
THE SENATE DEBATES

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2008 – 2013

THE SENATE

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

The Senate met in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, on Wednesday, July 22, 2009, at 12.10 p.m.

PRESENT

His Honour SENATOR Dr. Branford TAITT, B.A. M.P.A., LL.B. (Hons.), D.H.L. (Honourary), (President)

Her Honour SENATOR Miss 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. (Leader of the Senate) (Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office)

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, Ministry of Labour and the Civil Service)

Senator the Hon. D. W. BOYCE, M.B.A. (Finance), B.Sc. (Econ.), C.M.A., F.C.A. (Minister of State, Ministry of Finance and Energy)

Senator Mrs. V. I. SANDIFORD-GARNER, M.B.A., CIM, Dip. Mng., M.B.A., (Parliamentary Secretary,

Prime Minister's Office

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. INNISS, B.Sc. (Hons.)

Senator D. K. A. GRIFFITH

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

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

Senator Sir ROY TROTMAN, K.A., M.A.

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

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

Prayers were led by SENATOR the Very Reverend H. E. CRICHLAW.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Senate is in session.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR THE PRESIDENT

Mr. PRESIDENT: I am in receipt of information that Senator Sandiford-Garner will not be able to attend this Sitting promptly today, but will attend later on in the session.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS

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

1. Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemption) (Scotiast and Merchant Bank, Trinidad and Tobago Limited) Order, 2009.
2. Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemption) (Marcia Jordan) Order, 2009.
3. Annual Report and Accounts of the Barbados Agricultural Credit Trust Limited for the year ended June 30, 2008.
4. Barbados Water Authority (Water and Sewerage Rates) Regulations, 2009.
5. Report of the St. Joseph Hospital Commission of Inquiry.

MOTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OR
SITTINGS OF THE SENATE AND MOVED BY
A MINISTER

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: I beg to move that Standing Order 45(2) be suspended for the remainder of this 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 that the following Bills be read a first time:

1. Barbados Water Authority (Validation of Water and Sewerage Rates) Bill, 2009; and
2. Arts and Sports Promotion Funds Regulations, 2006 (Validation), Bill, 2009.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I beg to give notice of the following:

A Resolution to approve in accordance with Section 5 of the Crown Lands (Vesting and Disposal) Act, Cap. 225, the vesting in the National Housing Corporation of parcels of land, the property of the Crown, situate at Cliffden in the parish of St. Philip and Guinea in the parish of Saint John in this island for residential purposes.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

ORDER No. 1

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE GRANT OF A
LEASE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 5 OF
THE CROWN LANDS (VESTING AND DISPOSAL)
ACT, CAP. 225, TO THE CRICKET LEGENDS
OF BARBADOS INC. OF A PARCEL OF LAND
TOGETHER WITH THE BUILDINGS
THEREON KNOWN AS HERBERT HOUSE
SITUATE AT FONTABELLE, IN THE
PARISH OF SAINT MICHAEL IN
THIS ISLAND, TO PROVIDE
ACCOMMODATION FOR THE
CORPORATION AND TO
FACILITATE THE CONDUCT
OF ITS BUSINESS

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, as all blue-blooded or red-blooded Barbadians and West Indians know and believe, cricket is a

fundamental part of our culture, our history and our existence. The history of world cricket can be written largely around the Legends of Barbados and West Indies cricket, therefore, it is indeed an important action on the part of the Government to recognise the contribution of our cricket legends, many of whom are still with us and many of whom have passed on, who would have served their country, the Region and indeed, the world of cricket well.

Senate A19 Sequence 8

12.20 p.m.

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SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, in understanding the dark times of current West Indies Cricket - and I will say no more about those dark times, because I believe that to speak of Legends and to focus or emphasise our performance at this point in time, perhaps will, in some way, diminish the importance and great contributions of our great cricket Legends.

Mr. President, in recognition of that contribution, in support of their efforts and in support of an initiative to maintain their ever-present contributions in the minds of current residents, citizens of the Region, the world and those persons interested in cricket, there has been an initiative to form a business entity to perpetuate the memory and the contribution and to ensure that their role and their purpose in the development of cricket in the Region and the world lives on.

Mr. President, as we are aware, the Resolution speaks to a leasing of a parcel of land and the building formerly known as "Herbert House" by the Government, to the entity Cricket Legends of Barbados Inc. In terms of the specific details of that lease, the terms and conditions of the lease speak of a 25-year lease in the first instance, at a nominal rate of \$1 200 per annum, with the option to renew for a further 25 years.

In addition, the lease also spells out in detail the additional terms and conditions contained in the Schedule, requiring the entity and those persons who manage the entity to maintain the facilities by ensuring there is proper insurance, et cetera.

Mr. President, this gesture to provide "Herbert House" also has in itself, a great history in this country. I remember as a child persons going there in relation to matters relating to work contracts and signing up to travel to England.

It is also a facility that is very well-located in close proximity to Kensington Oval, the Mecca of cricket, not only in the Caribbean, but perhaps the world. We know

what Kensington means to the cricketing fraternity and to persons who support the game, some of whom have only a passing interest. Therefore, in its effort to support and to help build cricket, this vesting of land and this lease arrangement is of vital importance.

Mr. President, it is anticipated that the Legends and the persons to whom they entrust the management of this facility, the building of the legacy which is to devolve from the whole management of that facility, that the services and products offered would be one which ensures that generations to come would understand cricket and would understand its role in the development of our societies.

It would ensure that generations to come would understand the role that it can continue to play in building, not only a commercial venture for a young cricketer, for example, a young cricketer building a career and offering commercial benefits, but in fostering Regional unity. When we talk about the Region and about those successes, cricket has traditionally been one such success, notwithstanding the failures.

Mr. President, some people may argue that life is cyclical and therefore failures are to be anticipated. However, it is believed that one of the weaknesses of our Region in respect of memorialising the contributions that cricket has played has been the absence of tangible indicators, or evidence of the contributions that cricket has played. There has been a tangible absence of, for example, captured memories, whether in film, photograph, books and other memorabilia of what cricketers have done, what they have contributed, or what they mean, or would have meant, or would have done in our society.

Mr. President, I believe this initiative will provide such a mechanism. It is an example of the partnership that is necessary, and that it is useful in facilitating initiatives within the private sector, or within non-governmental organisations, for example, with Government.

The Cricket Legends of Barbados Inc., that entity in partnering with Government in getting what is essentially a start, allows that business entity to undertake something which is not only beneficial to the Legends themselves and those to come, as I anticipate that the legends would not be persons who functioned in the past, but legends who are in the making, notwithstanding all that prevails at this point in time. Sir, in doing so, we would be able to continue to build a solid history and a solid understanding of the role of the game and its contributions in many instances.

Mr. President, as I indicated, cricket has contributed to the financial well-being and to the building of character. It has contributed to the instilling of discipline in many young Barbadians and West Indian males. Indeed, in recent times, we have seen many females opting to play the game.

Mr. President, I am sure that as we look at this Resolution and as we support this Resolution, it is an important, though simple, acceptance of the role that Government has to play in partnering with those persons who make an important contribution.

Mr. President, cricket has seen a lot of competition from other sports, but I believe if we look around the island, we will see a resurgence of an interest in cricket. If we look at our primary schools, there has been a development of serious programmes to encourage youngsters, particularly young males, to become involved in cricket. If we look at the level of the secondary school, we also see formal coaching programmes developing within the schools. I believe this is important.

We all know the history of how our Legends started the game, how they were able to develop their craft, how they were able to be recognised. Sir, it was by playing in their communities, developing an interest and an awareness of the game at that level. Therefore, as a society, we have to encourage the development of the game at that level, in order to be able to carve out the base from which prospective legends would evolve and become a reality.

Mr. President, this is a simple Resolution. The Cricket Legends of Barbados already exist. What I would want to do before I move to take my seat is to exhort the management and the members of the body which create the nucleus of this company: to appreciate the significance of the support of Government, to appreciate the significance of their role in building an awareness amongst those youngsters in our community and those to come, of the role and importance of cricket, to create an opportunity for a very important segment of our tourism sector.

We all know that tourism is a vital sector. We also know that sports tourism is an avenue in which there is potential for diversification of that tourism sector. Therefore, it is important that persons who make decisions: to ensure that this company is viable, profitable and has longevity; must understand they are doing several things simultaneously; they are building the memories in terms of the contributions of those who have played the games; those who have represented us well; those who have some potential who are currently playing, who need to understand that when they represent Barbados and the Region, for example, Sir, they must understand they are doing so against the background of a tradition of excellence. Therefore, it is anticipated that recognising that these Legends form part, first a tradition of excellence, the activities of this company must mirror that excellence.

12.30 p.m.

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SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Whenever one passes Kensington Oval and remembers the many games that were played there in the heyday of West Indies Cricket and, indeed, in the heyday of Barbados' cricket, there is much that could be developed around that.

Mr. President, Kensington Oval and Herbert House, which houses the business of the Cricket Legends of Barbados, is also in very close proximity to another important location in relation to tourism. Sir, it is very close to the Bridgetown Port and we have been seeing an increasing number of persons from Britain, taking cruises, coming into Barbados and leaving Barbados having taken a cruise and it, therefore, creates a ready pool of potential customers for the Cricket Legends of Barbados.

It creates a ready pool for persons who love the game to have access to a facility such as this and an access to Kensington Oval. I anticipate that this company would, in its product offering, do much to tie the magnificence of Kensington Oval and the history of Kensington Oval with all they have within their museum, their gift shops, et cetera, in a manner that captures all that I spoke about: the glory days of West Indies and Barbados cricket, the continued importance of the game and its implications, not only for what obtained in the past, but its implications for what would obtain in the future.

Mr. President, we all know how our moods reflect the performance of the team. We all know how cricket, in effect, mirrors what is happening in society and, perhaps, by building and showcasing the contribution of these legends, the Cricket Legend of Barbados Inc., and its management, shareholders and other stakeholders, could do something to educate the public, local and visitor, about the contribution of cricket.

Mr. President, it is recognised that in making this arrangement with the company, in vesting these lands, that the Government has taken an important step to facilitate this enterprise and to facilitate the achievement of all the goals I anticipate that this company would seek to achieve and, indeed, should achieve, given the role and purpose of cricketing on the society.

Mr. President, with those few words, I certainly believe that this Resolution is an important one and, therefore, I would want to stress that, as we discuss this Resolution, it should be passed, I am sure, without any kind of major dissension. I cannot anticipate that people would have any objection to this but, one may argue, that I cannot anticipate anything in these discussions. Therefore, I move that this Resolution do now pass.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Thompson.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, thank you very much. This is a measure, which I think must be supported. I would have been interested, as I am sure members of the public would have been, to learn how much exactly the property is being leased for. Is it a peppercorn rent, so that you are giving a high degree of support to the legends or is it otherwise? Is it a commercial rent? Is Government taking the view that we want to be able to....

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, on a point of order. I am not sure if the Honourable Senator was listening, but very early I indicated, and I will repeat, that the terms and conditions of the lease are for 20 years at a nominal rate of \$1 200 per annum with an option to renew for a further 25 years.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, let me thank the Honourable Senator, I did listen, but I had not heard that. Sir, sometimes you listen and you still do not hear anything. I know that those who pontificate in management and other exercises are very familiar with the "game" where you tell somebody clearly sitting next to you. You can even write it and ask them to tell it to the person next to them and by the time it gets around the table, it is so grossly distorted that it often bears no relationship to what the original message was, so you could listen and, therefore, not hear. Therefore, I apologise to the Senator for not having heard. I did ask the question in earnest rather than attempting to be mischievous.

Mr. President, I did begin by saying that this is something which I am going to support and I reiterate that. Sir, now that I have had repeated, for my certain hearing, the quantum of the rent and the terms and conditions, I would have to say that they are entirely reasonable. You are not giving the property away, but the rent is minimal, that it provides an opportunity for the legends to catch themselves and move from there, so, Sir, Government is really giving good support.

Mr. President, I think that a few points must be made here, and one is that this very much builds on an initiative, which we visited previously and which, quite frankly, goes back now some years in the sense that, on or about the time that Cricket World Cup was being planned, and the organisational activities were put in train here in Barbados, one of the measures that the last Administration did, was to give very strong support to the whole establishment of the legends, including concessionary financing and gifts of money to ensure that this group was able to transition from being a group of people about whom we speak with nostalgia, who by their efforts had contributed much to the game at the national level and increased our pride and understanding of what we could achieve as a nation, when we worked at our best, but also to create an opportunity for

them to move to revenue earning from the establishment and branding from this notion of the legends.

Mr. President, in fact, other countries have capitalised on their legends. Of course, we are not the only people with legends, because every cricket playing nation would have a legend, two, three or four. We may have more than most and we may have better than most. We may have those that have the better historical record, in terms of achievement in the game, but we are not the only one with legends. It seems, therefore, that perhaps it is an idea, whose time has come.

Mr. President, I must, however, express concern over a number of things. As I have indicated, on or about the year or two preceding Cricket World Cup, the Government played a role, if not in all of the funding, in the redevelopment of Herbert House to give them access to a building within sufficiently close proximity of Kensington that they could realise benefits from the physical proximity, such benefit as could be realised from the sheer numbers of people who were going to be going into Kensington and who were going to be on the island at the time. Sir, in addition to that, during the course of Cricket World Cup, a number of other initiatives to do with funding, support, assisting in the hosting of events and so on, was given.

Mr. President, I am concerned that is now possibly three years or four years ago. I think that Cricket World Cup was in 2006/2007, so that is possibly three years ago but when one passes Herbert House, one sees no activity at all.

12.40 p.m.

