, speaking at a political meeting, is reported to have said that nobody in his lifetime or the hearers, would ever see this matter advanced. Now, when I listened to the Honourable Member for St. John last week in the Other Place, he said that this was a plank of the new Government's policy.

Therefore, there have been reversals on a lot of the policy positions which the then Opposition held now that they have got the Government. In fact, their reversals represent an endorsement of the Barbados Labour Party's policies as a Government.

Mr. President, there are some things that are being rejected. I understand that you would not have had a large amount of time to prepare your own Estimates, but I really feel that there was adequate time for us to see more of the new Administration's policies in the Estimates. Sir, it is not enough to say \$X million has been allocated to Education; \$Y million to Health and \$Z million to do something else. Where are the new initiatives, what specifically are they?

I heard that Project OASIS is to be stopped. Sir, this is a matter for the Government in its determination. Sir, Project OASIS has trained thousands of young people in this country, boys-on-the-block and girls at home. There are statistics coming out of the Ministry of Education. I apologise for not having them with me today but I will bring them. They were made available to the Lower House, on a previous occasion, and I would be happy to make them available here.

My question therefore would be that there is nothing which compels you to embrace or adopt our policy, but what are your alternatives for dealing with the boys-on-the-block and the girls at home? Sir, it cannot be ignored, because they too, need an opportunity to come into the broader growth of the society and to be part of our macro well-being.

Sir, the cost of living was an issue about which we heard much during the last Election and the preceding months, and on which I heard no specific policy addressed today. This is a major issue for Barbadians and I have views on it, some of which you may find interesting, others of which you may think is foolishness. This is not a simple issue.

There is a difference between a Party in Opposition and a Party in Government. I think you are beginning to come to grips with the reality of the difficulty of managing a country. It is not a simple process. It is not easy. You do not snap your fingers and things happen, even if you wish it strongly and genuinely.

Mr. President, during the lead-up to the campaign, the months prior and during the campaign, we were led to believe that the cost of living was an issue which was easy to address, and that it would be dealt with immediately on a change of Government. In fact, we did not hear during the Estimates in the Lower House or today, so far, how the issue of the cost of living is to be addressed.

A Barbados Labour Party Administration implemented the Reversed Tax Credit, giving poor people cash back in their hands. There were no increases in bus fares, or NHC rents.

Senate A2, sequence 18, 14:10:15

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

Mr. PRESIDENT: To the best of my knowledge, there is no Honourable Member for St. John in this Chamber. I think you perhaps would want to rephrase that.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, thank you so much for your guidance. In fact, it is merely habit and unfamiliarity with the new rules, but I will become familiar with them. I imagine that other speakers on the Other Side are not unfamiliar with his position. I am fully conscious of his change of status.

Mr. President, there was also subsidisation of the fuel charge on electricity bills, which was a critical component of holding down electricity costs. There was a reduction in personal income taxes which allowed people to have more disposable income in their hands. There was a basket of goods originally, which was then extended, of

critical foods and other goods which were not subject to VAT.

The ceiling at which people pay taxes was raised, so again people had more disposable income in their hands. There was a reduction of land taxes. The cost of fuel at the pump was also held down. I will deal with that at length when I speak on energy. These were the mechanisms that the Barbados Labour Party used. What mechanisms are the Government going to use to deal with it?

Mr. President, prior to leaving Government, a decision and an approval was taken that new supermarkets and so on should be set up at Warrens. Specific permissions were given to introduce greater competition into the marketplace to help to take care of the element of cost. We were told by the then Opposition that this Administration allowed a certain sector to have a stranglehold on the distributive sector. Why then have they not removed that stranglehold if it was as simple as that?

The issues relating to the cost of living are not simple and will not be easily resolved. I know that the Government is subsidising food prices to date, but that is going to bring it into collision with the Rules of the World Trade Organisation sooner or later, so that cannot continue indefinitely. There are other subsidisations that are taking place. Subsidisation cannot be a long term measure, therefore there has to be a long-term philosophy and policy approach. What is the long-term policy and the long term philosophy that is going to guide how Government implements the policy? I did not hear that today.

There are two things which are critical issues in the cost of living. One is fuel and the other is food. Let me speak first of food. I have made the point about the introduction of competition and I have dealt with some of the measures that we used.

I think the Government has to be frank with the public. Already one of your own Members is talking about the welfare of farmers, and the cost of food vis-à-vis what they are entitled to and how the issue is to be addressed. There would always be these kinds of internal conflicts within political parties because everybody has their constituency as they perceive it to represent.

Mr. President, food prices, quite apart from what the local dynamic may be of how our local distributive sector is organised, are driven by two things. One is the cost of fuel. Where energy costs are rising, the cost of food production rise commensurately. Sir, a lot of what we were seeing in the marketplace is being driven by an increase in the cost of energy prices. We are price takers in respect of energy products. Sir, the extent to which a Government will be able to intervene in the marketplace in relation to food prices is going to be constrained by that externality of

fuel prices, which is beyond the Government's immediate control, because you cannot control what happens on the international market.

In addition to that, because of the price of fuel, there has been a shift towards bio-fuels, hence corn, which is the major ingredient in animal feeds and in many food stuffs from ketchup, to corn curls, to all kinds of food. It is rising astronomically.

Mr. President, it is now more profitable in the United States of America where there is heavy subsidisation of the agricultural sector, contrary to World Trade Organisation Rules, but we could talk about foreign policy on another occasion, for farmers to sell their agricultural products to the bio-fuels and the green sector rather than put them into use for traditional primary or tertiary agricultural usage. As a result, the price of grain has gone up astronomically.

There are other international considerations which are pushing the price in the marketplace. China and India which were large producers of rice for export are themselves, because of changes in their society, becoming the largest consumers of their own product. Asia is now the largest consumer of rice rather than the largest producer for export.

Sir, the whole dynamic of the international marketplace and the international agricultural sector has changed, so much so that there is now an expression being coined for food driven agricultural increases, or inflation that is agricultural based. The concept of agro-inflation has now come into the marketplace. These are international phenomena. Barbados is a small open economy. How does the Government propose to address these? These are the things that are causing food prices to rise.

It was not the malice of the last Administration because they had no malice. Insofar as we could put interventions in place, interventions were put in place. How will the Government deal with those international realities to which I have spoken and on which I have heard nothing coming today, nor last week, nor from this Administration to date?

Mr. President, I indicated that the other driver of prices is energy, so I now turn to the issue of energy. Mr. President, in the Other Place, I heard the Honourable Prime Minister speak to the issue of the oil sector and the extent to which revenues from oil are going to be part of the Government's income and foreign exchange earnings and the role that they would play in their broader policy framework.

Mr. President, I am glad that, finally, after much rejection, the Administration has accepted and embraced it. Frankly, Sir, there are things, and you would perhaps

understand, on which one works really hard, sometimes against a perception that it is not going to have the desired results, and therefore I am glad to see that the work has been accepted as having value to the economy.

Senate A2 Sequence 19

2.20 p.m.

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: There are components of it to which I want to speak.

Mr. President, in going back to the point about inflation, the Government made a decision that we would not allow the full international price of oil to flow through to the consumer. Sir, this was not a crass approach. It was predicated on the fact that fuel costs drove all other costs in an economy. For example, the cost of production, or the cost of quality of life are all anchored on energy cost.

Sir, we formed the view and took the decision that high energy prices, if they flowed through directly to the public, would result in even worst inflation across the economy, hence we systematically reduced the tax take on energy products and controlled the price at the pump.

Mr. President, the Barbados National Oil Company (BNOC) was the importer. As a consequence of Government's decision, the BNOC accumulated a debt position. That debt position had and has to be addressed, and during the course of my comments I will say to you what our own view was in dealing with it. Our decision was also deliberate.

Mr. President, if one had to make a decision between a state's agency accumulating debt on the short-term, because there was a plan to fix it on the long-term and I will say what that is, and having rampant inflation in the economy, where people who are poor would have been significantly and adversely affected by the fuel prices, then, in our view, the choice had to be for the State's agency to take the debt, rather than to destabilise the economy.

Sir, that is a policy decision which the new Administration would have to confront, and I heard an Honourable Member from the Other Place, the Minister of Commerce, speaking about whether they are going to allow a full flow-through. If, in fact, the intention of Government is that rather than paying the equivalent of \$65 a barrel, which is what is being paid now as our pump price, you are going to let people pay the \$113, then that is Government's decision but then Government has to understand what the implications of it would be for the broad economy, for the quality of life and for the conditions to which the poor are going to be subjected.

Mr. President, it was not an easy decision to make. Sir, another Government might use a completely different approach, as is their right, but they must let the public know what the decision is going to be.

We anticipated that the debt would have to be brought to book and a Cabinet Paper was being prepared. Sir, I am hearing a lot of talk about the BNOC and their concerns about the debt. In fact, the BNOC was asked to send a policy paper to the Ministry showing in detail what the financial position was, what their projections were, and what the implications would have been. In the same way that we were subsidising the fuel adjustment cost for the public electricity, we were going to look at the BNOC's situation and put measures in place to deal with it.

We anticipated that we would have oil revenues from the sale of seismic, as well as money from the biddable signature bonus, to address the situation in respect of BNOC, but we have to know what is the policy of the new Administration.

Mr. President, I heard a call from SOL that bottled gas must be increased. As Minister then, I resisted that for 18 months. I would caution that many of these companies buy, sell back to themselves, and then pass on a lot of their own costs to the consumer. I do not know - he who pays the piper calls the tune - and it would be interesting to see what happens, but I resisted the increase in bottled gas for 18 months.

Mr. President, the BNOC built a new pipeline, on time and within budget, at a cost of \$70 million. Sir, I was not the Minister at the time and so I am not seeking to claim any credit for it, but at the end they made some changes to the project and their cost factor changed, but the project was generally on time and within budget.

Mr. President, they were being paid one cent out of the fuel prices to recoup their debt, at a level below what a commercial company would recoup. Apart from all of SHELL's holdings that it took over here in Barbados, SOL has bought the vast majority of Exxon/Mobil Holdings across the Caribbean. It has not taken over here in Barbados.

What was their financial cost? What is their debt service? Sir, if they are to get increases, are those increases to help to service debt which has nothing to do with the Barbados market? These are the things which you must be conscious of when private companies want increases. Sir, that is just a caution which this new Government could choose to ignore, but there is a lot of information there, if they want to act on it.

Mr. President, the offshore policy was then predicated on a number of things. It was predicated on the

fact that the bids would come in on April, 4. I understand the date was changed by the incoming Administration but the public deserves to know that, if it is true there was a change. We would have gotten our monies in the form of a biddable signature bonus early in May, so that every company with whom we would have agreed to do business, which passed the screening criteria, would have been required, prior to contract, or at contract with the Government, to sign and pay the Government a lump sum up front. That sum could have gone, depending on the companies and how it worked out, maybe to as high as \$500 million. Sir, this is not money to scoff at, therefore, the keeping of the timetable is critical to sending a signal of seriousness to prospective bidders and to having continued confidence in the programme in the marketplace.

Mr. President, we had a marketing effort in a number of international marketing magazines which deal with the energy sector, for example, in Houston and in the UK. I think it costs us between \$6 million to \$8 million and to date we made about \$12 million in profits from the sale of seismic.

Sir, new seismic packages would have gone on sale in January, I think they were US\$2 million each. It is, therefore, anticipated that they will make further monies. The question, therefore, of the tax regime has already been settled in legislation, and there are some other issues that are critical to the project, which need to be settled.

Mr. President, the Regulations have to be signed off on. They were finished since December. They have to be signed off on because the contents of the Regulations are critical to the financing, and to the broad parameters of the planning decisions that people, who are going to be involved in the bidding process, are going to have to make. Therefore, those Regulations have to be signed off on with some urgency.

2.30 p.m.

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SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: In addition to that, the establishment of the Petroleum Heritage Stabilisation Fund, even though it does not have to be done immediately, it would be prudent to do so because the establishment of it also sends a signal to the international marketplace as to how you intend to manage your oil revenue and the Cabinet Paper was completed.

Mr. President, there was then to accompany that some other decisions. We were establishing a company in which very small blocs of shares would be sold so that the average Barbadians would be able to purchase those and, in that way, not only would you have an equity offering for the public but there would be that initial share offering that

would allow Barbadians and small people, in particular, to buy into the energy sector. I hope you would continue with that to give small Barbadians an opportunity.

Mr. President, another decision critical to the planning process is what percentage take in the oil wells will fall to the Government. Again, that Cabinet Paper was completed. Sir, that too is a critical decision and I will not attempt to say what the figures are here, but there was a range. The legislation allows us to take up to 25 per cent.

A decision was taken at the level of the Ministry as to what the percentages should be, but that was another way in which the Government of Barbados would continue to hold shares and benefit for the taxpayers of Barbados, but it is critical that the decision be made because the persons who are going to bid cannot crunch their numbers without knowing what percentage take on each well, or on each bid bloc, the Government intends to have. Sir, that is a critical decision.

Mr. President, I was making the point that the Petroleum Heritage Stabilisation Fund final decision does not have to be taken now. It really would be an indication of good business so it does need to be taken. It is also important as an example of best practice and an indication of how it could be used as a mechanism to help to stave off the consequences of the dutch disease.

Sir, insofar as it represents an important management tool, then it is something that has to be a corollary to your revenue generation from the industry even from the seismic, even from your biddable signature bonus and so on because the intention of the previous Administration was to ensure that we had an industry from which present generations benefitted and equally from which future generations would also benefit.

Mr. President, I know that the Minister of State who has responsible for Energy has been busy with the Estimates, but this is an important issue for the public because it represents a major opportunity for income generation for Barbados, and will be a buffer against hard times if there is a slump in the international economy.

Mr. President, with the price of oil as it is on the international market, with technology having now reached the stage where it can access the deep offshore and Barbados' oil and gas, such as it may turn out to be and such as the seismic suggest it is, is to be found in the deep offshore and, in some cases, the ultra deep offshore. Sir, for the first time you have technology being available. For the first time in history you have the demand for energy exceeding existing supply. You also have the peak oil theorists arguing that oil has reached its peak and, therefore, that there will be diminishing returns now

wherever and whenever you drill oil wells. That is the theory, and we are seeing some of that.

The price of energy is at its highest ever in the world so now is the time for us to move because the coincidence of these elements makes such propitious timing an opportunity that it is appropriate that we act at this time.

Mr. President, as I have indicated, the Administration had said that it is continuing with the policy. I do not know what the changes have been, or will be, but I am keen to hear how it proposes - Tell us if the date has changed, what the changes are, and what the policy changes are going to be.

In addition, it was the Government's intention, and we have set a date for workshops where the Barbadian public would have been brought in, not only to discuss the share offerings, but so that they could understand what opportunity existed for them, but where we also have given members of the private sector suppliers of goods and services, a background to the needs of the oil sector and how they could be mobilised to get the business that would be coming to Barbados so that all of the goods and services would not be provided from people outside of Barbados, but Barbadian businesses, small and large, could benefit from the sector, and that what you would be creating would be truly and indigenous enterprise, not only oil coming out of our marine space, but really bearing our stamp in terms of the policy approach to obtaining benefits for the wider public.