Sequence 10

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SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: There appeared to be a lot of glitz, at the time, surrounding the launch of the Legends, given the support that Government gave to them, but beyond that, the effort that seems to have been needed to commercialise and properly brand these people, to attract revenues and foreign exchange and to earn for them, does not seem to have taken place. They need, like cricket, generally, and I do not want to speak about the West Indies Cricket Board of Control, not being a proper commercial entity.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Sir, whether it is that they have no control, whether it is that they cannot play cricket anymore, because if a Bangladesh Second 11 or Third 11 could beat our Second or Third 11 so bad at

international level, do we still have cricket? One can debate all of these things. I really want to speak about the commercial opportunity that we are letting passed.

In the United States you can get play cards for basketball players and baseball players. The exchange of cards is an industry tantamount to the exchange of stamps and other paraphernalia in the United States. After all this time, all these people, including many in here who have MBAs and well-educated people, former Legends or former players who are business people, we are still not seeing a business thrust of an entrepreneurial approach to the management, organisation, marketing and playing of cricket in Barbados or the Caribbean.

Government gave the Legends, and I am speaking here now generically, the last Government, and that is what this Government is today doing. You give them a leg up. You give them the platform on which to stand. You put down the foundation from which they can then build, but what is the effort that is taking place beyond the support that successive Governments have now given?

Sir, the time has come when a serious Commercial Manager, not a person who is a friend of a member of the Barbados Cricket Association or the BCL, or somebody belonging to the right Party, or having the right social connection, a serious Commercial Manager who understands taking a product, branding it, commercialising it, internationalising it, selling and making money from it, needs to happen in respect of the Legends. Sir, it would appear that they cannot do it for themselves. Therefore, they have to hire somebody with the right skill sets to get it done.

Sir, to this day when you travel, people ask you about the cricketing greats. When you listen to cricketing commentary on the radio or television, there is reference to Brian Lara's 400 runs on the Antigua Recreation Ground, there is reference to Gary Sobers' knock here or there, there is reference to a wicket that Malcolm Marshall took on a particular ground with a particular turn of the wrist, which was almost imperceptible to the naked eye until the ball hit the wicket, and the batsman appeared to be in greater shock than anyone else on the ground.

Sir, the stuff that West Indies cricket has been made of is truly legendary, but we really are not capitalising on it. Other people have capitalised on their Legends. Other former cricketers have made money by writing books, producing video, doing history and collections relative to the game. Though we have a proud history, a proud tradition, a rich cricketing culture, even across villages - in fact, there was a time when our cricket was so strong that a person like Steven Stephenson, who was arguably of international level and reputation could not get a play in the West Indies team. Yet, despite having the richness of that

culture, we do not commercialise it. The Legends are not benefitting from it. Sir, it is truly a sad reflection.

I have spoken about the game and about the personalities. I want to turn, therefore, to the facility of Herbert House, itself. Having been given Herbert House at a peppercorn rent, one must ask oneself, and perhaps Government needs to ask the Legends - to say to them what is the business plan for the Legends themselves and for this facility.

When one passes Herbert House, it has out-building. Apart from Herbert House always looking as if there is no activity there, the out-building itself seems to be used for nothing, when that could have been, I do not know the terms of the lease, subtle; it could have been used as a small museum, or an Interpreter Centre. In fact, the whole notion of three dimensional and interactive interpretive centres is really the latest thing in the museum. You go into a museum and rather than still exhibits, there are a lot of three dimensional and interactive things, in which you can come involved with the game, either as a spectator or a player, or something. At this time I was talking about baseball cards and basketball, and how basketball is an industry.

There should be at this time screen savers with cricketers, specifically of the Cricket Legends. There could be mouse pads. There could be all kinds of paraphernalia which is relevant to modern commerce. If cards worked for the basketball industry, it does not mean that cards would work in the Caribbean, but almost everybody has a computer. Sir, 80 per cent of Barbadians are computer literate and have access to the Internet. If you want information on cricket, you have to turn to cricketinfo.

The Legends themselves do not have a website, as far as I am aware. They do not have a cricket programme, or cricket information on the Internet that you can access. They do not have their products commercialised in such a way that you can go to the Internet and use your card. Bajan buy books from Amazon and have them sent here, and also buy goods from all over the world. You cannot buy a shirt that has Desmond Haynes' number or name, or a West Indies shirt. It is just not available.

Sir, we really have to move to the point where we get beyond thinking cricket as entertainment, champion over another team or another race, some good drinks and food, and we go home when we are finished and everybody had a good day, and that is the end of the matter.

Sir, cricket is commerce if we are prepared to make the effort to properly commercialise the product that we have. I am calling on the Legends and urging the Government. We gave them a leg up. You have now lifted them up again a little further, but somebody has to get

behind them to put in place what will catalyse and drive the next level of commercialisation.

In fact, you have to thank Sir Hillary, at the University, because he brought the academic dimension to cricket. You have the net practice which is available. You have good facilities at the University, and now there is a body of Caribbean cricket literature in a way that it was not before.

Sir, in fact, the book by Sir Everton Weekes, for those who have not read it, is an excellent book. It is about leadership, rising above social and economic circumstances to get, not only to the top of your game, but to rise to a level of leadership in your community and country, and as an international sport, as an icon.

12.50 p.m.

Sequence 11

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Senate A19, Sequence 12, 12.50 p.m.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, it is a history of our social circumstances at that time, seen through the eyes of somebody from the New Orleans, who lived in impoverished circumstances. It is a marvelous piece of writing of anecdotal commentary on things that we may not have known about, our history, but most of all, it is a story about the triumph of a single man and the triumph of the human spirit over hardship, and circumstances which threatened to engulf you and keep you down. It is a marvelous piece of writing and I salute him for it.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Sir, that is only one effort. It is in the University of the West Indies' Book Shop. I picked it up in there one day. I do not know if it is available on Amazon where people would go internationally, to buy books. I do not know if when you go to a game in Sydney, Australia, or at Lords, if there is a booth outside with West Indies material being sold and marketed, or if flyers are being distributed as people go into or come out to the game to say www.westindieslegends.com, get material on the Legends here.

I am not suggesting that these are the only things that can be done. I am just throwing out some of the opportunities that we are missing to commercialise an effort at which we have shown for generations. People still look forward to seeing the West Indies play, even if we are not now having our best days.

I do not want to comment on the spirit of the team, on the present team or anything of the sort. Suffice it to say, that a brand is a powerful thing. The Legends are a brand, but we are getting more puff than power from them. We really need to be able to exploit that brand in a very serious way.

Senator McClean spoke to a resurgence of interest from youth at the primary school level, in cricket. This did not happen by accident. It happened as a result of a structured programme, put in place by the last Administration, where a core of coaches were established to work with primary school students, where the Legends themselves, in an effort to improve their circumstances, were allowed to have duty-free cars, and they were given contracts to go into schools, villages and their own communities to work with young people and help to build the game, improve techniques, and talk about the history.

Sometimes it is seeing that one good game, that one fine goal, or hearing of a moment that your grandfather or somebody in the rum shop is speaking about, and as they put down the glass and lick their lips, would say, "Man, I would never forget it as long as I live." Sometimes it is just that comment that sparks an interest among a young person who did not know about the moment about which the person was speaking. Therefore, what we put in place was a systematic programme to allow for the resurgence at that level.

In addition, there were lights and improved facilities at many community playing fields, so that night cricket resurged in Barbados and it is still very keenly played, and that allowed a number of people...

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Senator Symmonds is reminding me 'commenced', because the truth is that in 1994, there was not that degree of night cricket, simply because community grounds did not have lighting and other facilities. Certainly, in St. James South and on all facilities, except one, lights were placed to allow for night cricket. It was done across communities and that assisted in the resurgence of the game, to which Senator McClean spoke.

Sir, not only did tremendous funding and effort go into the Legends and national cricket, and community cricket, but the very fact that they were given a facility, is also to be commended. It was part of an effort in the refurbishment of other houses that had historic interest like Tyrol Cot, the George Washington House, and Herbert House which had its own particular history, and which really, in terms of period architecture, was one of the iconic buildings in the City, refurbished and put in a position, where the Legends could have a home.

One of the things, therefore, about which I am concerned was the fact that these relationships which had been put in place to allow the Legends to be able, some of them, in particular, being of a certain age and having played cricket at a time when there was not a lot of money in the game, it was a way, also of giving them a source of income. That has collapsed.

Mr. President, I feel that if we are truly going to honour the Legends, we cannot just do it by giving them access to this building and rent at \$1 200 a year, but that financing mechanism, which did two things, allowed some of them to live with a high degree of dignity, but it also gave them a continuing role in national cricket and allowed several young people, who would only have heard their names, but would never have had the opportunity to interact with them in person to see them play and to learn at the feet of them as masters, to learn the game at that level.

I would urge the Administration that consideration be given to restoring those relationships or looking at some new mechanism to give support to those persons, who have given more than support to the country, but who have brought honour to Barbados by way of their stature as cricketers and the way they have played the game.

I began by saying that I support this measure. I conclude by saying that, but even in supporting it, I think that the Government, or successive Administrations in this regard, have discharged their responsibility to the Legends. It is, therefore, for the Legends to discharge their responsibilities to the country and to themselves.

It is being confirmed for me, Sir, that the Legends do have a website, but that does not change the broad point that I was making, that there needs to be a commercialisation of their efforts in a way that does not now obtain. That is the broad point. Therefore, even if they do have a website, I do not see any screen savers, mouse pads or any paraphernalia being sold in a serious commercial way. I do not see them being branded.

In fact, all the time, if you are on the street and you pass Kensington, there are tourists trying to get in to see the ground, to go on it, and Herbert House being in such close proximity is not attracting any of that pedestrian traffic.

The Harrison's Cave for instance, Sunbury House and a number of other facilities across Barbados, have a standing arrangement with the cruise ships to bring passengers to their facilities for tours. That is standard.

Senate A19, Sequence 12, 1.00 p.m.

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SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: I do not know if the Legends have any such arrangements. There are people who would be happy to come in and have lunch or dinner with, or be at some cricket related activity with some of the Legends as all of them may not be available at a time.

The point is that Herbert House should be a hive of activity. It should be a place to which you want to go and can go if you want information on cricket, or if you want to meet the Legends themselves and so on. It is not now that kind of hub, that kind of nerve centre, or centre of energy. That is the transformation that I am speaking to.

Yes, they have a website and I congratulate them for having it, but there is so much more that needs to be done. I applaud the Government for this effort, but I really think that Government needs to obtain from them what their proposal is for taking it forward, because I am sure that the Government would help, but they have to have a plan, they have to act on it and they have to do something quickly.

At the time of Cricket World Cup, tremendous opportunity was lost. At this time, I think that there is scope for it and for the Legends to have that commercial opportunity, and I am urging that the country see to it, not as a matter of urgency, but really, very soon.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I have become aware that a technical difficulty is being faced by the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation arising out of some technical difficulty for the Chamber's broadcast. In the circumstances, there is a request that the Senate be suspended temporarily for about 15 minutes so that this matter can be fixed.

I am not having any particular difficulty, but it seems to me that we would wish the wider population to be aware of what we are doing.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, with the difficulty we seem to be having, I beg to move that the Sitting be suspended for 15 minutes to have the matter investigated.

The question that the Sitting do now suspend for 15 minutes was put to the Senate and agreed to, and Mr. PRESIDENT suspended the Sitting accordingly.

Senate A19 Sequence 13

1.10 p.m.

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

RESUMPTION

Mr. PRESIDENT: This Sitting is now resumed.

Senator the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN.

SUSPENSION

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, in light of the continued efforts to solve the problem being experienced at this time, I beg to move that this Sitting be now suspended for lunch, to be resumed at 2.30 p.m.

The question that the Sitting be suspended until 2.30 p.m. was put to the Senate and agreed to and Mr. PRESIDENT suspended the Sitting accordingly.

1.25 p.m.

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

RESUMPTION

Mr. PRESIDENT: This Sitting is now resumed.

Senator Dr. Frances Chandler.

SENATOR Dr. F. L. CHANDLER: Mr. President, I rise to support the Resolution before us. The Cricket Legends of Barbados Inc, does in fact have a business plan which covers most, if not all, of the issues raised by Senator Thompson. It was done around 2007 and, as far as I am aware, it was a condition of Government's assistance. Sir, while there has been some implementation, I do agree that more needs to be done, or could be done.

Mr. President, I would say that I toured that facility a few weeks ago, including touring Kensington Oval with the Barbados Shipping and Trading Association (BSTA) group. We had a good tour. We spoke to two of the Legends and saw a lot of the memorabilia and publications there. We saw the beginning of a museum. Sir, maybe now that the future of the Cricket Legends of Barbados Inc., is more secured through the lease which was contained in this Resolution, maybe they would feel more secure in implementing some of the commercial aspects.

Mr. President, I support this Resolution. I thank you.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Symmonds.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. President, I rise to support this Resolution and with a few pithy comments would want to lend my perspective on this issue.

I think I would want to side with those colleague Senators who have emphasised the commercial or business aspect of cricket.

Mr. President, from my perspective, the reality is that we have to recognise that the Legends, while obviously they need to be supported and encouraged, have become legendary as a result of their contributions on the field of play. I do not think it is fair to the Legends to expect that the spectacular and halcyon heights to which they have aspired and achieved, are going to be automatically, and without more, translated into a similar level of achievement in the realm of commerce, because really and truly that is not their chosen field or specialty. Therefore, to the extent that we encumber their reputations and images with that expectation, I think we do them an injustice.

Mr. President, having started from that perspective, I also feel that one of the weaknesses I have detected in this debate, and I say this not out of any sense of anything other than an abundance of charity to colleague Senators, but equally I have seen this type of approach taken on the very important matter of the future of West Indies cricket whithersoever I have gone in this Region.

2.40 p.m.

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. President, I fear that the so-called wise men and women of the Caribbean who speak on these matters do so without a fair degree of reflection on where the burden really lies.