Mr. President, as part of this whole development, the BNTCL would have been absorbed by BNOC because BNTCL is a small company in the scheme of things, the function of which largely deals with the management of the pipeline. We felt that you would have a manager at BNOC, who would be responsible for the existing BNOC terminals as well as the BNTCL pipeline and the BNTCL terminal, and that you would broaden that management structure to allow you to adequately deal with the offshore sector, which itself would have to carry specialist skills, and what we would have started at, and for Barbadians abroad who had skills, and who had been involved in the industry outside of Barbados for years and were, therefore, in a position to help us develop this new sector.

Mr. President, I look forward, therefore, to hearing more on this issue, but since nothing has been said today, I can only speak to the broad policy parameters as we have defined them, and I concede that you are at liberty to change.

Sir, I am only saying that was what we intended and to let us hear what your own direction is. If you feel that the policy direction was sound, and you want to continue, clearly, I personally would jump up and sing the hallelujah

tune, but if you want to make changes, you are at liberty to do that. All I want to see is that the broad public, not certain special interest groups, and I must tell you that I was very clear, if you look at the policy papers, if you look at the Cabinet papers to see how they were structured.

S/A2/14:40

Sequence 21

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SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: It was intended that the broad base of Barbadians of all hues would benefit from this industry, that is, the opportunity that you now have. We are not coming after and saying why did our forefathers do or not do. If we had Barbados to build over, and I were a Minister of the Environment, I would not allow construction on any beach in Barbados. The whole coastline would be clear.

I am coming with all the benefits of hindsight, and somebody else might approach it in a different way, but we have a clean slate here on which you can draw and paint. You have a broad canvass, therefore, you have an opportunity, irrespective of those who may be long-standing Party supporters, or even financiers, to make sure that a broad section of Barbadians benefit from this new industry.

Sir, my MBA dissertation is in energy. It is an area that I would like to think I know fairly well. I would like to think that coming as we did, new to this, that we will not lose the opportunity to ensure that we create a Barbadian industry. I was very careful in the crafting of the policy, to ensure that it could achieve that which I perceived as critical to our macro development.

In fact, when one reads the literature, there is a lot of talk about both the blessing of oil and the blight of oil, and in developing countries, because of a number of peculiar characteristics, which I will not speak about today, there has been a preponderance of plight as opposed to blessing.

Sir, very often the development trajectories of oil-producing developing countries do not look as good, and are not as stellar, as countries which do not have any oil. Sir, when you look, for instance, at the Human Development Index, Barbados has done better than countries like Angola and Nigeria with vast reserves of oil, the way we use our oil products, and the revenues from them.

In addition, one of the things which we developed as part of the legislation framework was a mechanism which ensured that part of the oil remain here in Barbados for national use, because a lot of developing countries

negotiate and all of their oil is exported, then they have to buy it on the international market. They do not make any provision for domestic consumption. That, certainly, was one of the things which was built into our policy framework.

We will have at some time, I imagine, a debate on energy, and I would get to speak about it in some greater detail, then. Suffice it to say that I wanted to share our policy framework, and to say that I want to hear the Administration because, so far, that is one of the things to which it has not spoken.

Sir, I concede that in time, as a new administration it cannot speak about every thing. It cannot do everything. I am not so naive. The truth is, even if it is doing nothing, it has a lot of goodwill out there in the public for the time being, but goodwill does not last forever. It really does not.

Sir, the Senator is saying, sotto voce, that once you do good, it lasts.

Sir, I want, if he has not yet read it, to recommend to him Allan Greenspan's, "The Age of Turbulence". In it he makes really wonderful commentary. He said that when you offer development benefits to a population, very soon they get accustomed to that level of development and they want to be taken to the next level, but ultimately, no matter how much development you bring, no matter the alacrity with which it is brought, invariably, it never makes them happy, and when they are no longer happy they also tire of you, no matter how much good you are doing.

Sir, I say that only as a caution to those who come with the innocence that I did 14 years ago, and felt that it would last forever, because you wanted to do good. Wanting to do good does not make the public happy ultimately - Allan Greenspan - Very good reading it was for the incisive comments it makes in relation to development on policy management.

Sir, with that, I do not have much time left, as I imagine that you are pleased to hear.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Sir, I wanted to talk about housing. I do not think I am going to get to it, but we will get an opportunity to do it on another day. Today is only one debate.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: When you lead on the Opposition side again, you will get hours too, and it may be sooner than you think. Life has a way of being like that.

Sir, Health occupied a lot of attention in the Lower House. It occupied a lot of attention today, and again I did not see any mechanism. I heard broad sweeps, figures and policy. I am going to say to the administration what a supporter of your Party said to me, Athrowing money at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital will not solve the problems.@

We quadrupled the Queen Elizabeth Hospital's budget during the time we were in Government, so if there were a problem that money alone could solve, a quadrupling of the budget could have and should have. We did the same thing in respect of the Barbados Drug Service, which was more than quadrupled, but it would not solve the problems. I am going to speak, but you are not the manager.

Sir, we can have a debate. The minute you micro manage as a minister, you will have a problem with your bureaucracy. We will get to talk about the labour market and about management, in the context of the Public Service, because that is an issue we really have to discuss in Barbados, management in the context of the Civil Service.

Sir, the Leader of Government Business made a very interesting observation. I was hoping that she would speak to it, but it was a comment made en passant, and that is the question of how we define development. Singapore defined development in its own way, certain benefits, certain levels of progress, but you cannot chew gum, because you will get locked up, so we have to define a Barbadian level of development. How do we want to see our development when we move from developing status to developed country status? Nowhere is it more important that such a definition will have to be filled out, than in the area of health.

Sir, Barbadians are well educated, well informed, CNN, the Internet, they have a notion of what good health care is. Sir, let me say this. While we quarrelled about the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and have quarrelled for years, I did once a very interesting thing. I went back, and the Advocate has an excellent library. I think they were trying to sell it. I do not know if they still have one. I went back to Newspapers with commentary on Health in the early 1970's. Do you know when you read coming from then to now what people were quarrelling about? The standard of care at the Hospital - leaking roofs, long waiting times in the Accident and Emergency Department and the standard of nursing care. Sir, when you read it, it is almost farcical. You would laugh at it if it were not so sad

14.50 p.m.

Sequence 22

SA2

Sequence 22

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

Estimates - Senate A2, sequence 23, 2.50 p.m.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: :

Sir, I can honestly say now that I know that in a previous life, you did your best in formulating policy for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Equally, when I was there, I did my best formulating policy for the QEH.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Yes. You can write it down.

Sir, having lived for 14 years in and out of Government, there are perspectives that are being held in here today that I know five years from now, three years from now, the perspectives are not going to be the same. Sir, there is a level of exposure, a level of innocent changes. You have a different view.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Sir, you bring a level of celebration - and as my colleague Senator Symmonds is saying - a level of maturation to these matters. Sir, having come to politics, engaged in politics and now left politics, I can bring different perspectives.

Sir, the problems at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital are systemic. The issues about which we are quarrelling and concerned with today have been the concerns at the QEH for 35 years. Money is not going to solve them. One of the things is that health costs are rising all over the world. The health technology is changing at a rate with which developing countries cannot keep up.

Therefore, at some point, an administration is going to have to decide that health care is now free from primary care to tertiary care, everything. The most sophisticated kinds of operations in the world that you have to pay triple digits and then some knots to get outside of Barbados, we offer free at the QEH. Sir, at some point we are going to have to ask this question. Can a Government really afford this full compendium of services, and what package of services is Government going to carry, and for what specific groups?

We may determine, that given our investment in human and social capital, we will continue to carry the full cost of health care and education from primary to tertiary. Sir, this is a decision that has to be made.

The problems of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital will not be solved by mere money, no matter how much money it is and, I believe, that consecutive Ministers of all Administrations have done their utmost to bring change, to give good policy direction to the QEH to see it improve.

Ultimately, if any of us would drop down tomorrow, that is where we have to go, so there is a will on all sides to get the QEH right.

Mr. President, I had to confront the decision of the introduction of the Board. Although my former colleague from the Other Place, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South had the responsibility of implementing it, I had the process of working it through. There was a QEH Board Act on the Statute Book since 1961, not yesterday. Sir, in 1961 it was contemplated by the late Rt. Excellent Errol Walton Barrow. Why? Because the problems were the same. They were endemic.

Mr. President, I found that it was difficult to manage a rapid response entity like what the Hospital needs to be, within the context of a bureaucracy. Therefore, if the Hospital needed scalpels, the request had to go to the Supply Department in the QEH. It would be on the desks of registry clerks, then come into the Ministry, then go up the management system in the QEH. Then, come in the parent Ministry and go up the management chain in the parent Ministry. Then go to Central Purchasing and go up the management chain. Then from there it goes to the Ministry of Finance and up that management chain. Then the paper work has to go back by the same route, and if the Clerk who was dealing with it has gone on holiday, "the dog dead", as Barbadians would say. Sir, that was the reality.

Sir, the establishment of a board was not done without any malice, but an attempt to take the QEH into an autonomous management structure to deal with its own issues. This is what it was about, Sir.

I believe, I have said in a previous place that I think the structure of the Board is wrong, because the very entrenched interests are the ones whom you are asking to lead the change of the management process. Where are the change management agents? This is what is needed. It is a management structure that is appropriate to an institution of that sort, dealing with a culture which is entrenched and endemic at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Sir, there are excellent health care workers are the QEH.

Sir, we criticise the Hospital very much and have the right to want better. Mr. President, I have had the Caribbean. I say opportunity to travel the Caribbean and outside of the without fear of contradiction today, that the QEH is the best hospital in the Caribbean. I have been into the majority of them and have seen them with my two eyes,

so nobody can tell me about health care in the Caribbean, because I know about it, Sir.

Sir, let me say this. A former civil servant once asked: How can I move my chair if I am seated firmly in it? I laughed and everybody around him laughed. When I went home, the profundity of what he said struck me. Apply that now to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. You have people with entrenched interests, and you want to effect a change, but they are happy doing things the way they are doing them. They are concerned about what they may feel are threats to their job, their security, their comfort zone, so they do not really have an interest in effecting the kind of systemic change that you want. Mr. President, they, themselves, cannot be the change agents to lead it, Sir.

Sir, I am not going to attempt - because my responsibility for the QEH ended since 1999, nearly 10 years now, and I am not going to attempt to tell you how to get it right. What I am suggesting is that money alone will not solve it. There are systemic issues. You have to confront some of the entrenched interests, and you have to deal with putting an appropriate management structure and change agents in place to lead the process.

Sir, the change agent cannot necessarily be the CEO, because he has to grapple with issues relating to the day-to-day management of the institution. When he has weaknesses himself, he is concerned about covering up his own weaknesses. Sir, I am making no reflection on this CEO, because I have been out of health too long to know about him.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Sir, there has been other leadership at the QEH, so that the whole things of nurses - and I am going to turn to that in another context. We need leaders in the QEH and not, necessarily, managers. Sir, I am going to give one example because I really want to move on to two or three other issues, in my time remaining.

I spoke about systemic problems. One of the problems that we see at the QEH is a shortage of nurses. This is not new. It started before my time. It existed in my time. It continued after my time. Do you know what the challenge is? First of all we have to determine whether or not we want health aids to perform specific functions in that system.

The failed rate for people who do the Nursing Examination in Barbados is 60 per cent and upward. Therefore, what you have at your training institutions, you are not getting a large enough body of graduates on a continuous basis to deal with your level of attrition.

In addition to that, you are simultaneously expanding the Hospital in terms of the range of services that you are delivering. Therefore, you need more nurses, including speciality nurses. This is part of the challenge, and that is why I say that the problems are systemic.

...

Senate A2, sequence 23, 15:00:14

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: I do not have time to deal with Health in any further detail, but that is the picture I am crafting. Insofar then, I want to turn to solid waste.

Sir, I am hearing a lot of talk coming from the Other Place about the solid waste component. I sat at the desk there at the Ministry of Health in 1994. Before that, you did, Mr. President, and as early as then they were having issues with solid waste. You left. They were still having problems. I went there in 1994 and there were problems. Again, these are things that are systemic.

There is a policy that was developed, and though the new Minister from the Other Place is saying a lot, the reality is that all of the elements of the policy is a policy framework which I left in place in 1999 when I left Health.

The landfill at Greenland, and you could discuss whether or not that is the ideal location, was designed to take largely inert material. It was not opened because the composting facility and the facilities which had to be constructed to enable its effective operation, including a recycling plant and so on, were not completed. However, the contracts for the operation of the composting facility were signed. The physical preparation of it started since January of 2007. The Cabinet Papers cleared the Ministry of Finance with a funding approval last year between May and September.

Mr. President, the components of the Solid Waste Programme as defined - some elements of it in 1994 when I came and subsequently during 1994 to 1999 and when I left in 1999 - was a landfill. The decision had not fully been taken as to where, a composting facility, a separation facility, recycling and a gas transfer station would be. There was discussion about waste energy recovery from the landfill in the form of the use of methane gas. There was discussion about the use of tyres for fuel for the Arawak Cement Plant. There was also a discussion about waste to energy facilities.

Mr. President, whether or not we like land-filling, the reason we did not have a waste to energy facility was born out of two things. The first, which was the most

important consideration, was that the technology was new and untested. As Minister, I was not prepared for Barbados to be used as a guinea pig at very high costs because the technologies are not cheap.

The second, which is critical, is that when you are building the waste to energy facility, there is always the question of the cost of the generation of the waste and what you are going to feed it back into the national grid at. The costs were so high, based on the fuel prices at that time, that it was uneconomical. If we had gone to a waste to energy facility, it would have cost the taxpayers a lot more.

The policy framework was also driven by the fact that the funding institution was the Inter-American Development Bank which always goes for the least cost option. Mr. President, the parameters of the Solid Waste Programme were never backward so much so that the elements of this Programme, which I just detailed to you, is the first complete Solid Waste Programme that the Inter-American Development Bank ever funded. That was because in terms of its totality and holistic approach, it was ground-breaking.

Therefore, when I hear the Honourable Member from the Other place who is now responsible for Health talking about how backward the policy framework was for solid waste and the new things he is going to be implementing and then speak to all of these things, I could say that the work started with the President in terms of trying to find a new landfill and to move from St. Thomas and then the whole framework was developed by me before I left health and then come the work on it, because having left the policy framework, the implementation of getting the facility then had to take place.

I turn now to the St. Joseph Hospital. Sir, I am going to spend very little time on this. Suffice it to say, I know that there are concerns about the Report, I would have to concede. I left in 1999, as I have been saying today, and there was no report available at that time. I think that it is only fair to the public, and to all of the parties who would have been involved, that it should be made public. I am saying that as a matter of my own philosophy.

Mr. President, it has been put out all last week that the St. Joseph Hospital was shut out of malice, about not wanting to see people make money and so on. It was none of that. We have a different policy position on the Hospital as, indeed, you would have different policy positions from us.

The Queen Elizabeth Hospital often operates at between 60 and 70 per cent occupancy outside of the wards dealing with chronic diseases. The thrust in health has to be towards prevention of chronic diseases and the management of chronic diseases. If you can address that,

then a lot of the problems at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital could be addressed. I have left in place a Chronic Diseases Management Council to give advice to the Government and so on.

Mr. President, I believe that there should be a new hospital. I do not believe that we should continue to use this structure. I think that when you consider the location in relation to the coast and the problems relating to climate change and weather events of increasing intensity and so on, that you should look for a place that is more central in Barbados, on higher ground, and is more accessible to all people and build a new hospital there. That is my view. Again, we would wait to see what is the Government's policy.

At the time, there was a \$10 million cut in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital's budget when the St. Joseph Hospital opened. The St. Joseph Hospital was being used as a geriatric facility and a drug rehabilitation facility. We moved the drug rehabilitation from there. It only had nine patients who were sent to other facilities. It was not malice.

It was at the time that the resources, financial and human - If you do not have enough nurses to run the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, how could you have a large enough sector to run a second hospital? We did not think we had the resources, given the occupancy levels of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, to duplicate a second acute care hospital.

My own view was then and remains now, that the St. Joseph Hospital could have been and should be used for rehabilitative care and specialist services. There are people who come in here from all over the world, particularly the United States of America and do cosmetic and other types of surgeries. The St. Joseph Hospital would be an excellent location for that and for recuperative care.

There is a high incident of disability arising out of chronic diseases, motor vehicle accidents and increasing violence in the society, and we do not have any expensive rehabilitative care unit. Therefore, I think that is the purpose to which the St. Joseph Hospital can be put.

In terms of the environment, the single most important issue facing the world today, according to the World Investment Report is climate change.

Senate A2 Sequence 24

3.10 p.m.

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: I have not heard any policy in relation to how we are going to deal with climate change and related environmental issues.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: We did have one, and make no mistake, it was under a previous Democratic Labour Party Administration that work started to profile the vulnerability of Small Island Developing States. Under a Barbados Labour Party Administration, one which followed,

we did a huge amount of work on the environment and climate change. It was not perfect, but it was work of a good enough quality that the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) has just decided that they will confer an honour on me for my work in sustainable development, environment and climate change, in particular.

Mr. President, they must not drop the baton. It is too important an issue. Sir, the AFDEF policy, for instance, was a policy for pilot projects to be implemented over this financial year, putting a number of alternatively fuelled public transport vehicles on commercial routes to see how they would perform on various fuels such as diesel, ethanol, biofuel and so on, to determine which one would be best suited to Barbadian conditions and the economy, and that would have effected a significant cost saving. We have already introduced natural gas-powered vehicles. In addition, we had drafted the framework for an energy conservation policy for the public sector, and one to be followed by the private sector.

Mr. President, in the last Budget: AA Green Economy@ policy, which was a major thrust in the environment and climate change was developed out of which businesses would be offered incentives to go green. Sir, for example, there would have been initiatives implemented from procurement to production and in relation to homes, people would have been given rebates on their taxes for retrofitting their homes, not only using solar, which is the thrust given in the Throne Speech, but any alternative energy source. Sir, while solar would be useful, given our days of sunshine, you cannot ignore wind technology, geothermal technology or other types of alternative technology.

Mr. President, I regret that I will not get to the Head in relation to the Ministry of Housing today but we will get an opportunity to discuss it. Sir, briefly let me say that the demand for housing is being driven largely by two things, one is that with the advent of 100 per cent mortgages, you do not need to have any savings to own a house. Secondly, the fact that a significant amount of people are now

employed, there is a greater demand for housing where there was not one before.

Mr. President, while the Primary Homes" Project was much pooh-poohed during the General Election campaign, there are two Primary Homes development which persons can see. Sir, what I would want to say is that whatever is this new Government=s plans for housing, I am going to give them a piece of gratuitous advice, because it was an error that we made.

Mr. President, the National Housing Corporation, as presently structured, cannot deliver on a progressive housing policy. Sir, we should have bitten the bullet and restructured the organisation to deliver. That is not to say the Barbados Labour Party=s housing policy failed. When we came to Government, the mortgage market for residential mortgages was at \$34 million and we left it at \$1.8 billion and therefore it would have grown significantly.

In addition, there were initiatives such as the Housing Credit Fund, and the General Workers' Loan Scheme, which allowed access to the poor. Therefore, we would have presided over the largest ever building boom in the history of Barbados. Sir, of course, there are people on the waiting list who want housing but it has now become the responsibility of this new Government to deliver, and we will wait to see if, how quickly, and at what cost it can be done.

Mr. President, I would urge, however, that in relation to the funds of the National Insurance Scheme, if Government is going to be subsidising housing by having all first-timer homeowners getting land at \$2.50 or \$5.00, it would not be a return on the investment because the development cost would be higher. It is clearly a subsidisation and the money of the National Insurance Scheme should not be used for that purpose.

Mr. President, the Neighbour Upgrade Programme, with funding from the Inter-American Development Bank, is a programme which would help Government significantly to deliver low-income housing. It was left fully determined and fully laid out in place that Government could benefit. Mr. President, I started by saying that, as a Barbadian, I wish the new Administration well and, in the 10 minutes remaining to me, I would wish to reiterate that. Sir, clearly I do not want to see you all in Government for long, and that is the truth. Sir, that has to be my policy and partisan position, but as a Barbadian I genuinely wish the Government well.

I think that some of the policies are not going to work and we will have an opportunity to discuss them over time. You may disagree with me but we will be able to see

what level, or measure of success, or what level or measure of failure.

Mr. President, we left an economy that was strong, where all the social and economic indicators, by whatever measurement, were good. The notion that there was massive squandermania is false. In attempting to manage and implement all your projects, you will find that project designs may change between project conceptualisation and implementation. That will have a cost component.

Mr. President, the civil servants, generally, are the ones who deal with the monies. They are the ones who manage the projects on a day-to-day basis and, therefore, if you are saying that you are going to hold them accountable, that is good. We will see what happens over time. We will see the extent to which projects are delivered on time and within budget. Sir, it is very difficult to do that if you are building a dog kennel or putting on a garage to your house, furthermore when you are doing multimillion dollar projects, but we will wait and see.

I believe that you genuinely intend to attempt to change where you see excesses, and I want that as well. What you must be is to be honest, if you cannot get yours done well within budget.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, I was hoping we would see how the management of this number of projects and policies pan out over time.

Mr. President, the one thing about which I am concerned today is the number of dismissals we have seen of persons who have been defined as consultants.

3.20 p.m.

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Many of these are persons who are not Barbados Labour Party supporters, some are, and if you want to change them and bring in your own, which is what you are doing, then tell the public that. Do not give the impression that you are cleaning the slate for financial prudence. Tell us that you are bringing in your own and at what cost.

There was an attempt in a country where there is a limited human resources pool, where you have limited numbers of trained, skilled and experienced people. There was an attempt to use as many people as possible to help to deliver on Government policy. You can determine whether you want to use any of those and, Sir, some of them were no Dems.

Sir, I am saying that no matter how much you want financial prudence, the nature of people who are managing the system is such that there will not always be financial prudence. Sir, already one Minister has brought on close to 15 people in his Ministry without any vacancies, and without any budgetary provisions for it. Sir, all this notion about having financial prudence and so on, and saying all this is going to come to an end, is ridiculous.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, I trust that the initiatives which will truly benefit the country that the Government will get an opportunity to implement. You will find that over time your perception of the issues will change.

Let me also say that while they have been many attacks on the Barbados Labour Party Administration, I believe that a majority of the policies helped to take Barbados from a situation where we were in dire economic straits in 1994 to make us the top developing country in the world, according to the Human development Index.

There is no doubt that the policies benefitted Barbados; there is no doubt that Barbados is a country that people admire and is a preferred destination, not only for Caribbean people, but for people outside of Barbados because of the quality of life that Barbadians can have here. The fact is that when the international economy went into dire straits as a result of 9/11, we did not send home anybody and we continue to manage the economy well.

Mr. President, there are all kinds of indicators that could be produced that would pressure that growth. Were errors made? Yes, of course, because you are not dealing with a Government of perfect people or a Government of saints. You are dealing with a Government of men who have weaknesses and flaws of all different kinds, and women. Therefore, your administration will also make mistakes and we will wait for that because that is the nature of life.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Sir, some have started already but you are in your honeymoon period. The 100 days is not yet up even though it seems to be significantly abandoned. You have very few days of the 100 days left, so let us see what you will do in the remaining period of the 100 days and beyond.

Mr. President, let me also say this. I admire the zeal with which the Leader of Government Business spoke. I watched the shine. It will dull over time because the management of a country is not done only by words or good intentions. I know that your words convey good

intentions but that will not give the results for which the public is looking. You can with great expectations, whatever your actions the country is waiting to see, as indeed I am, both as a Barbadian and a supporter of the Barbados Labour Party but I think you were left an excellent wicket on which to bat and on which to play. It is my hope, from a partisan, political perspective, that you will perform like the West Indies team on its worst day.

Mr. President, I am much obliged to you.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Sir John Stanley Goddard.

Sir JOHN STANLEY GODDARD: Mr. President, I feel very humble this afternoon, coming after two excellent presentations, from two fine ladies, from different perspectives, but I enjoyed listening to both of them and, as the first man, I do feel honoured.

Mr. President, these are the first Estimates presented to Parliament by this new Democratic Labour Party Government for debate and approval since its victory in the General Elections on January 15, 2008. My sincere congratulations are offered to the new Government and I wish it well. I promise to monitor closely its management of the financial affairs of this country. In particular, I shall be looking for transparency and accountability on which the new Government has correctly placed very heavy emphasis.

Mr. President, I certainly expect the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament to be strengthened and to be more active than in the past. I also expect the forensic audits that have been promised by Government on certain operations that were undertaken by the previous administration to be carried out shortly, and to be effective. The findings and recommendations arising out of such audits will have to be taken seriously and acted upon promptly. In the interest of greater accountability and transparency I also expect that serious consideration will be made to strengthen the role and the functions of the Auditor General. I think this should be given top priority.

Mr. President, if you permit me, I would like to read from the Report of the Auditor General for the year 2007, under Section 1.20, dealing with the Constitutional Amendment. He says:

AIN addition to the changes resulting from the introduction of the Financial Management and Audit Act, there was also an amendment to the Constitution which impacted on the role of the Audit Office. The office now has overall responsibility for the audit of Government controlled entities and can also carry out investment in the efficiency and the effectiveness on their use of resources. These entities currently have their own private auditors. My office, however, will be reporting annually to

Parliament on the status of the audits of all Government entities.@

Mr. President, he goes on and this is important, his recommendations:

“In 1998, the Constitution Review Commission had a number of recommendations towards strengthening the role and functions of the Auditor General’s office and a number of these recommendations have since been legislated”.

S/A2/15:30

Sequence 26

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

SENATOR Sir JOHN STANLEY GODDARD: That was 1998, and I had the honour to serve on that Commission. There is, however, one recommendation which has not been legislated to date, and this relates to the delegation to the Auditor General of the power to recruit staff directly. The current practice of the Government is for the Personnel Administration Division to recruit staff from Ministries and Departments.

However, for the past 10 years, the Audit Office has been allowed the facility to interview persons, and then make recommendations to the Personnel Administration Division. This practice has had some success, but it would be strengthened if the recruitment process was delegated to the Audit Office.

Sir, it goes on: “It is imperative that there be a delegation of this function to the office, since the needs are not being efficiently met by the traditional method”. It has also placed the office in line with the best practices in many countries, where it has been recommended that as far as practical, the Audit Office should not be depending on an entity it audits for resources”.

Sir, that is a very important recommendation, because the Auditor-General can make recommendations, but he knows what skills he is looking for.

Sir, I was trained as an auditor over 50 years ago, and I would be quite useless today auditing anything. When I did auditing, there was no electronic accounting. The whole scenario has changed. Different skills are required and he knows what skills he needs to perform the task for which he is responsible. I think that top priority should be given to that recommendation.

Sir, if I may give a brief overview of the Estimates for 2008-2009, where current revenue is projected at \$2 762 million on the accrual basis, or \$2 692 million on the

cash basis, which is 9 per cent above the comparable amount in the previous year, Estimates of Total Expenditure for the fiscal year 2008-2009 is projected at \$3 408.8 million, an increase of 4.6 per cent over the Revised Estimates for the previous year. Included in this amount is Capital Expenditure of \$306.2 million, compared with \$319.1 million in 2007-2008.

The overall fiscal deficit on the Accountant General's basis is projected at \$653.8 million, where no depreciation is taken into account, or 6.8 per cent of nominal GDP at market prices, estimated at \$7 921.6 million in 2008-2009. When, however, converted to the international financial institution basis allowing for depreciation, the fiscal deficit is \$154.4 million or 1.9 per cent of GDP, which if achieved, is commendable and manageable. However, this appears to be optimistic in view of the many promises made in the Democratic Labour Party Manifesto, and which do not appear to be fully provided for in the Estimates.

I understand that the Estimates were done hurriedly, but there are certain things I see in the Manifesto that I must see reflected in the Estimates. So, that is to be taken into account. Then there is the seriousness of the present world economic outlook. If we can achieve a 1.9 per cent fiscal deficit, I think we will be doing remarkably well.

The projected fiscal deficit of \$653.8 million is to be financed by net borrowing, foreign financing of \$20 million for projects, and by domestic financing of \$633.8 million, which is made up of debentures of \$463.8 million, Government Saving Bonds of \$20 million and Treasury Bills of \$150 million.

The Economic and Financial Statistics of the Central Bank of Barbados shows that the national debt was \$562.7 million as at March 31, 2007. That was one year ago. I was unable to get any recent figures of the amount of the national debt. However, selected economic indicators, published by the International Monetary Fund showed that the national debt, as a percentage of the projected GDP for 2007-2008 to be 72.4 per cent, and the public sector debt, which includes the national debt and Government guaranteed debt is projected to be 89 per cent of the GDP.

Sir, as a general comment, the fiscal management of public affairs in Barbados has generally been carried out with a few notable exemptions, with prudence and care by the previous Government. The Estimates for 2008-2009 suggest that the same level and financial responsibility should continue under the new Administration, and hopefully, with fewer exemptions.

Sir, my comments on some aspects of the Estimates 2008-2009 in this Debate will be directed to certain sections in the Manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party,

which was issued shortly before the General Elections, which were held on January 15, 2008.

First, I would like to deal with lowering the cost of living. This is the first item in Part 1 of the Manifesto, "Putting People First". The rising cost of living is not peculiar to Barbados, only. At present, it has become an international phenomenon, mainly due to rapidly rising costs of energy and grains. This has been referred to already. It has also been heavily influenced by the increasing economic importance of China and India, with the growing demands of their huge populations in international commodity markets.

Sir, the standard crude oil price was under US\$25 a barrel in September 2003, and with inflation adjustments had remained below this mark since the mid 1980's. In other words, it was a steady price. It has recently exceeded US\$110 a barrel and it has gone up to US\$113 a barrel.

In 2008, world oil demand is expected to grow by 1.2 million barrels per day to 87 million barrels, which suggest that crude oil and gasoline, from which it is derived, will continue to rise in the foreseeable future. Reference has already been made that gasoline in the United States will possibly go to US\$200 a barrel to \$250 a barrel. That would boggle our mind. We just would not know how to deal with that, but we may have to face it.