Mr. President, if we are going to be serious about West Indies cricket, then let us recognise that we have two paths to choose from. On one hand, we have a private sector which, quite frankly, in my judgement, has been, irrespective of where we go in this Region, historically slow and unwilling to play the very lead role in developmental matters in the Caribbean.

Sir, very often the private sector has to be led and shown the way by progressive Governments and progressive labour movements, progressive non-governmental organisations, which then, having done the hard work usually, cede the ground to those who have greater financial wherewithal at their disposal.

Mr. President, the only other alternative for the development of West Indies cricket...

Asides.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Sir, I speak to West Indies cricket in the context of this debate because we cannot sensibly and seriously speak to the Legends of

Barbados without sensibly realising that they are but a part, perhaps a very important part, but they are nothing but a sub-sector of the broader pool of legends that have made the West Indies what the West Indies are. Sir, when one comes from England or India to explore the Caribbean, one does not only come bearing in mind the great Sir Garfield Sobers, but one also remembers that there was an Andy Roberts and a Michael Holding.

Mr. President, the reality is that the only other alternative to assist us in the path of development, quite frankly, are Caribbean Governments. Now, I am not entirely sure that colleague Governments in this Region have risen to the occasion in the way in which the last Administration, and by the very debate, this current Administration has demonstrated a willingness to carry the mantle of support for the development of cricket.

Mr. President, the Government of Barbados cannot obviously do it alone, but I am glad and heartened that this debate is taking place in this Senate in the presence of the foreign Minister of Barbados because, through you, Mr. President, I would want to encourage her not only to continue in this mode, but to lend further leadership and, where it needs be, guidance to colleagues in the Region.

The reality is, Mr. President, let us not fool ourselves, we have some festivals, Crop Over is one and Carnival is another, but the bread and butter of that which makes up our tourism product is largely connected to this very vital thing that we call West Indies cricket, and we cannot sit idly by and watch it go down the drain and slide deeper into the doldrums.

Mr. President, I am holding in my hands the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, which these days is treated almost as a Bible for our development. It is perhaps treated as a Bible in more senses than one because it is as closely followed by some, as it is scorned by others.

Sir, the reality is that at page 16 of this document, under Article 21, there is a concept introduced called "The Institutions of the Caribbean Community". I am going to share with the Senate what those institutions are. It says:

"The following entities established by or under the auspices of the Community shall be recognised as institutions of the Community.

- Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA);

- Caribbean Meteorological Institute (CMI);

- Caribbean Meteorological Organisation (CMO);

- Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI);

- Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI);

- Caribbean Regional Centre for the Education and Training of Animal Health and Veterinary Public Health Assistants (REPAHA);

- Assembly of Caribbean Community Parliamentarians (ACCP);

- Caribbean Centre For Developmental Administration (CARICAD);

- Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute (CFNI), and such other entities as may be designated by the Conference.”

Mr. President, cricket is a vital lifeline to this Region. I wonder whether the time has not come for the West Indies Cricket Board to join the ranks of those institutions, which are deemed to be institutions of CARICOM. There are also associated institutions and among them numbered, the University of the West Indies and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, but I do not understand how something as fundamental and virtually all-encompassing...

Asides.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Sir, the only nations, which do not play would be Belize and Suriname and, Mr. President, I do not understand how there could be something so all-encompassing and it is not treated to in the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas.

Mr. President, let me go a little bit further. Perhaps too, the time has come, in the same way that this Government and the preceding Government have made it their business to engage the country at the highest level on this vital issue of cricket and cricket development and the business of cricket, the time, perhaps, has come for the Region, as a whole, to engage all of its body politics on this matter.

Mr. President, that could only seriously be done, if we are prepared to recognise that the West Indies Cricket Board cannot be an end, in and of itself, answerable only to itself, but that the West Indies Cricket Board now needs to be harnessed and brought under a tighter rein, so that it is answerable to a body which is larger than the West Indies Cricket Board, to a body, which is accountable, in some broad sense, to the public called “The Caribbean Public.”

Mr. President, therefore, I think, perhaps, the Heads of States themselves in Governments might be the very institution to which that West Indies Cricket Board should be called upon to account. Sir, were that the case, I could

envisage a situation in which the leadership of the Board ceases to be fiefdom held by some so-called big-up, well-to-do, high-powered individual in our Caribbean society, who treats it as his own preserve, but rather something that would rotate around the Region so that from year to year, some other country takes the chair and that the reins of control pass and that there is a process of accountability, a process of inclusiveness, a process of broad participation by the public because the political directorate is in some way now more directly involved in this issue.

Mr. President, it is an unfortunate thing, but I believe that it is also true, if one studies the sociology of developing societies, the sociology of post-colonial developing societies very often, the type of process to which we look is only ever achieved, when once you introduce the spectre of Governmental leadership and the accountability that it usually causes to come with it. Sir, that is an unfortunate thing, but it is a historical reality in many ways.

Mr. President, I am of the view as well that we are not going to deal with this matter seriously, if we do not seriously begin to speak to the business of cricket. Sir, I want to associate myself in a large measure with the comments made by my colleague, Senator Thompson. The development of cricket is perhaps best left to those who know, have played and understand the rigours of the game but, Sir, the business of cricket is our business.

It is how we have said to the whole Region that tourism is our business, that you have to play your part and, Sir, that begins with the man in the street putting his litter in a garbage can because he does not want to defile the country in which he lives. Sir, the same kind of thinking has to be brought into this business of cricket. Therefore, we have to make sure that at every level of society, young men and, indeed, young women, feel an affinity to the game.

Mr. President, Senator Thompson spoke in the context of what happened in the United States of America basketball and football and, Sir, it is a truism. There has to be an interest in buying the paraphernalia, but you are not going to buy the paraphernalia just because there is paraphernalia there to buy. There has to be a marketing thrust and there has to be a marketing approach.

2.50 p.m.

Sequence 23

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: I am heartened to know that there is a website. I am heartened to know that there is a business plan, but I am disheartened to know that

right here in Barbados, the fact that the Legends were once opened on Friday evenings for drinks, was one of the best kept secrets in Bridgetown, and everybody knew that if you went on the South Coast you could find X restaurant and Y sports club open for drinks, but we did not see fit, we failed as a people to harness an opportunity in which we could put the necessary financial support for the Legends, so that the fruits of the marketing thrust could be realised. We cannot fail to do that at a Regional level.

I also believe that there is a necessity to think seriously about the types of skill sets which are needed. I think, to some extent that Senator Thompson spoke on that matter, as well.

Sir, it is abundantly clear that the business of cricket, and I continue to call it that, is but an aspect of that which we are calling our Regional development process. It is not only going to be achieved by the persons with qualifications in Business Administration, Marketing, et cetera. It is a holistic process. It is a process in which we have to be prepared to find the resources, to bring on board the very brightest and the best who have the requisite skills to promote this thing that we call West Indies cricket, in as many myriad forms as possible.

I listened to the Leader of Government Business today and I say that in a microscopic way she has hit the nail on the head. We speak about the close proximity of Herbert House to the Kensington Oval, and the close proximity to the Port. While we understand the importance of the close proximity, we have also failed to grasp the urgency of being able to keep the three entities open at the same time, doing business at the same time, and transporting people to and fro, so that there is a product when you step off a cruise ship, a part of the product you experience. Sir, that can be duplicated and replicated in Antigua. It can be replicated in Guyana, and it can be replicated across this Region, but it has to be done, as I said, in a broad and holistic and all-encompassing way.

The difficulty that I fear we will continue to battle with, we are speaking the language of support to cricket, but we are not putting Regional money behind cricket. The Governments of the Region cannot be so hard-pressed.

I know for a fact that as a plausible avenue, in my judgment, has been expressed in this Region where people are pointing to the fact that we are hauling in millions of dollars in every country in departure tax, and that what perhaps we should do is take a dollar out of the departure tax from every head, and put that into a pool which goes towards the development of this thing called "West Indies cricket." That was placed on the table years ago, Mr. President. This was placed on the table years ago, and what has become of the idea? It could not have been too difficult.

I have not seen, or heard of any report from the Heads of Government, from the Ministers of Tourism, or the Ministers of Sports, what their views are on this suggestion. Neither, to be very frank with you...

Asides,

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: That is true. You have not heard what the Legends' views are.

I also make the point there is also a burning necessity if we are going to talk about a business plan for cricket and so on. Then we have to also understand how this concept of cricket development translates into a practical reality, because it is a practical reality in two veins. On one hand it is a practical reality from the perspective of putting us in a position, where we will continue to see a revenue stream out of cricket in this Region, and that is vital, especially given the fact that we have spent billions of dollars in the Caribbean improving facilities, creating stadia, where none existed before, and we now find ourselves in the very interesting position where we have to create games for people, because they have a stadium. You never had that issue before. You now have to go to nine different places because you have nine test playing countries in the Caribbean.

Sir, there needs to be a very comprehensive approach to this thing from one end, and from the other end, we need to make sure that we are bringing the very best of our athletic talent into the game of cricket, at a time when they are facing extreme competition from a variety of other sports.

Sir, when I was much younger, and I am not that old, basketball was really not an option if you were a serious athlete in the Caribbean. It is today, and many other sports. Therefore, cricket comes under increasing pressure.

Sir, what has become of those institutions in cricket which have been proposed, and which would speak to both of these issues? On one hand, the continuation of the revenue stream, and on the other hand, the critically important issue of bringing in young people and training them. For example, one such issue, which has become a dead letter in the Region, is the Cricket Academy.

Sir, again, we understand the magic of a Cricket Academy because we have seen how Australia has not only slaughtered us, but slaughtered the rest of the world. We understood it and we embraced it at a national level, and in true Caribbean fashion, having deliberated upon it, having beaten it to death at a philosophical and national level, we left it. The reality is, if it is to work, you have to put some people 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to work behind that to bring it to fruition, to give it life, meaning and

purpose. If we do not do that, then we continue to berate ourselves and destroy the confidence of our young men.

Sir, it is all well and good to pull a 16-year-old out of secondary school in Barbados, and tell him to put on a maroon cap and go and play for the West Indies, but he is disadvantaged if he is going to go and play against a team which is comprised of 11 opponents, who have been given the benefit of psychological training, have been given the benefit of all of the health and nutritional training, have been given the benefits of all of the additives that go with a professional sport. This is what we continue to do. We continue to take people with raw talent, and in many ways a superior talent, but that talent has not been honed.

Sir, I had a young man who was in, which was my Constituency, and I am confident that it will once again be my Constituency, and if you pardon me, I will call his name, Ryan Hinds. Sir, you will not find a better natural talent, but there is much that should go with the talent, including you. I see you tapping your chest. I am sure that in your day you had some talent in the game. The extent of it I would not wish to comment on.

Asides.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: History has not been kind to you in that regard.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Let us have some order in the debate, please.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Sir, the lighter point is this. There needs to be the necessary supporting measures that go with the development of that talent.

Sir, it is unfortunate, I think, that an institution, or a proposed institution, which is as critical to the development of the game today, as a Cricket Academy, still remains a wish upon a star. It is an unfortunate thing, and we talked earlier about the West Indies Cricket Board having been gone, and that perhaps is the only change that is taking place in the West Indies Cricket Board, between when I was a little fellow, six years old, and today.

That is the reality, that you drop the control, but the approach is manifestly the same. You have a leadership of the Board which really and truly assumes, even if it is not exactly this way on paper, an air of almost invincibility, unaccountability. Yes, you are supposed to be accountable to the Barbados Cricket Association and accountable to the sister association in Trinidad and elsewhere.

3.00 p.m.

Sequence 24

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

Senate A19, Sequence 25, 3.00 p.m.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: In reality, Sir, these are paper tigers, and until we place the West Indian Cricket Board in a situation where it has to sit down and answer to what I believe is the only solution, a political master - those who are vested by the State that they come from with authority, having been elected by the sovereign people - saying that we send you there, you are going to a CARICOM Heads of Government Meeting, part of your agenda has to be the development of West Indies' Cricket, and we want to hear what is the plan for West Indies Cricket. Otherwise, years after successive years, we will be coming back to this sorry and sordid state where we lament, tear our garments and weep tears.

Mr. President, the reality is that we are powerless. Neither you, nor I, have any influence over what takes place with the West Indies Cricket Board and the approach that they take, and the people of the Caribbean are as powerless as we are. As President Obama has said, Sir, perhaps there is now time for change. Perhaps it is time to give people some degree of hope and to transform that reality that we now labour under into something more positive. Sir, that is my concern.

Sir, I feel very strongly that this debate is perhaps just a stepping stone along the way. We have had a previous debate of this nature here and I would not want to reflect. The Rules will not allow me. Much that we have heard here today, sentiments expressed in terms of commitment to the Legends, will be recorded or has been recorded before by Hansard.

The reality is, Mr. President, that the Government of Barbados cannot do it alone. The good news is that the Government of Barbados has taken a leading role and it has been supported by a successive Government. There is continuity. No man or woman can challenge the fact that there is continuity in Barbados, insofar as the commitment of Government to the development of cricket is concerned, but the Government here cannot do it alone. We need to have partners in this Region and I believe, Sir, we need to have partners at the highest level.

Mr. President, it is through that partnership that I am sure we will come to a greater level of accountability, a greater level of compassion.

It is a bad thing, Mr. President, in an industrial relation for people to be faced with a situation in which they have been contracted, they have toiled, they have done their diligence and their duty, but they then have to fight for recompense. These things should never happen and it should not happen in that industry, or that path of

endeavour, which we have chosen as the most superlative that we have in this Region.

Mr. President, I also feel, as I have indicated to you that it is through that approach that we will then better be able to speak to this thing that we call the commercialisation of cricket, the business of cricket, et cetera, because it is through that approach, that we will be better able to pool a larger source of revenue. It is through that approach, that we will then be better able to direct the course of that revenue, and it is through that approach that will then see the manifestation of the critical supporting institutions.

We cannot wait forever for some other NGO to come along and do what the University of the West Indies at Cave Hill has so successfully done. There has to be a leading role played.