Sir, the world may now be facing the highest grain prices in history. Most of the grains have been used in the growing number of fuel and ethanol distilleries abroad, to produce bio fuel to supplement fossil fuels from oil. This need for grain poses not only an economic problem, but also a modern dilemma, while millions of people in the developing world remain hungry and are starving. This is and will continue to be a serious challenge to the United Nations and to the developed countries of the world. Mr. President, it just cannot be allowed to continue. Something has to give. Something has to burst. How and when, I do not know.

Government has recognised its duty and obligation to the citizens of this country, to make reasonable efforts to lower the cost of living, by various measures that have been proposed or implemented. It is stated in this Manifesto, "While, in most cases, defensive trade measures whether tariff or non tariff are necessary, some need to be lowered and others completely removed".

15.40 p.m.

Sequence 27

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

Estimates - Senate A2, sequence 28, 3.40 p.m.

SENATOR Sir JOHN STANLEY GODDARD: This is praiseworthy but it must be recognised that the Government has no influence on or control over the rising international prices of energy from crude oil and grains, which have a significant influence on the rising cost of living, locally.

At present there are subsidies on a variety of consumer goods. This can only be a temporary measure to alleviate the effect of rising prices in the very short term, but they cannot be sustained. Retail prices will rise again, as soon as the inevitable reduction or the removal of such subsidies are undertaken. I believe that a few of them are due to come off at the end of this month.

The Government will have to balance its desire to ease the burden of the rising cost of living on the people with its desire, and need to protect its revenue, and control the level of the fiscal deficit.

Sir, I would now like to turn to health care for all. Barbadians can boast about the high quality of their doctors and nurses. They can also be embarrassed by the substandard quality of the delivery of public health care. I know what I am speaking of because I have been an in-patient of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital twice. I did receive very good, personal care from the doctors and nurses, but the condition of the institution, such as elevators not working, sanitation, et cetera, left a lot to be desired. The main problem seems to be the management of health care over the past several years.

The functional classification of total expenditure in the Estimates shows \$143 853 million will be allocated to health care. Included in this, is the sum \$150 million allocated to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital which was opened in 1964. This amount will probably be inadequate in light of experience, and the deteriorating condition of the building.

Reference is made in the Democratic Labour Party's Manifesto to a "Rescue the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Plan" which will include:

1. Increasing the number of trained medical personnel. 2. Moving swiftly to effect change, including reduced waiting times, at the Accident and Emergency Department of the QEH. 3. Constructing a new Accident and Emergency wing and providing more beds and equipment. 4. Expanding the Asthma Bay. 5. Setting up a General Practitioner Service as an adjunct to the A&E Unit to streamline patients entering it, thereby alleviating the long waits. 6. Upgrading the Geriatric Hospitals to treat the elderly for emergencies thereby taking the strain off the A&E unit and freeing up beds. 7. Upgrading and

opening selected polyclinics on 24 hr/7days a week basis.

I believe that the Polyclinic in St. John will finally come into being after many years.

8. Making the latest treatment options available to ordinary Barbadians at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

All of these goals, without exception, are highly desirable. Barbadians will hope and pray that they can be achieved, and sooner rather than later.

However, the future use of the present Queen Elizabeth Hospital building needs to be considered. Its design is outdated and its maintenance over the years has been very poor, over successive Administrations. Its plumbing and electrical wiring are old, and as far as I am aware, there are no fire walls, no fire doors or no sprinkler systems anywhere in the building. The building can be described as a potential fire trap, and it is simply tired and obsolete.

Upgrading of existing facilities at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital may be desirable, or even essential in the very short-term. There may be no option but the Government needs to take a longer view and consider preparing plans now for constructing a new facility to meet anticipated future needs. We cannot avoid that.

A multi-disciplined approach will be essential for such important and urgent planning and that will require priority treatment. Consideration will also have to be given to the demolition or possible alternative uses for the present QEH building, with many serious modifications.

Mr. President, I have been in that building many times and for me it has become an embarrassment. I am a Barbadian and I am very proud of what we have in this country. This did not start yesterday. This has been done over the years. We want a facility of which we as Barbadians are proud and which our neighbours in the islands can also be proud.

Education for the 21st Century. This is the most costly item in the Estimates, \$195 404 million. It is also the most important investment in the future of this or any society and their development needs.

The new Democratic Labour Party Government has promised to convene a national consultation on education and there are many major issues to be addressed. I would just like to address one on this occasion, which to me is the most important of all, and that issue is co-education.

In my humble opinion, co-education is fine at the primary and tertiary levels. However, at the secondary

level, you should only start in the Sixth Forms, when girls and boys have passed through the awkward but inevitable stages of puberty. We were all young boys and girls at one time. They are then less easily distracted and are starting to focus their minds on seeking employment, or furthering their education at university.

I know I will get criticised for that but it is a belief I had for a very long time. When I see the performance at the various schools, I think this has some merit and I am only suggesting that the Government needs to consider it.

“Treasuring our seniors in their golden years” - I wrote this one with some emotion, as the obvious but yet unappointed representative of seniors in this Honourable Chamber. I commend the Government for the various measures in the Estimates to increase pensions to seniors and for the improvements in other benefits for them generally. The Dean and I would appreciate that.

Asides.

SENATOR Sir JOHN STANLEY GODDARD: Mr. President, less than three months have elapsed between the General Election date of January 15, and the laying of the Estimates in the Senate here today, which are constitutionally due by March 31 each year.

The new Democratic Labour Party Government has made a favourable impression on the electorate to date, during this honeymoon period, but it is much too early to make any serious judgments on its performance in office, which has only just begun. Meaningful judgments on performance and I am stressing performance can only be made and will be made later on.

The new Government will have to consider taking appropriate and timely action on several important matters, in order to maintain and enhance the quality of life for Barbadians and visitors alike. I have listed some of those items and I would like to comment on them briefly.

“Waste Management Disposal” - Sir, for the first time yesterday, I had a conducted tour of Vacluse; Mangrove, which I am told is also known as Mount Stinkeroo - I think we all know that -the Cement Plant; the Bagatelle Quarry and the Greenland Landfill.

Estimates - Senate A2, sequence 28, 15:50:14

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

SENATOR SIR JOHN STANLEY GODDARD: I do not see how, in an island our size, 166 square miles, with a population of approximately 270 000 people, we could afford to devote any land to a landfill. I know that we, the taxpayers, have spent over \$50 million on

Greenland to date. I am told that amount could increase quite considerably.

Mr. President, there are very good geological and logistical reasons why a landfill in the Scotland District would have to be a sign of madness. That road, which was recently paved, is already buckling. It is not yet carrying heavy trucks with 40 tonnes of stuff on it and it is already buckling, so that is the geological and logistical reason. Mr. President, could you imagine truck after truck after truck going down and up that hill next to Farley Hill? Sir, that seems to me to be madness.

I know there is incineration. I know there is gasification which I know little about. I think it is the most sophisticated type of incineration, but it can produce energy, especially if it was energy for supplying the energy needs of the Cement Plant I understand their energy needs are high, and also for feeding into the national grid.

Mr. President, there is also the question of the sewerage of liquid waste on the South Coast. I understand there are three stages. We have only completed Stage 1. On the West Coast, we have not started Stage 1. That is going to be a real challenge because of the road system. There is only Highway 1, so where would the traffic flow if we are putting down a sewerage project there where all the hotels and condos are located? That is a challenge this new Government would have to face and deal with.

Mr. President, we also have the flyovers on the ABC Highway. I am not so sure that flyovers are necessary until we have tested the efficacy of the widening of the roads. A lot of money and time has been spent on widening the ABC Highway which is desirable. Until we are able to assess the improvements in the traffic flow on the Highway from that exercise - Flyovers are costly to build and to maintain, so I do not think we should be spending money on flyovers until we have been able to evaluate what has been done to date.

There is the question also of the aesthetics. There is nothing attractive about a flyover. I have never seen them, but I am told that there are flyovers in Singapore that are properly landscaped. They enhance the environment. We do not want some ugly structures, if we have to go that route.

I turn next to the improvement to the water distribution system. We spend a lot of money on pumping water from the aquifers where the rain water has collected after going through the coral some six months. I am told that as much as 50 per cent of that water goes back into the aquifers from the leakage of water mains. That is expensive and wasteful. This cannot be solved overnight because I am told that some of those mains are over 100 years old. If we start with a programme now, over a period of many years

those mains would be replaced and those who would come after us would benefit.

Mr. President, I turn to the proposed Constituency Councils. I have read where \$100 000 would be paid to each Constituency on an annual budget initially, and that there would be annual budgets after needs assessment have been completed. I think the public needs to know the composition of those Councils.

I have heard Honourable Members from both parties, the Church, schools and the community, but I think we need to be very clear on the composition of those Councils. They must account to whoever they are accountable to, and that accountability has to be transparent, because we are talking about \$100 000 now, but that would increase inevitably.

I am given to think of the American system where you have earmarks. This is not exactly the same as earmarks in the States. A member of either House, the Senate or the House of Representatives, can attach an amount to a bill that would benefit his Constituency. Earmarks is a big thing now in the American Presidential Election. This is not the same. However, there is a lesson there. Where people can attach taxpayers money, it has to be looked at seriously.

Finally, the Constituency Councils must not be seen as a means of protecting the incumbency of the politician in office. Again, in comparison with the United States of America, how often do you see a sitting, an incumbent senator or a representative in the House voted out of office and replaced by somebody new? He has control over the funds, earmarks, appointments and so forth. If we want to be really practising true democracy - I am not arguing against the Constituency Councils. They are very attractive conceptually, but their operation requires very serious and constant scrutiny.

Mr. President, I would like to move to the development of alternative energy sources. We have heard about winter banks, not in Barbados, we are too small. I am told that winter banks should be at least a mile from any residence. We do not have that land mass. We use solar now. I do not know if we could get better use of our solar power, but it is very effective. We have hot water in our homes and hotels, but have we ever considered nuclear power? It sounds farfetched.

The wealthy countries in the world have Navies and they have warships and submarines that are driven entirely by nuclear power, small nuclear plants. Have we ever considered that? I do not know. I am just putting that on the table for consideration. How we dispose of the waste is another matter, but it is an alternate source of energy.

Mr. President, I turn next to the transformation of the Civil Service and its business processes using best technological solutions. Of course, they can benefit from training. We have public sector reform and there is always room for training. Are we maximising the use of modern technologies, if one department has a data bank and another department needs that information but has no access to it? I do not know if that exists. Sir, in this age of electronic and information transmitted electronically, are we making the maximum use out of the technological solutions?

Mr. President, I just have two more points I want to deal with which I think the Government needs to consider. The first is accelerating the process towards greater local food sufficiency either by means of incentives and, certainly, better control over praedial larceny. It is very discouraging for a farmer to be trying to grow crops and having them disappeared overnight.

Finally -- "Determining the Future of the Sugarcane Industry: I know the previous Government had great plans, first of all of retaining the sugarcane industry and of making other diversified usage for Bulkeley Factory. That does not mean that the new Government has to do it. I think there was talk of speciality sugars, bagasse for energy and ethanol.

Senate A2 Sequence 29

4.00 p.m.

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

SENATOR Sir JOHN STANLEY GODDARD: Mr. President, I think that whatever is done, we have to retain a sugar cane industry and for two reasons, it earns foreign exchange and its esthetic value. Barbados is known for its beautiful beaches, its beautiful countryside and its friendly people, but if we were to take any one of those three out of the equation, then we would have a problem. Sir, I would hate to see what our countryside would look like, with only bush and garbage, if we do not retain a sugar care industry and if we do not care for it.

Mr. President, the new Government in office has many challenges ahead of it, not least among them is the present decline in the US economy and the prospect, even the likelihood, of that becoming a recession and spreading internationally, which appears to be the present trend. Inevitably, that will have serious and negative effects on us. There is very little, if anything, that Barbadians could do to influence the world economic and financial affairs. However, we can and must ensure that we manage our own affairs wisely, especially in anticipation of the difficult times ahead.

The Democratic Labour Party's Manifesto outlines many attractive promises which appealed to and were supported by the majority of the electorate. The implementation must be based on sound judgment as to priorities, they cannot do everything in year one. It is about timing and fiscal prudence after taking prevailing and expected conditions into account.

Mr. President, as referred to earlier, the national debt now stands at 72.4 per cent Gross Domestic Product and unexcepted debt is 89 per cent projected Gross Domestic Product. They are IMF figures. This should not be allowed to increase any higher, which means that public expenditure would have to be tightened and controlled. There is very little room in which to manoeuvre in view of our fixed exchange rate which has served us well, and the present global economic outlet.

These are important matters that can and need to be explained by our political leaders to the people, as expectations of better days ahead are at a higher level, following the recent General Election. It is about responsible political leadership. It is about what is going on, not just in Barbados, but in the world. I do not know how many of you have been following the World News on radio or television. I do, and it is disconcerting.

Mr. President, the watchwords for the new Administration will have to be transparency and accountability in all fiscal matters. The Democratic Labour Party has promised them. It must now be adhered to and be seen to be adhering to them.

Mr. President, in closing, I wish to thank those persons who have contributed, in anyway, to the preparation of the Estimates in such a relatively short period of time. Mr. President, I am happy to support the Estimates and wish the new Government well.

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNIS: Mr. President, I would like to say good afternoon to you and to all Honourable Senators. I would also want to say how very happy and humbled I am to be able to speak here today and to outline and lay some of my concerns. I would also want to applaud the Democratic Labour Party in areas I believe are futuristic, positive and dynamic approaches to problems that we face in Barbados.

Mr. President, as I stand here, I am reflecting on the many years I would have listened, as a young girl at Queen's College, and hearing the discussions of my parents as debates were going on; hearing persons on the buses and always realising that even as we speak, there are out there, some of them who have even more knowledge on areas that we are addressing in this Honourable Chamber.

There are many times, including today, where I listened to a rapport, to a discourse, which to me is like a parallel universe of things that do not exist, of problems that we face that have not been addressed by the Barbados Labour Party; of problems that have been exasperated by a 14-year old wait.

As I listened to Senator Thompson, there are some areas she did allude to that I thought needed some merit but there are some areas that confounded me most greatly. Sir, she spoke of the dilemma, of doom and gloom, of hoping that the Democratic Labour Party is like the West Indies Team, on its worst days, about things like you cannot please the whole of Barbados, you cannot make people happy. Sir, to my mind as I listened to that and as I reflect, as probably a person on the bus would, in my mother's home, the aim and objective I believe of the Democratic Labour Party is to inject hope into this country, to inject a future where colossal calamities are following us.

Sir, I listened very often and I heard in the Lower House this talk about a honeymoon. Sir, there is no honeymoon. We have inherited chaos in too many ways. The Honourable Senators spoke about energy, about the cost of living. The Honourable Senators went to great lengths about energy and about the explorations of the Barbados Labour Party in their attempt to find great oil in Barbados.

Sir, in 14 years not dealing with the calamities that Senator Goddard spoke about we are indeed in a crisis. We are in an economic and energy crisis. This has been compounded by 14 years of doing little to nothing. And I am sorry if I am coming across as being antagonistic. It is not my intention. My intention is not to stay here or ever stay here to speak of the Barbados Labour Party, or of any Honourable Member, and just attempt to show how they have wasted and show what wrong had been done. To my mind, that is not a true citizen. My attempt is to put clarity of what has happened in Barbados, under the direction of the Barbados Labour Party, and what we now have to grapple with.

Mr. President, the former Government, now Opposition Party, we are in a position where the price of oil has now reached speculatively US\$115, which might rise or fall. This did not happen overnight. Sir, we have to listen. At the University of the West Indies there are researchers, there are persons who listen to what is going on and ask, what is Government doing?

Sir, oil prices have been running amok. The confusions in Iraq, and all of the many facets of a disturbed country or society has affected the increasing cost of oil. And what did the former Government do in the 14 years that we are now at this point? The most that has happened in any proposal has been to look for oil offshore off

Barbados and in their failure has then attempted to make it seem that the Democratic Labour Party is claiming that they have wasted time and that there is no hope.

Sir, to them, that is our rebuttal. But it goes deeper, indeed, at US\$115 per barrel, bearing in mind this has been accumulating and we cannot sit and curse God and die.

4.10 p.m.

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNIS: The words I heard today, about 15 times, are that this is systemic of a society.

The Queen Elizabeth Hospital cannot be fixed well, let us just curse God and die because that is not going to be the policy of the Democratic Labour Party, and that is not going to be the policy of a Government with a vision, and the vision extends to a number of things, and to a number of areas which have been outlined in the Manifesto, and have been brought in the Estimates.

Well, you might just think I am preaching the gospel according to the Democratic Labour Party. I would not be so foolish. I am holding on a position which I believe is the better course, because of oil and energy running to such catastrophic levels. All that happened in the last two years was that an arbitration occurred, some \$12 million, and the whole of Barbados was expecting to be rejoicing about a maritime boundaries agreement. I am sure you remember that, and how the meridian had been drawn and now we can drill for oil.

Sir, all of that was said even in light of the fact that in 2003, when BNOC partnered with Conoco Phillips and, in essence, sank \$15 million but the price of oil was still rising. Sir, in sinking that, not a single oil well was found off Barbados and we are supposed to celebrate a maritime agreement.

Sir, I have no problems with that, but it went on and the Honourable Senator continued there in her discourse today, and the price of oil is rising as she speaks.

Sir, as we continue to speak about the revenue that we will gain from the seismic data, I am subject to correction, but she spoke of \$6 or \$8 million that Barbados has received from companies who are trying to make bids. She has spoken about the legislation, and the oil prices are still rising. She spoke about the fact that blocs are hoping to be sold off and all this is fine.

You will see in the Democratic Labour Party's position that we have not tabooed the search for oil. There has never been a member from the Democratic Labour Party saying that he does not want to hear this because any

logical, patriotic Barbadian, as I am and if there is one, it is me, would say anything that works for Barbados works for me. Sir, with God's grace, political mumbo-jumbo, even in this Senate will come to an end.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNIS: Mr. President, I withdraw those remarks. I was just using a general term. Sir, any political jargon that may not necessarily reflect reality may come to an end because, as I speak, there are persons out there, sometimes the simplest of Barbadians, who know the difference and who sometimes say "AWhat nonsense, that makes no sense to me.@

Mr. President, we have had the position with the seismic data but there is no guarantee that there is oil. Sir, the Democratic Labour Party has said it will continue with what is prudent. I am sure after my discourse and for years after, maybe, persons will be coming to confront the reality but sensible, logical, reasonable, thinking persons understand the point that is being made, and so we continue, prefix it with fact, as we speak, oil is still rising.

Mr. President, then the Honourable Senator in her discourse had the good conscience to admit that in her studies and research on such an excellent topic as energy that, indeed, the theorists say that oil reserves had peaked internationally, worldwide. In probably layman terms, the big dragons in the oil industry are saying, we have reached the top of the hill and it is coming down from now.

What, therefore, is an Opposition suggesting to a ruling Government, a Government which is futuristic? Their suggestion is that we should throw everything else and decide to make sure that legislation is brought in, and that the Senator's suggestion is that our biggest contention in grappling with the oil issue should be made sure and get bids and secure blocs.

This is the solution to the crises that Barbados faces in energy. Sir, to my mind, we have lost the point. To my mind, we have lost the realities of what we face in Barbados if it is only a battle against the Opposition's terms and what we see as reality.

Mr. President, it is the truth that oil is not a renewable source of energy. Sir, amidst the speculations; amidst the fact that we do not have any real concrete evidence of large expanses of oil; amidst the fact that even if we do, the millions of dollars that this small country, facing a fiscal deficit, which we are hoping to reduce to \$653 million, that we must throw all other avenues towards dealing with the catastrophe that faces us in energy, is to just follow an offshore drilling concept.

Mr. President, the Democratic Labour Party has set out another approach and this approach makes sense to me. While we may pursue this pie in the sky because, really and truly, that is what it is, while we may hope for the best with oil reaching the levels it is, with the fact that if we find oil, there is money that has to be shelved out and some years from now will be the investment returns. Sir, all this comes into play in a country like Barbados. So what do we do now? Where we have to turn our hope is for alternative forms of energy.

Sir, Senator Goddard spoke of what can we do, what can happen in Barbados? What will happen is that the Democratic Labour Party leaders will give Barbadians hope and, Sir, in the form of renewable energy, we have to explore this.

Mr. President, even if you look at the Manifesto and even look at to the Estimates, where we speak of solar energy, we in Barbados sometimes live a simple life, and solar energy has grown by leaps and bounds internationally and solar energy, photovoltaic energy, I am not speaking about just a solar panel, where the sun heats the water. Sir, where you have photovoltaic energy, in many parts of the world, this is a major source of energy and what has the Democratic Labour Party said regarding this?

Mr. President, one of our biggest challenges, honeymoon aside, is in the drainage of our foreign exchange created by the high cost of oil. Sir, today's consumption pattern in Barbados simply cannot be sustained, and we must look for areas of energy conservation and alternatives.

S/A2/16:20

Sequence 31

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNISS: We must, and we will, as said in the Manifesto and guaranteed in the Estimates where money has been allotted, provide incentives for the encouragement of fuel efficient vehicles. That is futuristic.

It has not been done by the Opposition in their hunt for oil. Providing incentives for greater use of solar energy; covering 50 per cent of the cost of installing solar electric systems; creating a Smart Energy Fund of \$10 million initially, keeping in context as we deal with oil prices and having to buffer the problems of oil, we have to change the mentality of a society. We have to change it to something that will not run out, and solar energy has shown great potential.

Sir, there is a \$10 million low interest loan to householders who are seeking to purchase solar panels and power their houses and a reduced tax rebate for the cost of installing solar electric systems. Sir, I want to spell it out so you understand that things are being done.

Sir, look at the many ways in which the Democratic Labour Party, and I am saying it again, I have no allegiance to any specific member of the Democratic Labour Party. I have an allegiance to what makes sense, ensuring that all Government and related facilities are fully fitted with solar electric systems. What will all these things do? Reduce the demand for oil. That is the point. It will not happen tomorrow. We will have to bear the burden, but we are looking at alternatives.

Sir, we continue phasing out such incandescent lights; financing investment in fuel; encouraging the University of the West Indies and other entrepreneurs to organise and intensity research and development, in solar power and alternative energy.

Mr. President, there are things going on at the University of the West Indies. Sir, there are teams at the University conducting a lighting programme. I am not talking about any solar house, where you let people come in and see and whatever, yet there is no relation to what I can do today, how can I get a lighting programme.

They established a project using photovoltaic and, in essence, powering a system. They are now going to be implementing solar energy to power irrigation. What they are attempting to do is to make models so that other Barbadians with such incentives, could say, okay, how can I buy two panels? How much does it cost? I think there are different ranges. It goes wide. I think that the 33 watt solar panels cost about US\$200. Some are expensive, US\$800, but they are within reach.

Sir, today or tomorrow, I must try it. There are two houses in Barbados, excluding the solar house, that are run totally by solar. What does that do for Barbados? What does that do for doom and gloom that nothing can be done? It is systemic. It shows Barbadians that you have alternatives.

Sir, we have, in a small country like Barbados, to find alternative means. Solar has potential and the Democratic Labour Party in its vision, and this Government in its plan to carry Barbados forward, not a plan to fight with the Barbados Labour Party, has put these incentives in place.

Sir, wind energy, as I do admit, has its problems, but there is development even in wind energy. A lot of buffers are being introduced.

Sir, we have to understand that technology is not dictated by the whims and fancies of a society. Our Senate, 10 years ago, I could not think that if I wanted data from by dear comrade, Senator Alleyne, in a file, I would have to ask comrade Alleyne, where do you live? I will be there, then drive up to his residence. That was 10 years ago. Now, I pick up the phone, I do need not talk to him, I can text him: "Please send my file X,Y,Z". In two minutes I have that document to hand, technology advances. What this ruling Government has in place are persons who understand that they will follow the path that leads to the future progress of Barbados. This is what the education was about. This is what Errol Barrow - it was not only about going to school. It was the concept of an educated mind, the ingenuity to make a change, the determination not to say, like Honourable Members of the Opposition are telling the Democratic Labour Party, that is systemic.

Sir, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital has always been so. You cannot do anything about it. We will do something about energy.

Sir, there are other forms of energy, the ocean thermic. Probably the Senator who is so versed in energy knows that in many parts of the world that ocean thermic energy conservation is active. I am not going into the details, but it might probably entail maritime boundary agreements. Since we do not have a fishing agreement, we might not be able to do it, but maybe when this Government irons out a fishing agreement, we can send ocean thermic systems. I will not expound on how it works but, in essence, it runs a system into the depth of the water which is hot and cold. We speak to students about it. That is another way. In a few years another way will emerge.

Sir, what are we going to do? Fold our hands and say that we cannot do it? Barbadians do not want to be happy? Are we not about making them happy? We are not about making Barbadians happy? I am not about making Barbadians happy? I am about doing what is right.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNIS: I just wanted to speak about that.

Sir, what are we hearing? You cannot make people happy because they will turn on you? It is not about Barbadians being happy. My role as a Senator is not about getting a million handshakes and saying: "Thank you, Senator Inniss". The Democratic Labour Party is so great. David Thompson is such an excellent leader, which he is, by the way, but it is about doing what is right, and sometimes people will not like you. Sir, it is not about attempting to steal what is not yours, go where you are not supposed to go, or any of those things. It is about doing what is right.

Mr. President, energy is doomed, but I am hoping that what I have said today, reflects a thought and an image of the Democratic Labour Party, that we are not going to subscribe to a system that nothing can be done.

Sir, in two-and-a-half-months I saw a team of dedicated men and women sit, understand, produce Estimates, and formulate policies and plans to improve this country, because of a sense of duty and love of this country. Even though times will be hard, as far as energy goes, we will, with the understanding of Barbadians that sacrifices must be made, find an alternative, which we hope is oil, rather than draining our pockets in its exploration of it. Let us hope, but you cannot place all of your eggs in an exhaustible basket, nor can you think that by speaking with grand gestures and eloquent words, that you are going to fool Barbadians that something is being done. These systems established and identified that something is being done.

Sir, I have such little time. Forgive me if I rattle on. I tend to speak a little quickly.

Sir, even in the area of energy, I often speak about this area because it always confounds me. The sugar cane industry - we have made in the last 14 years a colossal mess of the sugar cane industry.

16.30 p.m.

Sequence 32

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

Estimates - Senate A2, sequence 33, 4.40 p.m.

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNIS: Maybe, those who were the champions of the cause, are now going to say that it is a waste of time. The issues affecting the agricultural sector and the problems we face have to be addressed. I do not care what level of economic partnership agreements you forge, I do not care what international monetary systems you employ, I do not care what diplomatic relations are set in place, if a society does not have a sense of self security, and a certain ability to feed themselves, you are lost in the water.

Mr. President, I hope that I am not being too simplistic here. I do not want to, and I do not intend to go into any grand words. If you cannot feed yourself, at least to stop yourself from being hungry, it does not matter how pretty your clothes are, and it does not matter how eloquently your discourse, we are in a situation now where Barbados, not only struggles with energy, but even in the simplest of terms, struggles to feed itself.

Sir, I am not talking politics, so where there may be some Honourable Senators who may want to derail a concept, and brand it as a political statement, they may do that but the fact is, we have lost too much land out of agriculture. We have swapped zones like if it was Chinese hot-schotch in this country.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNISS: Mr. President, I am speaking about sugar as it relates to energy. Sir, I am thankful to have the opportunity to speak in this esteemed Chamber about this simple fact. Sir, I listened to Members of the then Government, a few years back, speaking about the sugar cane industry. We had many days of discourse about the sugar cane industry and I will speak just quickly because I know that the Minister of Agriculture will speak again.

In the context of energy, they brought a Schaeffer Report. They brought a Canadian firm and all sorts of experts, extrapolating and expounding how a sugar cane industry is going to work because we are going to have a high fibre sugar and that will fuel bagasse, and we will have ethanol until the cows come home, and we will supply all of our needs. Sir, up to today, we do not have the raw material. Sir, then you are going to tell a whole country, producing beautiful documents on this energy system.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNISS: Sir, I am subject to correction. If anyone can come and tell me, Senator Inniss, you are wrong. I will say, teach me. I know in speaking with those from the sugar cane technology that we have not been able to select any cane that has the specs for fibre to deal with a sugar cane industry.

Mr. President, do you know what it tantamounts to? Let us say that I want to make some sugar cakes and I set up a stall, make a beautifully painted sign saying: "sugar cakes here", have lemonade at the side, and have not an ounce of sugar, not a piece of coconut, do not know why I am doing it, do not know who is going to make it. Then, when I ask: "Excuse me, where is the sugar cake? Where is the sugar? Where is the coconut?" I hear: "Oh, it is coming". Sir, that is craziness. Sir, it seems like an illogical approach to this problem.

Mr. President, we are faced now with the EU, and the fact that the sugar industry, and sugar in itself, are being phased out and by the year 2010, we will have no agreement with the EU for sugar. Therefore, what will we do?

Again let us look to the international market. There are countries that are producing forms of energy, using

other systems. There are even some countries that are using genetically modified organisms, like the sugar cane in Brazil. There are marketing strategies that tell the entire world that sugar from canes has certain medicinal benefits which other forms of sugar do not. Sir, they are marketing from that aspect.

There are persons who do research into approaches at entering markets. What has been done in this sector, other than a lot of paper and discourse about a sugar cane industry? Sir, it has not been tackled correctly. Therefore, in the form of energy, in the sugar cane industry, it will be looked at by this Administration.

Sir, I always have to protect my discourse with the understanding that this Government has been in office for two months, and we are being bombarded with statements from Members of the Opposition about how we are going to drop the cost of living, which has been skyrocketing for years, because of the monopolies that have been imposed under their regimes.

Now, suddenly, in two months they want to know how we are going to attack the cost of living. They say, tell me before the end of the day how you are going to deal with the Hospital, and tell me before the next hour, how you are going to attack energy. Sir, we will attack them systematically, we will attack them with conscience and with the political will to make a change in this country.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNISS: Sir, reserving 30 000 acres of land to agriculture has been a direct mandate. Introducing an Agriculture Protection Act, which requires two-thirds majority of both Houses, thank the Lord, before you change land use.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNISS: Revising the current plan for sugar cane, the Democratic Labour Party has said it is convinced that sugar cane production is an essential environment, and is ecologically sustainable in Barbados. These have been put down and these are being worked on.