Mr. President, I am not going to stand here and be dishonest with myself, and with you. I do not believe that the private sector in this Region, unless led to that point, is going to take the lead in developing cricket, a little sponsorship, we are always glad for it, but there is something in it for the sponsor as well.

There was an individual who came into our midst, who threw some money at cricket, and who is no longer in our midst. What is the plan to fill that void, because that time of the year is almost upon us, when the exercise that he was instrumental in creating should be taking place again. No doubt, it will not take place because he is not in a position to do so, but the reality is, Mr. President, what is the plan to fill the void? Can we seriously and sensibly discuss the future of cricket if we understand that to the extent that there was private sector interest, that private sector interest is now - I almost said locked away - but washed away, and there is no alternative on the horizon. These are things, Sir, which we cannot stand idly by and continue just to observe, comment upon and let them slip. I think we owe it as a duty to ourselves, and we owe it as a duty to successive generations.

Sir, I do not think that any of us who were alive at the time when we enjoyed the halcyon heights in this global game, could feel comfortable about what we see today, worse yet, the Legends who made it possible. Therefore, Sir, we owe it to ourselves and successive generations that we, as swiftly as possible, put an appropriate plan of action in place that can take us forward.

I believe that the model which is being evolved in Barbados where Government steps in, harnesses the potential of the Legends, commits itself to the very best of its ability to giving the Legends technical and other forms of assistance, is a good start. I think, Sir, it has to be broadened across this Region. I am hoping that the

influence, the leadership ability, the known skill of those who are at the helm, will be used effectively, to promote the development of this type of thinking in the Region.

Sir, with that type of sentiment, I would want to encourage it and throw my fullest being into it.

I am obliged to you, Mr. President.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator McClean.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I believe that we would have heard much said in support of the Resolution to lease land to the Cricket Legends of Barbados, Inc. I also believe that there was a clarification or a correction to some issues raised in relation to the Company that is operating in the name of the Cricket Legends and there is, in fact, a business plan. I believe, however, and this perhaps is part of what needs to be manifested, there needs to be a lifting of a plan off the paper on which it is written. Therefore, there is a lot of work to be done on the part of the Legends.

I know personally that for more than a decade and a half ago, some young students of the University of the West Indies in a marketing programme, thought that supporting cricket in Barbados was important, and they sat down and prepared a very good and comprehensive plan to market cricket in Barbados and presented it to the relevant authorities. I do not think that much of it saw the light of day from what was manifested. I believe that is an issue that is important.

Mr. President, nowhere is there adequate information shared on the work that is being done, the plans of this, the actual programmes being run in the name of the Legends and therefore, there is much scope. Unfortunately, it is difficult to say but it is beginning, perhaps, to mirror the climate of cricket in the Caribbean and that needs to be lifted, Sir, and this certainly is an opportunity.

The point made about the need to treat cricket as more than a game, and treat cricket as a business cannot be lost. I believe very much that the game of cricket is, in fact, subsumed or should be subsumed, under the broader picture of the business of cricket, and that is where I am sure, Sir, that the respective contributions of the Honourable Senators who contributed to this debate, should be taken on board, by all those in authority.

The times in which we live and the circumstances facing West Indies' Cricket, create not only a threat, but Sir, as I always say, there are usually two sides to a coin - a significant opportunity to build cricket and to build on its contributions of the past.

Overall, this initiative is but one step in a continued series of efforts by the Government and people of Barbados to support Barbados and West Indies Cricket.

Senate A19, Sequence 25 3.10 p.m.

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, it is important that those persons to whom much has been given, that is, the owners so to speak of the company, Cricket Legends of Barbados, recognise that they owe a duty of care and responsibility to the people and Government of Barbados, to make the most of this initiative.

It is a situation which I am sure does not happen in many other jurisdictions and similar scenarios. It is an opportunity for them to make a tangible contribution to the building of youth cricket. There are myriad opportunities and myriad possibilities that should be, and can be explored. One way to do that would be to seek the counsel and advice of the people who have an interest in cricket. Mr. President, if you want to hear Barbadians talk, ask them to talk about cricket, and I am sure there is much that can be said.

Overall, Sir, this Resolution is one in which the Government continues on a path of support for West Indies cricket, using its resources to pool with those of others in a partnership arrangement to ensure that the interest of some activity, in this case cricket, which is of vital importance to the vast majority of citizens in Barbados present and, hopefully, the vast majority of those to come is protected and nurtured.

Sir, this is a Resolution which I certainly support and I, therefore, beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

ORDER NO. 2 – BARBADOS WATER AUTHORITY
(VALIDATION OF WATER AND SEWERAGE RATES)
BILL, 2009

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, before this Chamber is the Barbados Water Authority (Validation of Water and Sewerage Rates) Bill, 2009. Perhaps, I will begin in the way in which I have traditionally done when I spoke on a subject. As a former teacher, I like to explain or make sure that people are clear about what I am talking about.

Before us is what we know as a Validation Bill, which seeks to ensure, in the case of the Barbados Water Authority, that revenues collected under the statutory protection of that agency are being lawfully imposed.

In the case of the Barbados Water Authority, we have a situation where an administrative action was taken to collect revenue, which ideally should have been preceded by the appropriate legislative action, but which was not done, and it is, therefore, necessary that we take time to ensure that this is done, thus the need for this Validation Bill.

As you are aware, Sir, in 2005, a decision was taken to increase the water rates and the agency commenced to collect those rates. However, the necessary legislative supporting work was not done and, in essence, what we had was a situation until now, where in effect, those rates were being collected illegally. This is not the first time. It has happened in several situations. Of course, the omission or failure to make the necessary correction would require that this Administration or, certainly, the agency would have in a worst case scenario to repay those increases, so this validation is intended to ensure that the actions being taken by the Barbados Water Authority in terms of those new rates, are legally corrected.

In the context of the Barbados Water Authority, it is important to recognise that several things are happening. The lapse, if we want to call it that, in terms of the failure to put in place the necessary legislative framework to give legality to the increase rates is - I certainly would not apportion blame. As I said, the nature of things is that these things happen within Government structures and within Government bureaucracies.

Mr. President, when we look at that situation, it perhaps mirrors something else that we have seen as we look at the Barbados Water Authority. I recall reading and hearing people talk about this. There is a common sense, or a common notion, that the Barbados Water Authority has been neglected in several ways for several years, in fact, some people might argue for several decades.

All in all, Mr. President, this has translated into the poor state of the Barbados Water Authority. Its infrastructure needs to be addressed, which would be a major undertaking. Barbados has the proud record of having had public water transported across the island since the 1800s. Sir, as you would imagine, that distribution network has had to be maintained and will need to be maintained in a very structural and organised manner in the future. Clearly, that calls for significant resources being put into that.

Mr. President, in listening to the public discourse on this matter, I have been particularly troubled by the notion that Barbadians should not pay increases for water. I have been troubled by what appears to be a lack of appreciation or demonstrated appreciation of the valuable public good, that we have in the ready availability of potable water in quantities that have always been satisfactory,

notwithstanding the outages and some of the attendant problems that we see from day to day.

The reality is that this Administration, like previous Administrations under this Party and previous Administrations, recognised that in a country like Barbados we have been able to build our society on the provision of public goods and services at costs which are reasonable, all things taken into consideration. Water, for example, is an excellent case where, in fact, the cost to the consumer bears little relationship to the true cost of that water. That is something that has to be hammered home to Barbadians. If we had to pay anywhere near the true cost for water, our bills would be substantially higher.

Mr. President, I recall speaking to a young lady who recently relocated from Barbados to another Caribbean island where her mother was born. When she left Barbados, they were looking at her salary which was paid in US dollars which made it even more attractive when Barbadians look at it. When she started to talk about her utility bills and when we multiply those by two, we realised that she might have been paying almost 10 times the price that the average person in that situation would have been paying for water. That is no exaggeration.

The point I am making, Mr. President, is that as we speak to the issue of water rates, Barbadians must recognise that we have a duty of care to ourselves to ensure that we do not kill the proverbial golden goose.

Senate A19 Sequence 26

3.20 p.m.

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: In other words, notwithstanding those persons who sometimes find brown water periodically, which is a problem that has to be addressed, but if we do not pay something that approximates a reasonable part of the cost of receiving water of the quality that we get whenever we turn on our taps, we may very well find ourselves having to come up with solutions which do not approximate that quality, not only in terms of the quality of water, but the quality of the services which come together to deliver that water to us.

Mr. President, the point I am making is that when we look at the cost of delivering those things, one of the issues that has been highlighted is that the cost of providing the service, including salaries, infrastructural cost, technology, equipment, are substantially higher than the gross revenues. Sir, I want to stress this. They are higher than the gross revenues that are collected when consumers, both domestic and industrial, come together and pay their bills, even if they pay them promptly and 100 per cent. In other words,

operating cost, the cost of delivering water exceeds the revenue generated.

Mr. President, let me say that in itself is not fully problematic, and I will explain. In a situation where there is a subsidy given in the case of a public good, such as health service, education and in the delivery of water, the taxpayers will pay up-front. That money is then distributed to the various Ministries to deliver those services.

Sir, at the end of the day, we also have to draw a line somewhere, a line which says that the relationship between costs and revenues must be such that, at some point in time, people are bearing a reasonable portion of that cost. Sir, I think we have reached the stage in respect of the cost of water, where the revenues are too low in relation to the expenses of delivering that service.

Mr. President, I want to ask the question why that is so, and perhaps to posit some responses. As we could have heard from the limited discussions, and I do not think I heard a lot of fallout, or a lot of major criticisms, though I have heard some voices. Sir, I have heard some voices in support of the need to adjust rates, I suppose, because of the way in which the last rate increase on January 1, 2005 took place and no debate took place, thus the need to validate now, in terms of the legislative action I referred to earlier. Sir, because of the absence of that, people might not fully recognise that the rates had gone up. As I said, however, those rate increases still have not been enough, given the need to address the problems facing the Authority.

Mr. President, this brings us back to the question of the current state of the Barbados Water Authority. Sir, decisions to increase the cost of public goods are often hard decisions to be taken by any Administration, but we also see the dangers of failing to take those decisions in a timely manner. If we recall, earlier in the life of this Administration, there was a loud furore about the increase in fuel prices when the decision to bite the bullet was taken. We bit the bullet and took it.

Mr. President, I would want to say that in respect of this - because let us remember that we are talking about a situation of past action - that as we go forward, we will be required to address this matter again. The situation at the Barbados Water Authority, therefore, speaks to the relationship between revenues and cost. I have spoken on the matter of revenues, which are strictly in the control of Government at this point in time, where Government can make those decisions.

The question of cost, the management of cost and the containment of cost are mixed. If we try to dissect the question of cost, what we see is that there are many factors which come to bear, which must be brought to bear or

which impact on the cost structures and the actual cost of running the Barbados Water Authority.

Mr. President, we have, of course, labour cost, and I will come back to this. We have, of course, the cost of plant and equipment and things of this nature, therefore, what is necessary is that we ask ourselves, as we attempt to contain cost, how do we come together as stakeholders, Government, consumers and employees, in this process.

Mr. President, Government has in its power the right and responsibility to make decisions about the systems that are in place, about changing or upgrading them. Clearly we have seen over the years that has not necessarily been done in as systematic a way as possible. I spoke about the control over setting rates in order to influence revenue.

Mr. President, I will now turn to the role of the consumers, to his or her role in the process of the use and/or abuse of our water supply. There is an ongoing debate as to whether or not Barbados is a water-scarce country and I would err on the fact that it is water-scarced. Sir, the point is that when we look at the rainfall patterns, when we look at the population size, at the consumption of water generated by the ways in which we generate water such as rainfall, we see that there is, perhaps, a shift in that relationship.

Mr. President, if we compare or contrast the average Barbadian consumption of water to that of other citizens in various developing countries, whether South America, Central America, Asia or Africa, Barbados consumes per capita substantially more water per day, per month, per year, than most persons in other developing countries. We have the luxury of multiple showers, lawn sprinklers, water for consumption, water for cleaning, water for washing, et cetera. Sir, all told, Barbadians consume substantial amounts of water. While that privilege - and I stress privilege - is an excellent one, we also need to look to see how we could maintain that by visiting how we consume water.

Mr. President, the challenge must be thrown out to all Barbadians, not only to think in terms of conserving water, because they see increases in their bills, but conserving water. Sir, we do not want to see in our lifetime and the lifetime of other generations to come, that we have a situation where Barbadians cannot turn on their taps and drink that water directly from the tap, neither do we want to see a situation where there is no water coming through those taps. Therefore, the issue of conservation is very critical. Sir, that is something we need to self-regulate. We need to follow a regime of self-regulation.

Mr. President, Government can impose rules and regulations, but the best way to go is self-regulation. I believe it is important that the average Barbadian look at

how his or her household consumes water and seeks to do this.

3.30 p.m.

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Sir, basically, we are a water scarce country and this is not something that Barbadians woke up one morning and suggested to be the case. Sir, an important UN agency, the FAO, has indicated through its research, that Barbados is, in fact, a water scare country and they do that by looking at the per capita water resource available and I have mentioned that before.

Mr. President, it is said that there is less than 1 000 cubic metres per year per person and that we are using approximately 319 cubic metres per person and that, as I have said before, if we recognise the increasing use of things such as swimming pools and lawn sprinklers. I have even spoken to a relative before who said to me that she was going to install a dishwasher. I was kind of dismayed and I asked her for what reason, because when you start to look at those things you are not only utilising water, but you are also utilising electricity. It is, of course, a convenience, but it is an inconvenience when you think of the demands it puts on us for electricity and for water consumption. I am sure that a dishwasher will use much more water than a manual dishwasher using his two hands or her two hands.