Sir, even as I speak to another sore area, I heard today in this discourse numbers of concerns about water and sewerage. I just wanted again to lay the table from the facts that I know of, Sir. We have pipelines in this country which are more than 150 years old.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNISS: I am speaking about water, Mr. President, if you would indulge me for a little while. Sir, we have contaminated water supplies given to

us - and I may be a little harsh but I feel I am obliged - by the now Opposition. It is almost given, because for more than 14 years we had contamination seeping into our water, and absolutely nothing was done.

Sir, Barbadians have always felt that water is in abundance, and Barbados has the best drinking water in the world. We grew up with that understanding, but that is not so now, because we have now come to be the 15th most water scarce nation in the world. Sir, it did not happen overnight.

Mr. President, if I seem a bit angry it is because I am a loyal Barbadian. I am angry as a citizen who loves her country. Sir, in 14 years, because of mismanagement of our water supplies - call it neglect or whatever - we have this situation in Barbados today. We are now the 16th most densely populated in the world. We consume 98 per cent of the water we drink

Senate A2, sequence 33, 16:40:14

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNIS: In other words, as our aquifers are filled, 98 per cent of that is drawn up, so in essence, we do not have a reserve in Barbados anymore. We use 54 million gallons of water a day. All of that are consumption issues. We have to educate persons about water usage. What is horrific is that of that 98 per cent, we have situations where the leakage, I heard Senator Goddard speaking about that, is more than that. The leakage is approximately 40 per cent, but it ranges from 20 per cent in some pipes to 60 per cent in others.

Mr. President, Members of the Opposition spoke about the inaccessibility of these pipelines and that, in essence, there is nothing you could do. Mr. President, I am going to give the simple term. Let us all curse God and die.

The Minister of Energy has said that something must be done. We are now air-bound to deal with pipes that are too old to be repaired. I have the figure here of the numbers. Mr. President, what I am saying to you is that this is what has been allowed to continue. Do not come and tell me, as a Barbadian, or do not insult my ears, or my intelligence, by saying that it is a Democratic Labour Party's issue, or by saying I want to know right now what is going to happen, or even suggesting that you have no part to play after 14 years.

A desalination plant has come in. We are looking at introducing even more desalination plants. I heard from the Leader of the Opposition in the Lower Chamber that 25 per cent of the water, again I am subject to correction, from desalination is lost, so in essence, it is not an efficient system. I believe that was her claim. Again, I am subject to

correction and I am sure that in not too long a future she would let me know if I have misquoted her or misrepresented her statements. In essence, I heard the doom and gloom.

Mr. President, desalination plants exist all over the world. Again, while we only have one desalination system here, this Government sees the possibilities to help and to improve this society, and this is where we are going to continue.

Mr. President, in dealing with the issue of contaminated water, let me mention The Belle, St. Michael quickly, because I am now very often being termed as "The Belle Senator". The now Opposition sat for years while our waters were being contaminated in the Belle and in other areas. They promised the entire Barbados that they would look at reversed osmosis, desalination and a mini sewerage system.

Mr. President, what hurts me is that not a single thing was done by the then Prime Minister of this country. As a result, a third of our water supply is faecal contaminated with high levels of nitrates and nitrites. What we are doing now is a feasibility study. Monies have been allotted for such in the Estimates.

Mr. President, in the past, Zone 1 lands could suddenly hop to Zone 2 lands. That would now be a thing of the past. Legislation would be introduced that makes it mandatory that any change in zoning of lands has to be approved by Parliament, not by a pen, as has happened with the previous Administration. In order to save our natural resources, this Government is going to make it legislative that one does not touch or trouble our natural resources, especially those resources that supply us and ensure that life and limb are sustained.

Mr. President, establishing priority in land use planning is critical in a small country like Barbados. Misguided policies set into motion by the now Opposition have changed well established zoning guidelines. I am not going to be disputing whether or not it happened because I heard it first-hand. If anybody wants to tell me that it has not happened in this country, they are free to speak on that point, but I know that it has happened in this country. It will no longer be so easy for wealthy non-nationals to acquire prime property resulting in the alienation of our own people from agricultural activity and from being a proud Barbadian in our own land. This is what would be happening.

Mr. President, even as we speak about what this Government is going to be doing, I had the pleasure, even recently, of seeing first-hand the issue of illegal dumping in this country. I am part of the giant African snail eradication programme. Again, under the former Government, the

giant African snail came into this blessed land in 2002 and little to nothing was done, so we are in a state now in this country where epidemic proportions have been reached.

Mr. President, as we, headed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, attempt to deal with the problem of the giant African snail in this country, we face some members of the Barbados Labour Party and the statement was still the same, you can do nothing about it. There is nothing that can happen. It is a waste of time, let me see what you are going to do in two months.

Mr. President, what warms my heart is that in that small exercise, I saw the reflection of the nature of Barbadians. Mr. President, we had members from the District Emergency Office, Firemen, Police, the Defence Force, Residents, Environmentalists, Sanitation Workers and persons who are not working only within their corporation but as individuals who say they are going to make the difference in this country. All you had to do is to say when. They came out and they cut, burn, pick, dump, hide, whatever was needed to be done.

Sir, in one little exercise of two hours we collected as much as 10 000 snails.

Senate A2 Sequence 34

4.50 p.m.

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNISS: Mr. President, I am making this point, not to turn my contribution here only to the concept of snails, but rather to a larger point, to the neglect of this country, to the way in which too many things have reached pandemic proportions, and to the manner in which Opposition Members continue to bombard Members of this Government with the fact that nothing can be done, what can we do, and there is no hope. We have started an assault on more than snails and it will continue in the weeks ahead.

Sir, while the Members of the Opposition may think this is an assault on some other party, it has nothing to do with them. It has to do with Barbados and a Government with a political will to make a positive difference. Sir, this is what has been lacking and no one can expect me to believe that in 14 years our energy systems have collapsed as they have, and that there was nothing to be done, that our environmental systems have collapsed and there was nothing to be done.

Sir, I would want to say that there are many things that can be done and that is what this Government is going to do is to make it possible for Barbadians to claim and to have a say in the advancement of this small society. Sir, that

is what the education system has done for Barbados and that is what the Democratic Labour Party will do for the betterment of this country.

Mr. President, even when you talk about vetro control, let me talk about the Aegis Egypti mosquitoes. Sir, in the context of being futuristic, we can approach the matter of the dengue concerns in other ways. Countries all over the world are dealing with natural biological agents. Sir, Vietnam, which has large amounts of water and Brazil, have dealt with such. There are cases where these countries have introduced harmless biological control agents and now have zero presence of the Aegis Egypti mosquitoes.

Mr. Speaker, we have not only seen fogging in this country - and I am not talking about fogging only in relation to mosquitoes. For decades we have been trying to cover our eyes from a bad smelling hazardous mist about what can be done in this country, but we will use biological agents and deal with the myth that this country can do no better. Mr. President, I am not even going to address the matter of the Graeme Hall Swamp and the fact that it continues to be the same. Sir, something as simple as a gate, a former Government could not address, but it will be addressed by this Government.

Mr. President, even where we come to the matter of waste, we have the Sanitation Service Authority, and I commend a number of those workers. They are workers who maintain the vehicles and do all they can to make sure that the Sanitation Service Authority, with minimum monies, can continue to function. Therefore, the sum of \$2 million in current expenditure and \$20 million in capital works are voted into the Estimates to assist the Sanitation Service Authority.

Mr. President, as Honourable Senators have said, we have a serious problem with sewerage in this country. Sir, again these problems have not just occurred. They have amounted now where we have the Mangrove Landfill reaching its full capacity. This all happened under the former Government, who now has the nerves to ask us what are we going to do about it. Sir, they threw it in our laps, as dirty as it is, and expect that any sensible member of the Democratic Labour Party is going to stand up and reply, after being in office for only two months.

Sir, as Senator Thompson said, I do know there are plans which were in the pipeline since 1999. The Honourable Senator did mention the Solid Waste Project Unit, along with a number of other projects that were constantly planned under her Administration. Sir, they are no longer going to be plans because we realise that we now have to deal with problems of waste in this country.

Sir, recycling has to occur and it has been and will be addressed. Therefore, what has not been allowed and

what could not seem to get off the ground in another Administration has, as a matter of necessity, to be taken up by the Democratic Labour Party. Therefore, the Recycling Programme, including the Solid Waste Project Unit and the South Coast Sewerage System, has been allotted sums of money to help it. The West Coast Sewerage Project, which has been in the planning by the former Administration, has also been allotted sum of money. Sir, this Government will be dealing with such things.

Mr. President, the problem goes on. We have concerns even with such things as radioactive waste in Barbados. Sir, at the University of the West Indies, I have been dealing with radioactive waste and have been calling on Governments, trying to reach the heads, as to what would happen. Sir, there have been no systems to deal with radioactive waste in this country.

Sir, Senator Goddard spoke to nuclear energy, Sir, even if we cannot get out carbon 14, we will have a serious problem with nuclear energy, but what I will say is that it has to be addressed. It cannot be delayed anymore, nor swept under a carpet, because even though we might sweep waste under a carpet it still smells, and this is exactly what is happening in this country.

Mr. President, in relation to our coastal zones, I see the alarming reality that our corals are being destroyed and continue to be destroyed. Our primary corals are 90 per cent destroyed. Sir, this destruction goes on because of the flow of pesticide water from high areas into the sea. Sir, as I speak to that point, the problem with our system, and our gully systems are polluted, has not been dealt with, except in some cases by a number of environmentalists.

Sir, I would want to say that some small attempts have been made but what has not happened is that there has not been any form of legislation, or the enforcement of legislation against illegal dumping. Sir, illegal dumping is exacerbating the problem we have in this society, and none of these things has been addressed.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Honourable Member has five minutes.

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNISS: Mr. President, you may think I am going on and on but none of these things has been addressed by the now Opposition. Therefore, as you have seen, in many areas, this Government will deal and has to deal with these matters.

Mr. President, I can only speak on the Head of the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development for a very short time and here as well, our education system is failing. In some ways there are successes, and I will continue to be hopeful.

Sir, I see it every day, where at the tertiary and secondary levels our students are not being equipped with the tools necessary to make it in a market which demands aggression and expertise.

5.00 p.m.

Wednesday March 26, 2008

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNISS: Sir, this makes me smile. Today I heard the Honourable Senator Thompson speak about training people to export them. One of her suggestions is maybe we can educate Barbadians but we are too small, so we must educate our citizens and then export them because we cannot think of any system of making their services useful to Barbados.

Mr. President, everybody, I believe the Honourable Senator said, cannot train and stay here so, maybe, the solution is that we should train biochemists, scientists or accountants and then find somewhere in the outside world for them. Sir, that is only indicative of a failing educational system. We have problems at a primary level and I see, under this Government, the expansion of the Primary Nursery Programme. Sir, that is important because there are many financially challenged mothers and fathers who cannot afford the rates, and need to put their children in a nursery and failure to do that means they have to stay at home, so we will be extending those programmes.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Member, please wind up now.

SENATOR Miss P. INNISS: Mr. President, the educational system on a secondary and tertiary level has to be addressed. This Government is committed to many approaches to dealing with the educational system. Sir, a number of them are deliberated in the Estimates, and in our Manifesto, but most important, to bring all the players on board to address the problem.

Mr. President, most important, every area, but in education and environmental issues, we must bring the players on board and find a solution. If there is a 95 per cent failure rate, we will say let us concentrate on the 5 per cent and make it work for this country. Let us make a positive impact on this society and carry Barbados forward.

Mr. President, that is the approach we will continue to employ, and this country will grow from strength to strength.

Mr. President, I am obliged to you.

SUSPENSION

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 5.30 p.m. today.

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

S/A2/17:05

Sequence 36

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

RESUMPTION

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Sitting is now resumed.

Senator Millington.

SENATOR Rev. P.A.V. MILLINGTON: Sir, I want say a very pleasant good afternoon to all Honourable Members of this Senate, especially to the President of the Senate. I want to thank God for the opportunity to serve this country, along with other Honourable Members. Every morning when I wake up I am very thankful because I am very mindful, and the first place I look in the Newspapers is the Obituaries.

Asides.

SENATOR Rev. P.A.V. MILLINGTON: Sir, when I realise that people have died who are 27 and 37 years old, an age I have passed so long ago, I am very thankful.

Sir, I would also like to say that this country has a history. Even our National Anthem says that our Great Forefathers sowed the seed, and it is not only the seed of hard work, but I would like to say it was a seed of prayer, because when you hear the centenarians speak to the Governor-General, most of them, if not all of them, would have said that it was God that kept them alive. It was their faith in God. It was the mercy of God. So, once we acknowledge that in this Honourable Senate, I believe we will be doing very well.

I also want to say that this country has a history of good Prime Ministers.

SA2 1&:30 p.m

Sequence 37

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

Estimates - Senate A2, sequence 38, 5.30 p.m.

SENATOR Rev. P.A.V. MILLINGTON: Therefore, I want to say that I believe the Prime Minister, the Honourable Member for St. John, will continue in that tradition. There is no need to fear what the other Members were trying to say that he was not able to lead. He reminds me a bit of myself, having the potential, but not given the opportunity.

Asides.

SENATOR Rev. P.A.V. MILLINGTON: There were many occasions in St. Michael North West where I had to tell people I believe that if you give the Honourable Member for St. John the opportunity, he would be a great Prime Minister. Sir, many times, we had some very heated discussions, especially with a certain former Barbados Labour Party Minister.

Mr. President, I would also like to speak a little bit about the qualities of our Prime Minister. I want to allay any fears that the populace may have about his ability or his character. Many times when we are in Parliamentary briefs, I observe him sitting quietly and listening to all of the other Honourable Members of the Lower and Upper House. He says nothing. Then he makes his point, and he allows you to continue. He is a very open Prime Minister. He is very fair. He is very intelligent. He is very knowledgeable. Sir, I am honoured to serve in this Honourable Senate under the Honourable David Thompson.

I would also like to say that we have entered the most difficult time in our history. I have said this before the General Election. I have also said to the members of my congregation and general population that we are about to go into the most difficult times. I believe that God has at this time, allowed the Democratic Labour Party Administration to be in the Government because he wanted a Government that would be able to run the affairs of this country. Sir, even we have been given a difficult task. It is like the special forces who have been sent in to do a very difficult job, and we accept this job.

We have heard quite a lot about the rising cost of oil. This is something that we have to deal with. We have heard about the price of wheat tripling. All of these things will have implications for the Barbadian economy. There are no easy answers. I think at some point or the other, we will have to bite the bullet, even though this Administration or this Government has intentions of trying to ease the burden as much as is humanly possible. I want to reiterate the words, Mr. President, as much as is humanly possible we will ease the burden.

Sir, I would also like to think that with the advent of the new Democratic Labour Party Government, that certain types of behaviour will not be observed, or certain types of

display of attitudes and character. I am referring to the fact that the Honourable Member for St. John, Honourable D. J. H. Thompson had to wait 14 years before he could get the Polyclinic in St. John built. Therefore, I would like to say to all Members on both Sides that each Constituency and each Parish deserves assistance.

The days are gone of saying that I am in the Barbados Labour Party, so I am going to fix “B” things, and I am in the Democratic Labour Party, so I am going to fix >D= things. Every person in Barbados deserves to have access to amenities. Therefore, I believe that we would put an end to this type of one-upmanship, if I may use those terms, whereby we prefer to service those who have really voted for us and those that have not voted for us, seem to be prejudiced - note the words, “seem to”.

I would also like to draw attention to the Sherbourne Conference Centre and the fact that this has also languished. Both parties have used the Sherbourne Conference Centre for international conferences. It has been deemed to be a very useful building project, which has made us proud. I noticed with interest that a certain person in the media has asked this Government to try and finish the back, even though he was not involved in culture.

The former Prime Minister was the Minister of Culture, and I never saw him in the print media asking for the Sherbourne to be completed. However, we, on This Side want it finished and I believe that all Barbadians would like to see that, if the money is available, because we have come on here with a very tight budget.

I want to turn to what we have inherited as the current Government of Barbados. Mr. President, anytime a doctor is going to perform surgery, you first have to clean the cut. Anytime a nurse is going to attend to a sore or wound, you must first clean out the dirt that is found in it, and then you apply the necessary medication, and it is the Lord that heals.

Sir, I think this is a good time for me to say that the Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away. The Lord taketh away the Barbados Labour Party and he giveth the Democratic Labour Party. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Sir, as I was saying, when you have a cut that is full of infection, you have to clean it out. Sir, in listening to the Parliamentary briefs and reading all the literature that has come to me, it is obvious, Mr. President, there are many things that the Government will have to put right.

I will not say that nothing has been done right. It would be unfair, unwise and foolish, so I am not going to get involved in partisan politics. I believe that good things were done on the Other Side. Sir, when I was a young boy going to St. Michael=s Cathedral and I was doing my

catechism or collect, we said that we have done those things that we ought not to have done, and we left undone those things that we should have done. I believe the former Administration has left undone those things that they ought to have done.

Asides.

SENATORr Rev. P.A.V. MILLINGTON: Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Sir, lots of people are calling on the current Prime Minister to do something and I want to remind the listening public that this is only less than three months that we have had to take the reins of Government, and we have to look to see what is there before we jump up and down with any rushed policies or any quick fixes. We have to examine what we have found there.

The Honourable. Member for St. John, the Hon. D. J. H. Thompson is undertaking forensic audits in several different areas. I believe that when this information is forthcoming, it will be made available to the public of Barbados. Therefore, we have to see where we are, before we can do anything. I believe that this is the course of this Government.

Sir, while I am speaking about the Prime Minister, I want to say that this is a Government for the people. I believe it is a Government that is putting people before projects. I heard the Prime Minister in private and in Parliamentary briefs, charging the Honourable Members that they are elected by the people and we have a responsibility for the people, and he is very serious when he tells us that, Sir.

Therefore, I believe that the Prime Minister and this Cabinet are going to do their best to assist the people of Barbados in whatever way they can. I do not believe it is rhetoric. I do not believe it is political talk, but I believe that this Government is going to do its best and I am very pleased to be associated with the Government.

Sir, when I looked at the Auditor General’s Report, it reminded me of a time in the history of the Bible where every man did what was right in his own eyes. I am glad for this document that I can refer to because it is really quite amazing. I did not think that this sort of thing used to go on. I do not confess to be an economist. I do not have a degree in management. I am just a person of reasonable education, who was quite surprised of what I saw. I want the public to know that these things are here, because if we were not in Government, I do not know how much of this we would really have been able to bring to light.

Sir, want to refer to page 26 of the Auditor General’s Report of 2007, section 3.(A). I quote:

Senate A2, sequence 38, 17:40:11

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

SENATOR Rev. P.A.V. MILLINGTON: "A construction company was hired by the Ministry in November 2005 to remodel thirteen (13) stalls near the Speightstown Bus Terminal for an agreed sum of \$72,804.90. By July 2006, this firm had been paid \$91,610.64, which included a variation of \$18,805.74. It should be noted that towards the end of December 2007, the contractor had commenced work on only 6 of the 13 stalls. There was therefore no basis for the entire contract price being paid".

I am sure that the average home builder would not pay a contractor the full amount of money until the project is completed.

It goes on to say at Section 3.9:

AThe contractor was therefore overpaid in respect of the actual works carried out and efforts should be made to recover the amount overpaid".

Mr. President, I will be referring extensively to this Report of the Auditor General.

It goes on to say under the Heading: ARepairs to the Roof of the Veterinary Laboratory".

AThe Ministry awarded a contract to a construction company to repair the roof of the building housing the Veterinary Laboratory and the Animal Nutrition Unit for the sum of \$98,679.78 VAT, inclusive. This contract was to commence on the 12th August 2004 and the date of completion should have been the 30th March 2005. Clause 2 of the agreement stated that there should be no variation of the price unless agreed to by both parties in writing and signed on their behalf. However, at the start of the project the contractor submitted a variation for \$89,867.14 for the removal and carting away of the existing roof, resulting in a project cost of \$188,546.00.

This was actually nearly doubled the original cost.

It goes further:

AThe Audit Office has not been provided with any information that the variation was approved by the Ministry in accordance with Clause 2, of the signed Agreement between the Ministry and the contractor".

I am not about to cast aspersions on anyone's character, and I am going to move smartly along. I am just reading what the Auditor-General has stated. It is really quite mind-boggling that in the private sector environment,

this could never happen, and if it had happened, somebody's head would have rolled literally.

I turn now to Section 3.21 on page 29 of the same Auditor General's Report where it says that:

"There was never an executed performance bond. In a most unusual occurrence..."

That is very nice language he is using there.

I now turn to the Absence of Contracts on page 29, Section 3.22:

"With respect to the projects at Speightstown and Palmetto Square, it is to be noted that no written contracts were entered into. The Financial Rules require that written agreements be entered into, and that these agreements should contain safeguards for the satisfactory completion of work. The absence of such agreements presents risk to the Ministry in cases where there is disagreement about the nature or value of work completed.@"

Therefore, Mr. President, I believe that our Government is intent on tightening the loopholes and on dealing with more prudent management as it relates to finances relating to the Government's and the taxpayers' money.

Mr. President, we are going to acknowledge in this Honourable Chamber that the civil servants are very highly qualified. They do an admiral job. Many of the Senators and Members of Parliament of the Lower House have been guided by the Parliamentary Secretaries, but we need to have tighter controls. I believe that this Administration is intent on tightening all of the controls and all of the loopholes to make sure that this does not happen.

I now turn to page 43 of the same Report at Section 3.72 under the Ministry of Health. This is a very interesting one. I think I need to read some of these because we must understand the scope of what we have found. I believe that this is the tip of the iceberg and when we have other information, it would be brought into the light of the public so that they would understand what we have inherited.

I believe that it is very important for Honourable Senators to be fully aware of what we have found. It is important for the public to know what we have found in the event that things start to get a little dicey down the road, we would be able to say this is what we found. It was not of our own making, we are only trying to put on the plaster, or to put the antidote to what we have found. We have been commissioned by the people to fix it, and this current Administration is going to fix it.

Section 3.71 says:

“Items purchased for the renovation of the Education Unit included 100 gallons of automotive paint and 50 gallons of thinners at a total cost of \$20,867.50. An audit inspection of the relevant records and the related stores carried out on July 2, 2007, revealed that 78 gallons of the paint and 40 gallons of the thinners remained in storage after the completion of virtually all of the painting at the Education Unit”.

I am sorry that I am not building a house at this point in time. I cannot understand why you would order 100 gallons and leave back 78 gallons. It means that the paint was of such a high quality that when you put on the brush it really spread very well and there was no need for the other paints. It also means that the Project Manager or the Quantity Surveyor was not really very qualified and he did not know what he was doing.

It goes further:

“No satisfactory explanation was provided for the substantial difference between the quantity of paint purchased and the quantity used on the Education Unit”.

As I said, it sounds very biblical to me where every man did what was right in his own eyes. There was no king. There was no prophet. Every man was for himself and the Lord was for us all. Mr. President, I do not want to spend too much time on this because I could go on and on, but it is quite interesting.

Mr. President, I am very fond of the Police and I want to have a quick look at the construction of the Police Station at Crab Hill. I will turn now to page 65, Section 3.162:

“The consultants for the Ministry, who evaluated the tenders, as evidenced by their technical report, had not delved into the financial and technical capabilities of the companies. A main factor in the award of the tender related to the submission of the lowest bid. The consultants concluded that, given the financial constraints of the project, only the tender of the contractor was analysed in detail”.

Mr. President, you could reach your own conclusion.

Section 3.163 states:

“To ensure that value for money can be obtained when awarding contracts, it is important to establish that the entity selected to perform the work can provide the best combination - I want to re-emphasise that - of quality and price. Any technical assistance that merely focusses on those lowest bids and shortest construction time period, and ignores the financial capabilities, manpower requirements for the project, and previous experience, is deficient”.

Mr. President, I will stop there for now as far as that Auditor-General Report is concerned.

Mr. President, this is not a case of attempting to make anybody look bad. It is allowing this Honourable Chamber and the public to know that these are the things we have discovered after assuming office, and these are things that have to be rectified. People just cannot break the rules or established procedures of the Auditor General or Government procedures. One cannot do as one likes. One cannot do what one is not supposed to do.

I believe that the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable David Thompson is very concerned about what he has discovered on assuming office. This has great implications for the Government because it means that we would have to curtail some of the things we want to do or would like to do, having to finish up the projects of the previous Administration.

Senate A2 Sequence 39

5.40 p.m.

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

SENATOR Rev. P.A.V. MILLINGTON: Mr. President, one of the things I want to talk about is the condition of the workers at the Animal Nutrition Unit, where literally there are citizens of Barbados, the taxpayers, working out of a sheep pen.

Asides.

SENATOR Rev. P.A.V. MILLINGTON: Mr. President, I am saying that it all comes back to the mandate of this Government to put people first. Sir, I am not saying that a large project is a bad thing, or that it is not even desirable but we cannot afford to find \$100 million to dredge the Constitution River, \$250 million to do a highway and cannot find accommodation for Government workers and civil servants who give all their all into the research and study of animal feed and to the feeding of livestock, et cetera. I am very happy to hear that this has been immediately rectified by a caring Government. We need to have the personal touch.

Mr. President, the Attorney-General, on his various visits to police stations throughout the island, has visited the Hastings Police Station and was appalled at the conditions he found there. He had to ask them how did they manage to work under such an environment. Recently I have heard in the news that the Commissioner of Police was lamenting the fact that many persons do not seem to be interesting in joining the Royal Barbados Police Force, which has many good policemen.

Sir, I have many good friends in the Royal Barbados Police Force, but I believe this current Administration is very keen to rectify their salary situation. I believe this Government is looking to make sure that these men who are special - We were told that they were not very special but they are because nobody else in Barbados risks their lives every day, even to go to a domestic dispute.

Mr. President, a policeman told me he went to make an arrest and they found the guy with a 9mm gun about a foot away from his hand, and it was night. That policeman said he wondered what would have happened had the guy got his hands on that gun. Sir, these are the types of dangers our police face daily and nightly.

Furthermore, we are talking about drug busts where many of the criminals today are better armed than the police. Therefore, I would like to make a call for the proper upgrading and rearmament of members of the Royal Barbados Police Force. Sir, let me give you an example, the police responded to a call at a certain business place. When the police turned up, with sirens blaring, they were met with machine gun fire, and they had to retreat because they realised they were out-gunned and out-powered.

Mr. President, therefore, the old time days of the policeman with a baton are over because we are now dealing with a sophisticated criminal element, one that is very well-armed, with guns such as Mac. 10's Mac. 11's, the latest high-powered armament and the latest body armour, while the police are sent out there with inferior weaponry. Sir, I am calling upon the Commissioner of Police to make sure that his men and women are well armed.

Mr. President, there are even situations where some of the policewomen, who are petite and small in frame, are asked to carry very large guns which are made for men. Sir, there are guns which are small in size but are very powerful, and all of the Forces throughout the United States of America are using weapons which are small but very effective, because of the velocity of the ammunition used.

Therefore, I am calling on the Commissioner of Police to update the weaponry of his men and women and to make sure that when these persons are given new weaponry, that they are able to use them effectively because some people might have weapons and might not know how to use them.

Mr. President, I was told by a male nurse, and I will not call the name of the institution, that one night part of the roof caved in and the patients had to be moved. Fortunately, the caving in of the roof missed hurting or damaging the patients by a few feet. Sir, we cannot have these types of conditions where, in our old age, we find

ourselves in a home and the roof dropping in. I do not think that is the kind of trauma we would want in our old age. Sir, some of us are approaching that age, therefore, we have to take this very seriously.

Mr. President, it was only the other day that I was a young boy, wearing round-mouthed shoes and khaki pants and running around the sandbox tree at Harrison's College, but now I am a grandfather, Lord have mercy. It happened so fast. So do not let us be negligent of the fact that we are aging, and some of us look older than others.

Mr. President, I want also to have a quick look at solid waste management. In all fairness to the last Government, and I keep saying this, they had 14 years to implement their policies, that is why I find it quite amazing when Honourable Members from the Other Side sought to tell us to declare our *modus operandi*, our methodology, or the small techniques that we are going to use in getting things done, when we have only been in Government for two-and-one-half months and are still looking at things we have found. Yet they want a detailed report.

Mr. President, they had 14 years in Government, yet there has been no decision made on Mangrove or on Greenland, but the Opposition Party is saying that somebody has to come and make a hard, maybe unpopular decision, despite all of the advice from those who have been raised and living in the area. As Senator Sir John Goddard said earlier in his speech, it would be suicide.

Mr. President, despite all warnings and scientific evidence, work was started in that area. I do not know what would be the conclusion of the matter I will leave that to higher minds but needless to say, we have been left with the problem of finding a solution to this problem.

Sir, most of the things we found, we have to find solutions to these things. We cannot say the Barbados Labour Party has done it and that we are going to wait until they return to power - and Lord's willing, that would be for a long time. Sir, we cannot say we would wait until they return to power. We have to deal with whatever they left. We have to try rectifying those things for the people of Barbados and, therefore, hard decisions would have to be taken.

Mr. President, one of my suggestions would be the use of abandoned quarries. I was living in the Grazettes Area and that quarry was very dangerous and eventually it was filled. Sir, in the United States of America, old rubbish dumps or landfills have been reclaimed, recovered and planted with trees and grass, so much so that persons would never realise that anything was there. Mr. President, one of my suggestions for waste disposal would be the use of any abandoned quarries, as they can be very dangerous. These quarries could be filled in. I do not know how long that

would last, but it could be a temporary solution to the problem of waste management.

Mr. President, there was a documentary on CNN called: AYou Were Warned@. Sir, this documentary dealt with the fact that the United States of America is on the verge of running out of oil. Sir, I believe that we in Barbados cannot sit and hope to be subsidised for all the days of our lives. We have to take some very hard decisions but, I believe, the suggestion by Senator Sir John Stanley about nuclear energy, that some people are not keen on those types of things.

Sir, the red flag goes up when they hear about nuclear waste, but the idea is that you may either have nuclear energy or no electricity at all. I believe some harsh decisions would have to be taken and that nuclear waste is one possible option that could be looked at in relation to energy.