Mr. President, when we start to look at those patterns, we recognise that is an issue compounding the problem of water scarcity based on the resource generated by the traditional means, that is, rainfall collected in underground wells, reservoirs and the aquifers from which we pump waters. Mr. President, if we have to go to some of the other mechanisms like desalination and so on, those things are costly. It, therefore, is important that we look within that trio of stakeholders, as consumers, as to how we consume.

Mr. President, I recall speaking to a lady at the beach one early morning. Sir, you could relate to early swimming on the beach and so on with the ladies and with people generally. Sir, in the early days of the discussion of this legislation when it was being discussed in the Other Place, she said to me that she could save water, but she would have to turn off the tap when she was peeling potatoes and so on. Sir, she was saying that she ran the tap as she peeled a breadfruit, or sliced a potato. Sir, think of the gallons of water that are lost with those actions and, Sir, I am sure that lady is not the exception, because that is apparently the norm.

Mr. President, when people come to my house, I go around the kitchen and I would turn the tap down sometimes, but I cannot do it in the bathroom.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I noticed that you are not relating to my early morning escapades anymore.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Sir, I will get back here but I was just saying that you could relate to early morning walks.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: I was saying that when people are in the kitchen and they are running the tap and I think it is going too fast, that I turn it down because I think there is only so much water you need coming from the tap to do a specific task. Sir, I was not talking about the shower, because I do not invade the privacy of people.

Mr. President, I go back to the three stakeholders and say that consumers need to examine their practices. In addition to that, Sir, we have heard substantial concerns about the water distribution infrastructure and about the age of systems, et cetera, and it has been established that there needs to be a comprehensive re-running of pipes, et cetera, and, Sir, that is costly.

Mr. President, there has been a suggestion that we should probably spend time doing those things before we talk about revenues. Sir, unless we have the financial resources to do those things, we will not put ourselves in a position, once we have been able to render efficient the distribution system, to revisit revenues with the intention of reducing prices.

We could look at those things if we improve the distribution, but the difficulty is that the cost of doing that is substantial and, therefore, in order to ensure that we are able to do those things, we have to look at those revenue bases. Unfortunately, this Administration seems to be always in time to be dealt a difficult hand and, Sir, I will explain what I mean.

Mr. President, as I indicated, the challenge to the Barbados Water Authority is that the inefficiencies it faces are not things that happened overnight. These things have been allowed to happen and have gone unaddressed because of the cost of doing so. It is unfortunate that in better times, when the public purse was healthier, when the world economic outlook was also a healthier and happier one, that these things were not addressed.

Let me hasten to say, very quickly, that happier times would have encompassed the period when the introduction of VAT in the country, there would have been

some takings in excess of what was projected - that is beautiful from the point of view of revenues - and that there would have been funds around which would have made the whole process easier. The whole question of borrowing to finance this is one in which the Government was somewhat hamstrung because of our debt ratios at this point in time.

Mr. President, I believe that while we cannot postpone or delay this initiative any longer, because we cannot run the risk of having our water system further compromised, or our water distribution system further compromised, we have to bite the bullet now and deal with it. Sir, liquid medication is not an easy thing for me to take and, certainly, medication to maintaining this liquid flowing through this tap is one that we would have to bear and address.

Mr. President, I also spoke of the role of Government and the role of the consumer, and I want to speak to the role of the employees, which is another critical stakeholder. I believe that we would have seen reported the conversations that the Prime Minister had with the staff of the Barbados Water Authority.

Mr. President, as I have said, we are all stakeholders in this together and I noticed that with me, in this Honourable Chamber, is a dear colleague Senator, who smiles - I do not know if I can report on facial expression and so on but, Sir, my apology if I did the wrong thing - but my honourable colleague knows that we are all stakeholders in this together. Therefore, I anticipate that when we speak of issues of inefficiencies, that those inefficiencies stem not from any single source, but from multiple sources including, perhaps, some long-standing arrangements in terms of work arrangements.

Mr. President, management is a fourth pillar and I will separate management, but I believe that the time has come for all parties, management, Government's representatives and workers and their representatives, to sit down together to examine what is in the best interest of all of us, the people of Barbados in bringing to the table solutions, which would work in the interest of all of us to ensure that as Barbadians, we continue to enjoy the quality and standard of water provision that we have all grown accustomed to and that we lift it to a higher standard.

Mr. President, therefore, I believe that I would find no opposition from those who speak from either management, and I speak on behalf of Government and no opposition from those who speak on behalf of the employees to a suggestion that there is no better time than now to sit down and reexamine all of these issues to ask ourselves, what are the best work arrangements, whether these are work hours and so on, and I will use an analogy in a second to illustrate what I am talking about.

3.40 p.m.

Sequence 28

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: What are the best work arrangements? What are the best pay structures that will allow everybody to get their fair share of wages, their fair share of work for wages received? In other words, their fair share of productivity on all fronts.

I think that at the end of the day, unless we do this in a holistic, comprehensive manner, a lot of what we do will not necessarily be achieved. In other words, the point I am making is, as we talk about water policy and programmes to deliver water to Barbados, and programmes aimed at making the Barbados Water Authority an efficient and effective machine for delivering water resources to the people of Barbados, and the other services that it offers, we have to do this in a holistic way, one in which we all put on our collective thinking caps and sit down and negotiate in a very mature and reasoned manner to resolve these things, because it is important.

Sir, I will use this example. If you visit any institution that has a 24-hour operation, and I am sure this is it - If I have a burst main and I want to, perhaps, save the loss of water, then we have to ask ourselves, do we have structures which provide a 24-hour response? If that is the case, what do we have to do to ensure that it is a fair and just arrangement to facilitate that 24-hours. As I said, the analogy would be the hospital. That is an area where there is a 24-hour operation. Therefore, the services provided there would also have to be.

If for example, we have a situation where, let's say, waste from an operating theatre cannot be collected after certain hours, and it is allowed to pile up, then we will have a problem. In the same way, if we could not get a burst main fixed, which is gushing gallons per hour, and that is not fixed because it falls outside of a certain time-frame, then we will have a problem.

The key point I am making is, we have to ask ourselves, collectively, what are the challenges? What are the respective solutions that can be brought? What are the respective roles to be played by each category of stakeholder, and within each stakeholder category, by each individual within that stakeholder category, what can we contribute to the solution?

It is not a problem to be solved by Government alone, as in the Minister responsible, or by Cabinet. It is not a problem to be solved by management alone, as the General Manager, Financial Controller or the Human Resource Manager. It is not a problem to be solved by the

workers alone. It is a problem to be addressed and solved by all of us.

It is not a problem to be solved by the consumer necessarily paying the highest they can pay, which is not the intention of this Government, and has not been the intention of Governments in the past, but it is important that we sit and recognise that we all have a critical role to play in this.

Sir, as we talk about validation, which is rectifying an error of the past, or an omission, or a failure to follow through on a certain action in the past, it is important that we look at that within the context of going forward, because this validation is something which is taking place within the context of decisions to be made in the future. Those decisions, I believe, Mr. President, were set out in relation to the various stakeholders. I talked about three. Then I subdivided employees and broke it down into workers and management.

I want to say something in terms of management. At the end of the day, the ability of the Barbados Water Authority to deliver is largely shaped, as I said before, no single category is solely responsible by the calibre and actions of management.

Barbados, as a country, has invested heavily in our human resources, and this is manifested when we look across the public sector and the private sector. If we look at the qualifications of key officers in any statutory corporation, any government department, what we see is a set of individuals who are well qualified. Therefore, I do not believe that we have a challenge of finding qualified persons.

What we need to do is to ensure that those qualified persons are able to use their qualifications to the advantage of the organisation, to use their qualifications in a way which shows that they are able to influence that organisation in a positive direction and to implement the kinds of decisions that are necessary, to ensure that they are able to champion the cause, in this case, of the Barbados Water Authority, to champion the cause of the people of this country, that is, the cause we need to have an efficient and effective water supply and delivery system, and all they do must go towards the achievement of those things.

I believe that if the Accident and Emergency Department is able to pull together the various elements that I spoke about, if we are able to pull together the work that the Government has committed to doing, that is by putting the resources, finding the resources to do this, if we are able to ensure that once Government makes these kinds of decisions to address the continuing problems of the Barbados Water Authority, if we are able then to hand to management.

I suppose each time that I reflect, I need to, perhaps, step back a bit. I talked about management. We can break management down a bit more. We have the policy arm, which is the Board of the Barbados Water Authority, and I believe that if I can revisit the stakeholders and say something about the Board, I believe that in recent times, I heard the Chairman of the Board speaking, along with the General Manager, about these challenges.

I have heard the Chairman of the Board speak about his vision and the Board's plans for the Barbados Water Authority. I believe that when we start to look at those stakeholders coming together, perhaps we have, at this point in our history, a serious opportunity for turning that situation around.

Sir, when we talk about validation of that previous rate increase, it was anticipated that as we saw those increases, we would have seen corresponding changes for the better at the Barbados Water Authority. To date, a number of the critical problems continues to plague that institution and that, therefore, is the reason that I took time to speak about the need for the various stakeholders.

Let me repeat them again. Government was exemplified in the decisions taken by Cabinet, and the Minister responsible for the Barbados Water Authority. As we talk about the role and importance of the Board shaping the direction in which the company has to go, as we talk about the management translating that direction into day to day operational decisions, and management influencing and coordinating the work of its employees in a system which understands what we have to do, if we are to ensure that we continue to have proper water supplies in this country.

Sir, as we look at all of those things, and we have a situation where workers and their representatives accept their share of responsibility for making this thing work, I believe that the Barbados Water Authority will continue to improve in its service. We will see a transformation. This transformation is not an easy one. It is not one that will happen overnight, but it is one that has to start, and unfortunately start, with some tough decisions.

A19 3.50 p.m.

Sequence 29

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

Senate A19, Sequence 30, 15.50 p.m.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Sir, one of my colleagues once said that a Government - and we would have heard this over and over - cannot be afraid to govern. I always remember one of my former professors

several years ago, making the point about some of the characteristics of a good manager.

Sir, to sum up some of those characteristics, he said that a good manager is somebody who has to be unafraid to make hard decisions, which are in the interest of those persons for whom he, or she is managing, and on whose behalf, he or she is managing.

Sir, I believe that the situations facing the Barbados Water Authority and the decisions to be taken, and the decisions articulated by the Board and this Administration, will see the transformation of the Barbados Water Authority. Our commitment to the people of Barbados, as I said, is one in which we will offer a better service. The remedies required to make the Barbados Water Authority work are such that there will be costly remedies. The Government will do what it has to do to ensure that those are there - and it will only truly succeed, Mr. President, if all of those persons who constitute stakeholders - let us start from the consumer, whom you may place at the top, or the bottom, and/or top and bottom of the pyramid - the consumers, the Government, the employers being the board and management as agents of the employers which is Government, and the general body of employees, come together to recognise that we are doing this in the interest of every last one of us, because every last one of us has to use our water supplies.

We cannot live without water. It is something for which we have paid and continue, Sir, I must stress, to pay very cheaply. We, unfortunately, are forced in these times, to appreciate that if we disrespect the things that are important to us, if we take for granted the things that are important to us, we may also lose them.

I, therefore, believe, Sir, that I have made a strong plea to the consumers. I have made a strong plea to all stakeholders to take the business of the Barbados Water Authority seriously. As we debate this Barbados Water Authority Validation Bill, we look at it to recognise that we are taking an action to validate something in the past, but in doing so, it is necessary as we go forward, to ensure that we deliver a better service.

Mr. President, I now beg that this Bill be read a second time.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Thompson.

Senator Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Thank you very much, Mr. President.

I was very interested to hear the terms in which the Honourable Senator who preceded me spoke. I am going to speak in the kind of way that Senator Benn likes, when I become anecdotal and look at the history and so on, but I

did not necessarily agree with everything which Senator McClean said and, therefore, I am going to take issue with some of those things.

I agree with her that any discussion on the water resources is an extremely important one, and critical to national development. Therefore, I am not going to frame my comments in entirely political terms, though some of what I will say will have a political bend, but speak in the broader way in which Senator McClean spoke.

I begin at the point that Barbados is not a water stress, but a water scarce country, and the United Nations has, by their various measurements and criteria, been making that clear. It is a message that certainly when I was the Minister of the Environment, I said often, but it is difficult for people to connect with that message, if 90 per cent of the population has pipe borne water, or 95 per cent of the population has pipe borne water, with not just a single pipe in their homes, which is the situation in much of the Caribbean, but with several taps and points at which they turn on and invariably without exception, water will come, even if the pressure is low, even in Barbados in certain parts of Bagatelle and so, it is not transparent, but a little off-coloured.

We really do not have the challenges with access to water as many of our Caribbean neighbours and in developing countries. In fact, there was a programme on the BBC, a morning this week, Sir, as you know, and as the Honourable Senator McClean knows, I also take a morning sojourn on the beach sometimes, and come back latish.

There was a very interesting BBC story on water access on Bambi and people were in rivers, men were about, getting some brownish water - that if a Barbadian Government were to supply, they would have no future at all at the polls on the next occasion - some water that looked absolutely nasty. People were wading in and getting buckets of it, and people were also buying water that looked like that at very high cost.

It was taken for granted, Sir, and that is one of the things that amazed me in listening to some of the people, who were responding to the questions by the interviewer. They took it for granted that water had to be bought at very high cost, that it was not going to come into your home, that you had to go and get it, and that there would not always be an adequate supply.

Therefore, even though the water was nasty...

Mr. PRESIDENT: Nasty-looking, Senator?

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Nasty-looking, Sir, because there is no brown water that could be clean, so I believe that when I say it was nasty, that is what

I mean, and I can be fairly accurate in saying that you can have water that is brown because of a certain nutrient discharge, let us say from rivers, mangroves, or from the point of source, but I do not know how clean it would be for water to drink. You may be able to bathe in it, but no Bajan is going to drink that, so it was nasty water as a Bajan would classify it. It was expensive or dear, as Bajans would classify it. It is inaccessible, as anybody would classify it. Therefore, the problem of the challenge of the management of water resources is not peculiar to Barbados.

Barbados is not only water scarce, but ranks within the top 15 countries in the world for water scarcity, comparable to countries in Sub Sahara, Africa. Therefore, the challenge that successive Governments have had to bring potable water to a majority of Barbadian homes, in a country as affluent as Trinidad, with all its energy resources, oil and gas, only 67 per cent of the people in Trinidad have access to pipe borne water. I got that statistic from a Cabinet Member there, and I was stunned at it, and they assured it was an accurate figure. Therefore, we take a lot for granted.

The efforts therefore of successive Administrations, have been successful and tremendous, against all of those odds, a Small Island Developing State, without a lot of resources, that is water scarce as ranked by UN criteria, ranking with Sub Sahara, Africa and so on, no doubt about it. I think there are a number of challenges that we now have to confront, going forward.

Water is critical to the quality of life, development, but most important, it is critical to life. It is interesting that Senator McClean asked for the various stakeholders, Government, the public and the Barbados Water Authority to each reexamine their roles to determine what they can do to ensure a continuous supply.

Senate A19, Sequence 30, 4.00 p.m.

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: At the level of the consumer, like Senator McClean, I believe that there must now be a call for a national conservation programme, both in relation to water and energy, because after the super spike in energy prices we should have realised that the era of low energy prices, has gone. Even though we are now paying perhaps US\$70 per barrel for energy, and that represents a reduction in the US\$148 per barrel which we were paying last July exactly, because energy prices super-spiked on July 11, 2008 at US\$148 per barrel, OPEC and those who are in control of the resource have every intention that as soon as the world economy starts to improve, energy prices are going up again.

President Chavez in a statement last week, said that he fully expects that energy prices would be back to US\$100 by the end of the year. The market is a very volatile one, so he may or may not be right. The point is that Venezuela is a Member of OPEC, and we should, therefore, be listening to the signal that is being sent that what we are perceiving now as a drop or low energy prices, is not going to last.

Mr. President, there is also the challenge to the Caribbean of water. The Bahamas is also another water-scarce country. With a population of 270 000, or thereabout, and an annual tourist influx of more than four times your population, you really have not only to be looking for water for your own use, but for all of the people who are coming, because each one of them expects to be able to bathe, drink water, get into a swimming pool and do all of the things that water requires.

Mr. President, there is then the whole development focus. You cannot develop a country without readily access to energy and affordable energy, nor can you develop a country without ready access to potable water.

Mr. President, energy and water are inextricably linked and critical to development. I am going to speak about the connection later on.

Moreover, in my view, it has to be recognised that in a previous era, Governments of the Caribbean were focussed on issues of education, infrastructure, social cohesion, upward social mobility and developing an economic pie that everybody in the society can have a stake in.

Mr. President, our new development challenges come from issues which are largely environmental, access to water, and issues of climate change and the impact that has on water quality, water access, rainfalls, crops and crop production, fishing, marine habitats, loss of water, and extreme weather events and the frequency and intensity of them.

The development challenges which the Caribbean is facing are environmental in nature. In that, I add energy as part of the challenge, because energy comes also from a natural resource, whether you are talking about renewable energy or fossil fuel energy.

Mr. President, we have to concern ourselves with water as a development issue and as an issue for which there has to be long-term planning in the way that we plan for education and for health. I do not think that as a country, we have come to that point of definition where we actually make the connection between, how we are going to define our future development in the context of the environmental challenges, which now threaten to

undermine that development, and access to water is one of them.

Mr. President, we come to this debate, in my view, with some broad philosophical questions: How do we plan to ensure that there is water for development? Do we regard water as a public good? If, in fact, water is a public good, depending on what our treatment of it is going to be, how do we cost it to facilitate the development that needs to take place and for quality of life? That is the role of the Government.

The role of the public is to understand, appreciate and conserve. The first responsibility of the public is to understand what the Government is attempting to do, and that is a question of public education.

The second responsibility of the public is to appreciate because as a small island developing state, we have had access to potable water for many generations in a way that many others do not.

The Honourable Senator McClean in her speech, alluded to the fact that the Barbados Water Authority system is old. That is a fact. In many instances, Barbados had potable and pipe-borne water reaching the public before a lot of countries in the world, even before some States in the United States of America. When Barbadians had potable water as a matter of right, many countries did not in fact have that level of development. Mr. President, we had it for a long time and we now come to the point where we take it for granted.

The third responsibility of the public is to conserve, that is why I am calling for a national conservation plan, both for energy and for water. We had the very wonderful imagery of Senator McClean at the tap, and in the shower, and so on. I do not think I could be so provocative. Sir, there is a point there beyond the playful mischief of the imagery, which is this.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: I do not think that the Honourable Senator intended to be mischievous. I do not even think that she realised the kind of excitement she might have awakened abroad.

Asides.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I have to ask you to address the Chair, please.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Sir, I do not know if your Honour is suggesting to me that you were part of the crowd with the active imagination. I do not know if that is why your Honour is asking me to address the Chair.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Sir, beyond that, I think that the Honourable Senator was really making a very valid point, that we use water without thought. You are brushing your teeth and the water is running all the time. Somebody calls and says: "Mavis, the phone wants you", and you turn away from the tap, because you are only going to the phone for just a minute to tell the person that you are brushing your teeth, you would call them back. You are in the shower, it does not get hot enough right away, so you let it run and you go in the bedroom and do all kinds of things and then you come back when you think it is hot enough.

Mr. President, most of us use solar systems, and that is part of the thing. You have to get the run-off from the cold water first, but we do not use that water for anything, nor we do not plan for it, we just let it run.

In schools and in public institutions, it is commonplace to see taps left on by children and adults, or to see taps dripping simply because it wants a \$10 washer, or whatever a washer costs now.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Two dollars? Well, I am glad that something is still cheap in Barbados.

Senate A19 Sequence 31

4.10 p.m.

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, a simple correction would stop gallons of water from being wasted, but nobody bothers with it, and so, water is wasted all over the country, in homes, in public institutions, in commercial centres. Sir, people know, for instance, there are toilets that when flushed, because of a defect, they keep on flowing and nobody bothers to correct it.

There has been an attempt by some retail centres to introduce low-flow and low-flush water toilets, which are bought by a minority of the public. Therefore, there is a role for the consumer to understand, to appreciate, to conserve and ultimately, to change current behaviour.

Mr. President, the kind of savings that can be effected by energy efficiency, for instance, is now being measured. It is the same thing with water. Sir, tremendous savings can be effected if we change the way we use both energy and water. Therefore, that is the public's role.

Sir, policy formulation falls to the Government and to its agent, the Barbados Water Authority. I do not wish to get into the issue of policy, but I think that what I have attempted to do is to define the issue of the challenge facing Government. The other challenges relative to the environment - and I am not going to treat to all - would be the management of solid waste and the management of liquid waste.

Sir, I am not going to speak to success or measures but simply attempts at intervention. A former Democratic Labour Party Administration developed the plans for the sewerage system in the City, in an effort to manage liquid waste. It was built by a Barbados Labour Party Administration succeeding and having the plans in place.

A Democratic Labour Party Administration then sought to put in place a South Coast Sewerage Project. The planning was partly done and then again, there was a change of Administration and a Barbados Labour Party Administration put the South Coast Sewerage System in place.

Sir, let me pause to say this. As you are very well aware, part of the planning for an Inter-American Development Bank funded project always involves some degree of reimbursement, some degree of consumers paying for the goods they are receiving. Sir, the project area ran roughly from just off Government Headquarters to possibly just beyond St. Lawrence Gap, or thereabout. It was projected at the time that 10 per cent of people in the project area, primarily Bay Land, St. Lawrence, et cetera, some of whom did not have potable water, would have all been given potable water and water toilets as part of the project. Sir, that was done.

Mr. President, it was also projected that the commercial entities would pay for hooking up to the sewerage system. In fact, I am sure you would recall that when the Bridgetown Sewerage System in the City was done, the full benefits of the project were never realised, because people did not hook up, particularly the commercial enterprises.

When the South Coast Sewerage project came, the plan was then to circumvent that wrongdoing by passing legislation which mandated hookups. Therefore, in this instance, everybody was hooked up by Government. The question then came as to the cost of payment. There was a mechanism where, if you were poor, you could seek relief and let Government carry the cost without your carrying the full cost.

Sir, would you believe that the majority of people in the South Coast project area were all poor? Would you believe that all the people along the South Coast were living in abject poverty and that nobody could have

afforded to pay the \$300? Sir, everybody came with a story as to why he, or she, had three or four bathrooms, but could not afford to hook up, or as to why he, or she, had one or two apartments, but could not afford top hook up.

Mr. President, that is what I believe Senator McClean was talking about, when she talked about the responsibility of the public, about the fact that there is a cost to providing the service. Sir, there is a cost to producing more water, and there is a cost to protecting the environment. Sir, people do not seem to believe, or to understand that when Government carries the cost, that Government is to be found in the mirror. Sir, Government is not an institution out there, or something disconnected from them. At the end of the day, if they will not pay for it directly, then the country has to pay.

Mr. President, the West Coast Sewerage Project is a plan that has been developed, now to be constructed. Mr. President, I make this point about sewerage projects in this discussion, as people may wonder why I am talking about sewerage in relation to water in this discussion, it is to bring you to this fundamental point.

Sir, even in the planning of the Bridgetown Sewerage Project, which was overloaded far more quickly than was anticipated, the South Coast and West Coast Sewerage Projects, arrangements were made that those systems could be upgraded from secondary treatment to tertiary treatment, so that you could have potable water coming off as an output of the process.

Sir, if people were reluctant, you could use the enriched water for irrigation in both commercial and domestic usage. You could have the water from the system for secondary use. That was built in as part of the capacity of the South Coast Sewerage Project and, certainly, was contemplated in the planning for the West Coast Sewerage Project.

Mr. President, that is one of the attempts that successive Administrations have made, to ensure that the public had access to potable water and that there was contingency planning to ensure that water was readily available to the public.

Mr. President, in addition, recognising that our pipe-borne water system was old, Sir, that is a problem that manifests itself in various ways. When a lot of the mains were put down more than 100 years ago, there was not adequate mapping of the locations of these mains. In addition, development took place subsequent to the early installations of mains, which changed the configuration of the lie of the land.

Sir, as part of the planning, had the Barbados Water Authority been thorough, what they would have done

would be that every time such a change was made, or a main discovered. Sir, that happens all the time, for example, a road may be repaired, or road works may be going on. Sometimes it happens very often when natural gas is going to be installed and the Barbados Water Authority discovers a main that it did not know existed.

Mr. President, that is a fact. People tell you they did not know there was an existing main and so you would see the repeated digging up of roads. Sir, that further mapping needed to have taken place.

4.20 p.m.

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Sir, in addition to that, in October 2005, \$41.1 million was voted, or agreed at a PPC for a mains replacement programme and, in fact, a mains replacement programme started and was ongoing. Equally, there was a bond issue of \$150 million in...

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Sir, the Honourable Senator Symmonds is saying that all of Bagatelle was done, but several places were done. Sir, \$150 million was raised in a bond issue for the further development of water and water mains in the country.

Mr. President, before that, there was consultancy which looked at the whole issue of water losses from the system, something that the Barbados Water Authority now uses a euphemism for, UAW, "unaccounted for water", or something like that they call it. Sir, again, this comes from not knowing where their mains are. Sir, when the consultancy was done, going about using testing, empirical data, research and so on, they said, at the time, that 40 per cent of the water in the system is lost or unaccounted for because of improper mains connections, not knowing where mains are and all kinds of reasons and, Sir, that had to be addressed systematically.

Mr. President, the Barbados Water Authority spent about five years insisting that the figure had to be inadequate and trying to defend it and saying that it was a reflection on their management and so on, when all you were asking them to do was to attempt to address the problem.

Mr. President, I cannot remember the company which did it, but it started with request for expression of interest and request for proposals going back to whoever would have been Minister responsible for Water prior to 1994. The surveying process took years before they came to that conclusion and then, a further attempt at dealing

with the water problem was made by trying to get the Barbados Water Authority to address their leak system.

There were complaints that there were leaks and when people called in to say there were burst pipes, these were only addressed after hours and on weekends, so that it became a matter for overtime rather than general repair work and sustained maintenance and repair programme of the Authority. Sir, people know that this is a reality. Very often, in fact, although appeals were made to them, beyond a certain hour, you cannot report a burst main because when you call, you get a recording, so there is nobody manning the phone, who can then say to crews that they need to move from Christ Church to St. Thomas, to St. James, because calls have come in about burst mains in those areas.

Mr. President, the whole issue of how the labour component of addressing water challenges is done is a critical issue that needs to be addressed. A further attempt at addressing the water problems was considered and pursued by the construction of a desalination plant located at Spring Garden with reservoirs at, I believe, Cave Hill.

The desalination plant helped to augment potable water coming from the reservoirs and the aquifers and since Barbados was water scarce, you needed to have some augmentation of the water and that was addressed through the desalination plant. Sir, a question then arose as to the transmission, or distribution system and its expansion and repair, because the desalination plant was not running at full capacity and, Sir, that needed to be addressed.

Mr. President, I have tried to give some of the background to some of the measures that were used, whether people want to accept them or not. I did not speak to the metering system, but that is another measure, and a decision was made that we would try to meter all water services so that people could have an accurate measurement and be more conscious of consumption measures, because it was found that people were not getting billed. Some people were getting bills which they were challenging and, there were all kinds of difficulties and, therefore, a system of metering was put in place.