Mr. President, I want to touch a little bit on disaster preparedness. A few weeks ago, there was an earth tremor throughout the Caribbean. At that time, I was in Villa Road, Britton's Hill. I was mashing the brakes of my car and I said something seemed to have been wrong with the brakes because the harder I mashed the brakes, the car was still moving. Sir, I could not understand what was happening until my daughter called me from AFour Seasons@ to tell me there was a tremor and that everybody had ran out of the office. It was then I understood what was happening.

Mr. President, I went to Paradise and came back to Bridgetown. Sir, it took me one hour and twenty-five minutes to get from the bottom of Broad Street, to the top. Sir, we have to look very seriously at the whole concept of disaster preparedness. Some people say that you are calling things which should not be coming. Some people say that you are into gloom and doom but other countries have early seismic warnings, for example, California, who is on the earthquake belt, the San Andreas Fault.

6.00 p.m.

Tuesday, March 26, 2008

SENATOR Rev. P.A.V. MILLINGTON: They also have devices to warn them of wave actions as a result of shifting in a fault and I think we have to take note of the fact that we have had things occurring in the Caribbean that have not happened before. Sir, Trinidad has experienced quite a few earthquakes.

We have had our shakings. I do not believe it is the last and, therefore, we have to seriously look at having some sort of exit strategy for the people of Barbados. Mr. President, nobody could move backward or forward. If

something had happened, all of us would have died in Broad Street. I just thought I would mention that we need to look seriously at that whole situation.

Mr. President, I believe that the Democratic Labour Party in this current Administration has ideas. They have highly qualified people in respected spheres of study and I believe that this Government will make an attempt to make changes which will be beneficial to the people of Barbados.

Mr. President, in the Estimates in the Ministry of Health, I have noticed that the Honourable Minister for the first passing has approved \$150 million. It is not only the money that is going to make the changes in the Hospital. It is going to be the management. I have noted with great interest that already in the Hospital I see changes in the security; things that are not capital intensive, but commonsense intensive.

Sir, a simple thing like the security -, I remember going to the Hospital to meet a staff member a night time around 10.30 p.m. and I asked the guard, who was sitting at the front desk, are you not afraid. She replied that she was afraid but that she could do nothing because it was her job. Mr. President, the doors were opened and anyone could walk in at any time in the night from the front or the back.

Sir, all the solutions to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital are not capital intensive, but it needs somebody who has the will to do something about it. We do not have to talk, I can tell you that nurses were afraid to go to wards at night because there was no lighting in the hallway. Can you imagine a nurse wanting to go to another ward but because the lights are not working, she loves the patient but will not go and risk being raped? Sir, these are the kinds of conditions that exist.

Mr. President, we are not talking about retrofitting or refurbishment. We are talking about getting the light bulbs changed and working. Sir, many people have gone to the hospital to realise that quite a few of the lifts are not working and this has been in that state for a long period of time. Mr. President, I believe under this new Government that things like that would be attended to.

I believe that you must have the will to do these things and that your priority must be people-centred. I enjoy driving on the new Highway. It is very smooth and lovely to drive on but, at the end of the day, when you go to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital...

Asides.

SENATOR Rev. P.A.V. MILLINGTON: I had somebody who had a letter saying "urgent" from the doctor. He went to the Hospital at 12:00 noon and was attended to at midnight, and the letter said "urgent". This

means that if you had appendicitis or some other “it is”, that you would have die and it would still be urgent. Sir, that is the case of many people who have visited the Hospital. Sir, as I have said, it is not a reflection on the skilled staff at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, the nurses, orderlies or doctors, it is a reflection on the infrastructure, the management and the lack or shortage of staff.

Mr. President, while we are on the Hospital, I do not understand why we were sending to Nigeria for nurses when the new Honourable Minister was able to arrange for some to come from St. Vincent next door. Sir, that is a separate subject by itself, people that have a language problem and when you tell them to bring medication they do not understand the language. You are supposed to get 50 cc’s and the person not really understanding the English so well you might get 500 cc’s.

Asides.

SENATOR Rev. P.A.V. MILLINGTON: I did not say it happened, but I am saying that with a language problem, it is more difficult than if you have a person who is speaking your language clearly.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Honourable Member must be aware that in Nigeria they speak English.

SENATOR Rev. P.A.V. MILLINGTON: Thank you very much, Mr. President. Not all tribes speak English. Sir, these are some of the situations and conditions that persist in the Hospital, and I am looking forward to the Honourable Member for St. Philip West to attend to these problems.

Mr. President, the overall picture we are painting here this evening is of a situation where the Government has come in, we have a short time to do what we have had to do; we have found many things and we are still discovering things as we go on. Therefore, before we can take up money and do the things we really want to do, we have to look after the debt of the past. We cannot say it is not our debt. We have to look after these things and I am looking forward to the time when the Minister of Finance will be able to tell the public what he has found and deal with these matters as we move ahead.

Mr. President, I want to say at this particular point in time that the Honourable Members on This Side of the elected Government of the day are very happy to be at the service of the people. I have confidence in the economists and accountants in our midst, who I know are capable people, of steadying the ship.

I want to say again that I believe we are in the most difficult time of our history. At no time in the history of Barbados has oil been US\$110 per barrel. At the time the

price of wheat has gone up three times and, therefore, it has implications for bread, flour and food. Sir, I want to add at this time that I believe there is a certain amount of price gouging and that people are using the scarcity of oil to raise prices on items.

Mr. President, I am a great lover of vegetarian cheese, I go to the shop one day it is \$10. I go back another day it is \$10.95 and when I go the next week it is \$11.50 and that has nothing to do with oil. Sir, even before the oil moves, their prices are moving. Mr. President, as a layman I cannot accept the fact that steep prices we find in Barbados are as a result of oil and people are using that as an excuse.

Mr. President, I look forward to the day when some other competitors will come into the market and shake up the place. Sir, when that happens the prices will go down. I remember one time we were paying \$2.35 for overseas calls and when competition came in it went down to \$0.30 and then it went down to \$0.10 because of the competition and I believe that we could do the same thing with our food. Sir, I am only a layman, and I might be wrong, and the economists would have to tell me, but if other players came into the market, it would make a major difference.

Mr. President, I also have major concerns about wholesalers also being retailers because, obviously, if I am wholesaling a product and I am selling it to company “A”, and I also run a competitive company, I would be given preferential treatment. I am not going to sell the competition at the same price that I would sell to the other person. Sir, these are things we have to look into as far as fair trading is concerned. It exists here, but it is something that we must look at very carefully. You cannot compete fairly in a situation like that and you have to take what you are sold.

Mr. President, I heard from a gentlemen this morning that he was able to buy something and retail it at \$1.99, but when he went back to the man, the man was trying to sell him wholesale at \$3.50. He asked the man why he was being sold at that price. The man retorted, the wholesaler has raised the price and that he had to sell it at that price if he were to make a profit. Sir, I am saying that we have to look into this situation of price gouging.

Mr. President, I am not going to prolong my speech, I am not normally lost for words, but I do not believe in talking for the sake of talking, but I like to say, close to my closing, that I want to stress the fact of people before projects. This Government is a caring Government and I am pleased to be associated with this Government and they have pledged to put people before projects. Yes, projects generate revenue and work for people maybe, not long-term but you cannot have money being spent on a massive project and a person cannot eat.

I spoke to a lady who said she could only eat chicken backs; that she could only put it in soup and boil it down but that she could not think about buying chicken breast. I remember one of our social commentators saying that she has never seen so many people come to her for assistance.

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Wednesday, March 26, 2008

SENATOR Rev. P.A.V. MILLINGTON: The reality is, as a grassroots man, there are many people out there who cannot afford to eat a proper meal. If they eat vegetables on Sunday, they cannot eat them Wednesday, Thursday or Friday. They have to eat whatever is available. In other words, a belly full. They cannot talk about a quality food or a quality diet, and this is a reality. Some of us who live pretty well off may not be insensitive to the fact, that there are people down there who cannot do these things.

Sir, I have had people say, Pastor, I cannot come to Church. I have no bus fare. I would say: "Why did you not tell me? Sir, it sounds minuscule, \$1.50, that somebody does not have \$1.50 to come to Church. These are the realities of what is happening in Barbados. There are two classes of people in Barbados. Those who are comfortable, and they are those we do not know about, because some people do not venture into those areas.

Sir, I happen to work, when I leave here this evening, on my way to Grazettes Community Centre. We are going to have a type of Bible Study/Prayer meeting. I walk among what you call the basic people, the grassroots people. I mix with these people. That is why I have a very close affinity to the people of St. Michael North West.

I can go into Deacon's Farm any time I want to. I can say that Deacon's Farm is a wonderful place. Many people have said many negative things about Deacons Farm, but I go there 1:00 or 2:00 o'clock in the morning, any time, day or night, I have never had a problem for twenty-something years. So I really want to let you know that there are very wonderful people in the Deacon's Farm area. You have to know the people, but some people are not in touch with the people, therefore, they have nice statistics, unemployment this, and they are ticking off their charts, and so on, but when you get to talk to people, you will hear who can pay their light bill, who does not have bus fare, who has not had meat for a long time, who has to wait for somebody to give them something.

Sir, I want to thank the Honourable Members for indulging me in my speech, and I look forward to the time when we will pass the 100 days and implement our 100-day policy. I would like the other Honourable Members to know that we said we would find 500 house spots, and we

already have 490-something. I think we have the 500 already. There are a lot of other things, but we do not have to tell you everything. You will know in due season. We are not going to give you a ball by ball commentary on what we are doing. When we have accomplished and the time is ready, we will come and tell you this is what we have achieved, and that is what we have achieved.

I say that these Estimates are timely. We could not do anymore with these Estimates because we have to allocate money to tie off loose ends of the last Administration, but once we have done that, I believe in the following year we will be able to go full steam, but we have made some provision to address some very urgent issues.

I thank you, Mr. President.

SUSPENSION

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I move that the Sitting be now suspended until Thursday, March 27, 2008, at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I draw to the attention of Honourable Senators that a Suspension requires us to begin exactly at 1.30 p.m. tomorrow, which means there will be no 15 minute grace period. I expect Senators will be refreshed and ready, and I wish you well tonight. Have a good evening.

The question that the Honourable Senate be suspended until Thursday, March 27, 2008, at 1.30 p.m. was put to the Senate and agreed to and Mr. PRESIDENT suspended the Senate accordingly.

18.13 p.m.

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

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

EDITORIAL QUERIES

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

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

Q2. Dates in the text. The source gives ‘Tuesday, March 26, 2008’ (26 March 2008 was a Wednesday). The weekday and date do not agree; printed as in the source.

Q3. Order No. 1, speech of Senator the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McClean, take-slip Senate A2, sequence 13, about 12.10 p.m.. The source types twice, either side of the take-slip, the sentence beginning ‘as we look to utilise part of the budget of the Ministry of Transport, Works and International Transport’ on a database of current information for public sector accommodation. The fuller version before the take-slip is printed here and the repeat after it (about 70 words) has been left out. Please confirm.

Q4. Opening take-slips. The Senate met at 11.10 a.m., but the first take-slips read ‘SA2 10.20 a.m.’ and ‘Senate A2, sequence 03, 10:30:14’. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Message from the Acting Governor-General. The Acting Governor-General’s name is printed ‘ELLIOTT FITZROY BELGRAVE’ under the letter and ‘ELLIOT FITZROY BELGRAVE’ under Message No. 2/2008. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Characters in the source. Throughout the source an apostrophe appears as ‘=’ (for example ‘Government=s’, ‘His Excellency=s’) and quotation marks appear as ‘A’ and ‘@’ (for example ‘AYou Were Warned@’). These look like conversion errors in the original file. Printed as in the source.

Q7. Speech of Senator Rev. P. A. V. Millington, CNN documentary. A paragraph of Senator Millington’s speech has been set as though it were a speech heading, so that ‘Mr. President, there was a documentary on CNN called’ appears in the place of a speaker’s name. Printed as in the source.

Q8. Speech of Senator Miss H. E. Thompson, take-slip about 2.50 p.m.. After the take-slip, one speech heading for Senator Miss H. E. Thompson is followed only by ‘:’. Part of the text may be missing. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The Senate met in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, on Wednesday, 26th March, 2008 at 11.10 a.m., with His Honour Senator Dr. B. M. Taitt, President, in the Chair; prayers were led by Rev. Father Errington Massiah. The President read a letter and Message No. 2/2008 from the Acting Governor-General, Elliott Fitzroy Belgrave, on the absence of the Governor-General, Sir Clifford Straughn Husbands, and the Senate granted leave to Senator Sir Roy Trotman for International Labour Organisation duties and to the Deputy President, Senator K. F. Ifill, who was attending the West Indies Championship of Cricket for the Blind. The Leader of the Senate, Senator the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McClean, laid papers including the Report of the Accountant General for 2006-2007, the Report of the National Insurance Board for 2006 and the Twelfth Actuarial Review of the National Insurance Scheme. Standing Orders Nos. 22 and 45(2) were suspended so that the Appropriation Bill, 2008 could be taken through all its stages, and the Bill was read a first time.

Opening the debate on the Appropriation Bill, 2008, Senator McClean said the Democratic Labour Party Administration was the first since Independence to present Estimates within less than three months of taking office, so that the Estimates were partly inherited and blended continuity with the Government’s own agenda. She reviewed growth of between 3 and 3.5 per cent over the previous decade, a mismatch between jobs created and the skills of school-leavers, and health and social security as the largest component of the budget. As chair of a sub-committee on Government buildings, she said she had waited weeks for basic information on where public servants worked and promised a database to guide decisions.

After lunch Senator Miss H. E. Thompson, new to the Senate, said governance had to be concerned with philosophy and that she had expected more policy. She urged the establishment of the Petroleum Heritage Stabilisation Fund and spoke on local government, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the absence of a climate change policy; the President reminded her that there was no Honourable Member for St. John in the Chamber. Senator Sir John Stanley Goddard congratulated the Government on its first Estimates, noted that a 1998 Commission recommendation on the Auditor General's power to recruit staff had not been legislated, and questioned the use of any land for landfill in an island of 166 square miles and about 270 000 people, saying over \$50 million had been spent on Greenland. He argued that a sugar cane industry must be retained.

Senator Miss P. I. Inniss replied on oil exploration, citing the \$15 million sunk with Conoco Philips in 2003 without finding a well, and withdrew certain remarks. She spoke on reserving 30 000 acres for agriculture under an Agriculture Protection Act requiring a two-thirds majority,

and on water, saying 98 per cent of what entered the aquifers was drawn off and the island used 54 million gallons a day. The Sitting was suspended until 5.30 p.m.

On resumption Senator Rev. P. A. V. Millington spoke of his constituents in St. Michael North West and quoted a report that a contractor engaged in November 2005 to remodel 13 stalls near the Speightstown Bus Terminal for \$72,804.90 had been paid \$91,610.64 by July 2006, including a variation of \$18,805.74. He described workers at the Animal Nutrition Unit working out of a sheep pen, suggested abandoned quarries for waste and raised nuclear energy, disaster preparedness and waiting times at the Hospital; the President pointed out that English is spoken in Nigeria when he raised language difficulties with nurses recruited there.

On the motion of Senator McClean the Sitting was suspended at about 6.13 p.m. until Thursday, 27th March, 2008 at 1.30 p.m., the President noting that a resumed Sitting must begin exactly at that time.