Mr. President, over the course of the last Administration you had mains replacements, you had the vote of \$150 million bond issue, you had \$41 million being applied to mains replacement, you had a metering programme being put in place and you had a desalination plant. Sir, there was an assessment system ongoing and then there was the question of an increase, and in 2005, there was an increase in water rates. There was discussion in the House about the increase and the extent to which the public needed to be conscious and the measures which were being taken to address it.

Mr. President, you are not going to remedy the issues in relation to water. Sir, I am tempted to say "I say that to say this", which something my father and a lot of Barbadians say all the time. Sir, I do not mean that there are no remedies, nor am I saying that it is a problem with remedies. What I mean is that one has to keep constantly addressing issues in relation to water, because you do not reach success on them overnight.

Mr. President, I have outlined a large number of measures that were tried and put in place and there will be other measures that need to be put in place. There were systems that would have led themselves to greater efficiency that were being mooted, systems like SCADA, et cetera.

Sir, a Committee of the Cabinet was set up to try to drive a lot of the issues relative to water, but part of the challenge that we had when we met with the management of the Barbados Water Authority was that very often you were not getting accurate information. There was no data that could be properly used for planning, and when you asked for financial statements, a lot of the information you got is not just a commodity to be commercialised for the vendor to derive profits from, but that water is a public good and the key to your development.

4.30 p.m.

Sequence 33

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: The instant you put it in the hands of a private sector entity, which is driven primarily by profit margins and by the bottom line, then you are compromising your control over your development prospects, and allowing them to be driven by somebody, and I feel that way about energy too.

You are allowing it to be controlled by somebody whose consideration is not country, but cash, not country, but capital, not people, but profit. Therefore, Government has a responsibility to make determinations about what it prices, how it prices and the impact that pricing can have on development.

Sir, having spoken about what we did, I want to turn, therefore, to what I think is the political perspective. This is the point of departure that I think that Senators on the Other Side and I, would have.

Sir, water is needed for three things essentially:

1. potable for your national use and development;
2. commercial for the business sector, tourism businesses, et cetera;

3. for your broader development strategy.

If you are saying that you want more tourists to come, then you have to find more water to deal with them. If you are saying that we want more hotel products, that requires water. If you are saying we want golf course development, that requires water. If you are saying we want industry of a particular type, that requires water, and if we do not tell the people at the Barbados Water Authority and the people who work down the line how critical they are to the development process...

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: If energy and water, and water is a public good, how do we price it? The Honourable Senator McClean said that it was a hard decision and nobody likes to make these decisions and so on. My contention is, an increase in water prices was not necessary. If, in fact, there was to be an increase, it did not have to be in the magnitude of 60 per cent, which is really a very steep increase. Sir, I will tell you why I believe this.

Sir, I am not in a position to say what the percentage should be. I am simply saying that I do not believe that a 60 per cent increase is warranted, and I will tell you why. We have had a very steep increase in energy prices. Energy drives every single activity, domestic, commercial, business...

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: On a point of order. Sir, I rise on a point of elucidation. I am a little confused. I heard the Honourable Senator say that an increase in water prices was not necessary. My understanding is that we are debating a validation bill of a decision to increase prices on January 1, 2005. Are you saying that the 2005 increase was not necessary? That is what the matter before this Honourable Chamber is about, so I need a clarification.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Elucidation made.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Thank you. I do not know if that was an elucidation. It seems to me that the public is going to have to contend with what we have heard, that there is going to be an increase in water prices. I am speaking to that point. The question is, if the Honourable Senator McClean wants to say the one in 2005 was necessary, there was one. There was a validation and you are bringing the validation now, something that should have been done before. The options are to pay back people, or bring the validation. You have brought the validation. I am going forward with where the Administration is going.

We had an increase in energy prices, which is very steep. We have had an increase which affects every single sector of the economy.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, on a further point of elucidation and perhaps even a point of order. My question re the statement of the increase not being necessary was an effort to understand whether the Honourable Senator was speaking about this Validation Bill or something else in the future. I sought to get that clarification and it was not provided. I, again, seek to understand whether she is speaking to the matter of validating a decision taken January 1, 2005, or she is speaking about something which is not before us.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Thompson, you may continue.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Thank you, Sir.

We have had an extremely steep increase in energy prices. The country, we are told, is to confront a 60 per cent increase in water prices. We have had increases in the cost of doing business, transportation and vehicle taxes, land taxes, without relief in the last Budget, even though we were told it was a creature of the last Administration, and not this one. This Administration did nothing to lower land taxes after the last Administration had reduced land taxes on a certain amount. Professional taxes have also been increased.

Sir, I am making the point that when a Government intends to make increases, it has to consider what is the overall economic situation, what is the burden that businesses are going to have to bear, what is the nature of stress to be placed on individuals who have to carry all of these increases, to which we have been subjected since January 2008, by a Government that came to office telling people that the cost of living was too high.

What we have now is a number of decisions being made by this Administration to increase the cost of producing business in every sector of the economy, the cost of recreation, living, dying, working, or doing business in every sector of the economy, placing a burden that is unbearable on businesses and the common people, who will have to bear this increase in water rates, food, enterprises, people producing food, restaurants, the agricultural sector which uses water, hairdressers, nail technicians, laundry...

Mr. PRESIDENT: I do not wish to interfere with the Honourable Senator, but I think you will agree that this Validation Bill does not require us to go over land, hair, and whatever else. I think you will agree with me. You may proceed, Madam.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Thank you, Sir. I am placing the issue of water from the validation in the context of what the public is asked to bear. I know that

it would be uncomfortable for people to have to listen to the pain that the public is being made to bear.

Sir, the question, therefore, is, in a situation where you can give the Turf Club \$20 million in relief, where you can give concessions to high-end fishermen, I do not think it is wrong to ask this Administration at this time, rather than inflicting a 60 per cent increase on the common man, on the public and on the public sector.

4.40 p.m.

Sequence 34

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

Senate A19, Sequence 35, 4.40 p.m.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Sir, in a situation where the world economy is already against them, they should not be feeling that the Government is against them too, by increasing every single cost across the board. Sir, that is why I am saying that it is not necessary at this time.

Mr. President, what the Government has done by way of all the increases that it has put on in a year, is not only to collect a windfall of taxes, which it is doing from the energy sector, but to make an international situation significantly worse at the national level, and more unbearable for the common man.

The United States of America views its agricultural sector, as significant to national development and competitiveness in the international arena, and in defiance of WTO, and whoever else, the United States of America subsidises its agricultural sector. I am saying that this Administration, at this time, has no right to contemplate, in the context of validation or otherwise, a 60 per cent increase in water rates in Barbados.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: It is unconscionable for a Government that says the cost of living at the end of 2007, was too high, and now in the middle in 2009, people are literally choking with the bills that they are being forced to pay, across everything. I do not now know it, I knew it from the time I heard the Budget of last year and the Budget of this year, cumulative effect, after cumulative effect, where it is big business that is being given the relief and the benefits, and small businesses are going under. The cost of living is getting higher, and the quality of living is going down. The cost of doing business is getting higher, and people are going out of business.

You walk around Bridgetown, Swan Street and the malls, go to small shops and hear people tell you that nobody is coming through the door, that they cannot pay the bill, and now on top of that, you are adding water too. What is the responsibility of the Government? How does the Government view its role in providing a cushion for the common man, for the poor? What does it perceive as its role in stimulating the business sector, in the context of a hostile international economic climate? It cannot, and must not be to make things harder for the average Barbadian, which is what is happening at this time.

It is, therefore, wrong in the context of the policy being pursued by the Administration that there should be an increase in water rates, to the magnitude of 60 per cent. It should be subsidised. If you can give the Barbados Turf Club \$20 million, you can help ordinary Bajans.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Sir, on what has the Honourable Senator risen?

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I rise on a point of order, and if I am out of order, you may so tell me. Again, my understanding is that in matters of a validation, we do not range so far and wide in the description and discussion that I am engaged in. Of course, I know that we are back on air, but, Mr. President, I need your guidance on the procedures, in terms of a debate in relation to a validation, because I am beginning to question whether my understanding of the conventions are, in fact, correct.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Your understanding is perfectly correct, and I appreciate your drawing to the President's attention, that he may be, in fact, the one not doing what ought to be done.

Senator Thompson, you may continue.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Sir, to me this is not a question about whether the radio is on or off, whether the reporter in the gallery is taking notes or not. If people want to reduce, or if certain Honourable Members want to reduce the debate to that, that is a matter for them.

The critical issue here is, to use a Bajan expression, Sir, "one-one blow kill old cow".

Mr. PRESIDENT: I take it that you are not going to inflict one-one blow on the Chair. That is all I am hoping for. One-one blow would kill this old cow.

Senator, you may continue.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Sir, I know that you, like the rest of us, have to endure the one-one blow of this Administration, that you too, would have been paying more for your car, more for your electricity; the increase of 60 per cent on your water.

Sir, I spoke to commercial entities, which said to me that based on what is projected, they are expecting that their water bill may move from between \$3 000 to \$5 000. I have spoken to the young ladies at the hairdressing shop and others. What happened in 2005, is that the water increase in 2005 was an embryo to this old man of an increase that this Administration is planning. It was not me, who went to the public to say that there is going to be an increase of 60 per cent.

Sir, let me draw the philosophical divide. It was our firm commitment that, if in fact, you are going to allow Barbados to be competitive, if you are going to give an opportunity to small businesses, if you are going to help the common man and to support people's quality of life, then you had to undergird your energy pricing and your water pricing, because they were fundamental to quality of life, to national development, to people being able to do business.

In fact, in addition to that, there was also a systematic reduction in personal, business and other taxes. There is a level of hardship that the Honourable Members on the Other Side are being too flippant about. People are under real pressure and the decisions that this Administration is taking are exacerbating the bad international situation.

Yes, things are bad in the global economy and that, therefore, is the time at which you give relief, not when you put on more pressure. When a man is drowning, you do not attach bricks to his feet. When a man is going in a well, you help him out, but this Administration is putting on pressure on people at a time when they can ill-afford it.

Then, people sit down and laugh and tell you that the radio on "ca-ca-ca", and people are not at school now, so do not worry about energy prices and so on, a lot of trivial foolishness. This is not what the public expected from this Administration a year ago. People honestly believed that there was some plan afoot that would cause the cost of living in Barbados to go down. People did not think it would quadruple in so short a time and this, together with the increases in energy last year, are going to further push up the price of doing business, and the cost of living in Barbados. Things are not going to get any easier. They are going to get a lot worse.

Mr. President, I know people may say that I have strayed from the Validation Bill.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Thompson, you have two more minutes.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Thank you, Sir.

I have, however, connected with the issue that people have to confront when they are pulling their wallets to pay their bills at the end of the week, and at the end of month. Is the decision of the Administration right? Is it appropriate? Will it help? Sir, my answer to each of these is that there is no need for an increase in water rates to the magnitude of 60 per cent. It is absolutely the wrong time to do it. It will make things in Barbados considerably worse, and burden people beyond the extent of the international economy.

Sir, it is clearly the action of an Administration that is unclear, uncertain and unwise in its approach to Government, governance and people.

Senate A19, Sequence 35, 4.50 p.m.

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: The Government really needs to reflect on where it is going and the impact it would have on the country. I do not know what else it can now increase, except the price for carrying hair on your head, because it even attempted to raise money from you for talking on a cell phone. People are getting very frustrated. They are also getting very tired of hearing it was the Barbados Labour Party's fault. The Government needs to find another song to sing, because people are not interested in hearing that chorus anymore. They want to know what the Government is doing.

Mr. President, I gave all of the measures that we did to deal with water in Barbados. There will be a problem at some point. The point is that we took decisions to deal with it. This Administration now needs to give the public help and relief.

We came to Government in 1994, saying that we would create 30 000 jobs and we took unemployment from 25 per cent to 7 per cent. The Democratic Labour Party came to Government saying that they would do something about the cost of living, and they moved it from low to extremely high, and are now doing things to make it keep going up all the time. The public is really getting fed up.

I am much obliged, Sir.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Trotman.

SENATOR Sir ROY TROTMAN: Mr. President, I have been intrigued by the two contrasting presentations

made so far on this subject of the Validation Bill, but two very good political presentations, I plea to be allowed to say, and I am not surprised by either one of the two speeches.

Sir, I do agree though with the two Senators that it is necessary for us on Both Sides of the divide, the Independent Senators like myself as well as the public, to recognise that there is justice in the call for greater conservation of water, and I agree with Senator Thompson, as well as greater conservation of energy.

Mr. President, I think it is important for me to say up front that I agree too with the need for Government, the public, the Barbados Water Authority, that is, the management and workers generally, and the trade unions, to look for greater efficiencies and to work towards those greater efficiencies.

I would not pursue that matter any further at this stage except to say to you, Mr. President, that while I would wish to agree with and support the Validation Bill which commenced from January 1, 2005, which relates to an increase in the cost of water generally, I support the view that the paying of an increase of some 60 per cent is not pleasing to myself, my organisation, or indeed, those members of the labour movement that I speak for. I do not need to apologise to anybody for saying that.

Mr. President, I believe that the cost to the consumer versus the real cost is a very serious matter. I agree that we have to accept that there are problems which are associated with us having to recognise that we have to come closer to the real cost of many of those things, that are public utilities for which we were not paying anything near the real cost before.

For me therefore, there cannot be anything wrong with understanding that the cost has to increase, but I think that in any arena, a 60 per cent increase all at once is totally and absolutely unacceptable. That is why I have to support the call made by Senator Thompson. Perhaps, we could get to 60 per cent, but not all at once. We have to be concerned about the quantum of the increase, the timing of that increase and at the lack of staggering which there is in that particular arrangement.

Mr. President, when some time ago I spoke about the need for dealing with those people who are most vulnerable and who needed cushioning, unfortunately, my voice was the voice of one crying in the wilderness and I got abuses from all ends on All Sides on what I thought was a very real call for us to recognise the need for the most vulnerable to be protected.

Mr. President, I understand why the Government is going in this direction and I have sympathy for it, but in

understanding, and I am being sympathetic, I do not wish anybody to believe that I can support something gone in the way that this has gone when I felt that there were other options which were available.

Asides.

SENATOR Sir ROY TROTMAN: I do not get perturbed, Mr. President, by snide side comments, so I would not deal with you, Sir.

Mr. President, I wish to go beyond what I have said so far to make the further point, that in addressing the subject of the Barbados Water Authority, I am very conscious that very shortly an attempt would be made towards having some changes. I would wish to say that the labour movement, so far as I am concerned, and I, as one of the leaders of a labour movement in Barbados, am fully aware that those changes must be made.

I am also aware, Mr. President, that one ought not to treat to material in the Press and therefore, I ought not perhaps to be treating to today's editorial in the newspaper that I read. Mr. President, exceptionally, one has to deal with that because it is an editorial comment which proceeds to slur the labour movement, particularly to cast aspersions on the integrity of the leadership of the Barbados Workers' Union by suggesting that the Barbados Water Authority cannot reform because the industrial union opposes change.

In this Honourable Chamber, Sir, I need to be steady in the responses that I make to anyone, including to slurs within the Press, so I am merely saying that I think that statement is unfair because it does not reflect the full facts, or facts at all. Mr. President, because of the malice within the comments, it could only serve to misguide some of the people at the same Barbados Water Authority, whom we might need to be helping in the exercise, but who may choose to be misguided by what in itself is a most misguided editorial comment.

Mr. President, there are some members of the public who are not known for their support for any trade union, whether industrial union or public sector union, who may choose to hold on to this to a basis through which to turn, or to seek to turn away the minds of those people who might need some persuasion in the direction of being more supportive of the requirement for change.

Mr. President, it may, in short, lead to uncalled for hostility and lead to negative approaches by some of the agencies that the same Barbados Water Authority might need to approach in endeavouring to get funding, goodwill and the overall support that would be required to turn around the fortunes of the Barbados Water Authority. Mr. President, I think it is most unfortunate and the newspaper owes it to the public to correct itself.

Senate A19 Sequence 36

5.00 p.m.

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

SENATOR Sir ROY TROTMAN: Mr. President, the history of change in this country will show that an important agent for change has been the labour movement, whether it has been public sector/ general unions or public sector/skills, or unions that have specialised purposes like teachers, or nurses, or whether it has been the private sector union like the Barbados Workers' Union.

Mr. President, I would wish to crave your indulgence to use a few examples, to show that there has to be no basis for the minds of the public to be poisoned against change at the Barbados Water Authority, before we even get around to discussing the matter. Sir, in sugar, there was a need for significant change to make Barbados better. The private sector, in many instances, tried on their own and having failed, approached the labour movement.

Sir, the labour movement never resisted, otherwise sugar would not have reached the position where the previous Administration and this one, are both able to say that we are not in the economic difficulties as the rest of the Caribbean because of the fact that sugar underwent change, because the stakeholders, including and particularly the Labour Movement, supported that change. Sir, it was Senator Hutson, who was their spokesperson for sugar, who will be able to confirm there was that willingness and preparedness of this important stakeholder.

Mr. President, let us go a little further and take into consideration the Bridgetown Port. You, Mr. President, would be much too young to recall when we moved from the days of spiders and lighter men, and that kind of thing, more than 2 000 people in direct labour at the Port. Sir, with almost the stroke of a pen, that number was reduced to less than 1 000.

Mr. President, who is there that is so short of memory that would like to pretend that in 1984, we did not have another restructure and in 1990 another restructure, so that we are now down to a position of 140 workers in direct labour at the Port. Sir, the only reason it took some time, was that there were some employers who believed they were able to enter into private deals with some workers, like when they agreed that a day's work would be the unstuffing of four containers, but when they realised that the number was not satisfactory for them, they then approached the Trade Union Movement, which they had bypassed, and said they wanted eight containers unstuffed. Which Trade Union Movement is going to say that it represents the workers, that management had bypassed the very workers and then is asking the Trade Union

Movement to make the same workers do what management said was too much for them to do?

Mr. President, where is it that the reform was opposed, because the Trade Union Movement is opposed to change? Sir, let us take, for example, the service industry, especially shops. The Trade Union Movement accepted that Monday to Friday was work time, up to 4:00 or 5:00 p.m. and half-days on Saturday. The Government at the time, a Barbados Labour Party Administration between 1976 and 1986, decided that they were going for seven days a week.

When they came back in 1994 and 2007, they wanted seven hours a day out of 24 hours. The Trade Union Movement never opposed it. We said we believe that would bring greater employment. It would bring more business to the country and that we would follow along with these employers, that they have to make sure that workers get home safely from work without being raped, or worse than that, being robbed of their pay packets outside the doors of their businesses.

Asides.

SENATOR Sir ROY TROTMAN: Mr. President, I am sorry. I did not meant that. That is one of those things that happens sometimes when you do not stick to your script. Sir, I apologise. There cannot be anything worse than the abuse of a human being and I hope you would appreciate that was a lapse.

Asides.

SENATOR Sir ROY TROTMAN: Mr. President, I would not make an excuse for that, but there was the problem of our arguing that people must have security in going home. They had to be able to have proper working conditions. Sir, it is the same debate we are having now, and we are still not saying that we want to stop progress. We are saying that a discussion related to the progress of the business has, at the same time, to understand the stakeholder, that is to say, the worker has to have as serious an acknowledgment of his or her interest as any other stakeholder should have.

Sir, for that reason too, we agreed that public transport would be an important thing to be changed. When we agreed to that, and we moved conductors, a lot of people lost work. Did we have a strike? Was there a demonstration? We were quite prepared to accept that the one thing that is constant in this world is change. Sir, the Trade Union Movement does not merely say it, we teach it. We constantly teach that across Barbados, so accuse us of a lot of other things, please, Mr. President, but do not accuse us....

Mr. President, I have to address you, Sir, I cannot address anybody else.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Honourable Senator, I know that you know that I am one for change.

SENATOR Sir ROY TROTMAN: Yes, Sir, I am perfectly aware of that. I am simply asking you to let the public understand they can accuse us for something else, but do not give the impression that the Trade Union Movement buries its head in the sand, turns its back to progress in this country and gives the impression that it has not, in the past, helped with change. Sir, I am saying that they can accuse us of something else, but do not accuse us and give the impression that where the Barbados Water Authority is concerned, that we have already made a decision, and that we are not prepared to express any interest in change. I think that is most unkind and I would like to believe it can be adjusted.

Mr. President, it is true that the Prime Minister did have a discussion with workers at the Barbados Water Authority, but I think it must be equally clear that having discussion with those colleagues, only meant that the Prime Minister was giving himself a chance to practise for his discussion with the leadership of the workers. Sir, the longer the Prime Minister takes to have that discussion, the greater the problem he is likely to have. That discussion should have been held weeks now, but I am patient and so is the need for the discussion.

Asides.

SENATOR Sir ROY TROTMAN: Mr. President, the history of change will also show that the management of that change process must be transparent and proper. I do not have the benefit of much time, so I cannot develop what I mean by proper, or by transparent, and I am hopeful that it is clear enough that I do not need to express myself to much more on it, but I will give you a classical example of what I mean.

Sir, in recent times, there was a company named Cable and Wireless. This company not only failed to be transparent, proper, or to respect that we have a tripartite social partnership and to be able to follow that, but having been given some idea and an example by the Government of what would be proper, that company is now endeavouring, all over again, to dodge the issues which are important in this and to treat to the issues as though workers do not count for anything.

We are saying that change might be possible, but unless that change is dealt with properly, in accordance with collective agreements, social partnership agreements, custom and practice, what is decent and proper, then nobody needs to pretend that they could go to editorials and

believe that would change the position of the Trade Union Movement, in terms of demanding fair treatment and demanding justice in this country.

5.10 p.m.

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

SENATOR Sir ROY TROTMAN: Mr. President, the question for us, further, is whether there is a basis for judging the response of a workforce in Barbados, or anywhere else when that response has not been sought and, therefore, could not have been given.

Mr. President, what the Leader of the Senate said is that she would expect when the moment comes, that there would be support from all of the stakeholders for whatever the plan is. I believe we could say here and now that within my knowledge, those trade unions, which have an interest in the Barbados Water Authority, would again demonstrate that they put Barbados at the top of their priorities, that they always have and that they always will. I will challenge anybody who has the temerity to say otherwise to bring the evidence. Sir, that is what we say.

Mr. President, we have another concern. The concern is the suggestion in that statement that discipline and efficiency are opposed by the labour movement of Barbados by workers and by their trade unions. Sir, sometimes the sensational gets put ahead of the facts and sometimes if there is a stoppage and people listen to people on the fringes, they will hear people speaking from the fringes about what may have given them some reason for comment but they do not necessarily go to the source of the leadership of the organisation and so, they do not always recognise what are the problems.

Mr. President, I do not know of any trade union in Barbados, nor do I know of any trade union leader in Barbados who does not demand greater levels of efficiency from those managers, or owners, with whom they have to relate. Sir, I know of none. Yet, when it suits members of the public, who are in a position to inform the public, they would try to indicate that the world would be a great place if workers did not have leadership that was able to guide them on how to be more efficient, how to be more effective and how to be better disciplined.

Sir, let us look at the history. Have the public and those who influence public opinion listened to when we have demanded that there should be full attendance from workers in all areas of employment? I have made that call almost every Old Year in addresses, that in the next year, we should be able to work more fully at attendance, that we should have reduced absenteeism, that we should have a reduction in casual leave that is taken, as if it is a right and

not a privilege, that we should have greater levels of work efficiency.

Sir, not just me, but labour leaders, generally, make that comment, so do not now argue that I am an exception, because that is like going into England as a black man, or woman, and having somebody make racist comments against your group and then say that they do not mean you and that you differ.

Mr. President, we have called for greater work efficiency and we have called for higher levels of productivity. Sir, when we set up the Productivity Council in 1993, it worked for two years and then the recovery in the economy came, and the employers stopped asking for productivity work, and stopped giving the information about productivity performance, because they did not want to share the information.

Mr. President, it is the labour movement that has always kept the development of Barbados before anything else. If we have been doing it for Other Places, why would we not want to do it for the Barbados Water Authority. After all, if we seriously believe that water is vital to life itself, how could we then say as persons living here, that we are not concerned about the lifeblood of our nation? I think it is cruel for somebody to want to make the suggestion otherwise.

Has any trade union that you are aware of, Sir, ever denounced an employer, or challenged a public agency because of a plan to make that agency more efficient? If you, or anybody else knows of it, tell us and let us see if we could help you with it, but we do not know of any. Sir, even in the most recent public example of a problem in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, the problem was not that any trade union opposed the change. The problem related to process, that the Trade Union Movement, and particularly the National Union of Public Workers, had a different suggestion regarding an approach.

There was no agreement on that process and, therefore, it appeared as though there was objection, but who knows what went on, would tell you that there was an opposition to an effective, functioning health scheme in Barbados. Sir, nobody could tell you that the National Union of Public Workers has ever opposed that kind of efficiency. If people hear on the fringes what they choose to hear, we must understand that is not really what goes on.

Mr. President, there is a myth though, that the Public Service of Barbados must be more expensive, and it must be more inefficient. There is that myth that is not necessarily held by anybody in this Chamber but there are several members of the public who feel it is only Government, and if it is only Government, then you do not have to do it right the first time. You do not have to be able

to do it better than anybody else. You do not have to exercise the highest level of efficiency, but the labour movement does not preach that, neither the public sector unions, nor the industrial union in the Barbados Workers' Union.

Mr. President, at the instant case of the Barbados Water Authority, it has been the workers themselves who have called for the following things. Sir, just as an example: Better quotations to go from the management of the Barbados Water Authority to private sector developers who want to use the facility so that true cost, real cost could be provided for them to make the work less expensive.

The Barbados Water Authority has frequently failed to deliver those proper quotations in a manner which would make the developer realise that the private sector is hardly going to be able to produce goods and services cheaper than the public sector, unless he is breaking the Laws of this country, by avoiding Convention 94 of the International Labour Organisation, where the rates that he pays ought not to be less than the Government itself is paying for some of the work because, Sir, that is the only way it can be cheaper. Mr. President, we have to look at what causes that problem.

Mr. President, the workers have been asking for earlier transport from their collection point to get out into the field to start work on time and the Barbados Water Authority has been, in the past, getting them to leave their workplace sometimes as much as one hour and a half too late and then they have to leave the field one hour and a half too early to come back to work. Sir, it is not that the workers do not want to work and when you see them at the side of the road and you, as a member of the public start to curse them...

Asides.

SENATOR Sir ROY TROTMAN: Not you, Sir. I am speaking through you. Mr. President, you would never do that. We should not do that to them, Sir, because most times...

Mr. PRESIDENT: Could we have a little order, please?

SENATOR Sir ROY TROTMAN: Mr. President, the Honourable Member does not want me to say it because it is a snide remark. Sir, we should not abuse them because, very often, they are waiting for material, or they are waiting for parts.

Mr. President, tell me when in the last 20 years the Barbados Water Authority has had adequate parts, or adequate material? You are doing a job and you are sitting

down sometimes waiting for days before the material arrives, yet, the public will abuse them because they are not working, or they are waiting for overtime.

5.20 p.m.

Sequence 38

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SENATOR Sir ROY TROTMAN: The facts will show that they have asked for proper handling of human resource demotivators. What do I mean by that? There are little problems which the Management and the Board allowed to fester in such a manner, that rather than helping people to become more motivated and more anxious to work, and work effectively, they allow these matters to become as huge as Mount Olympus, that they are not able to concentrate as much as they would want to do. I do not want to draw examples for anything, because I see too many people drawing examples from the cricket relationship of the Board and the players before they have agreed to go to mediation.

Sir, there has to be transparency in the plans to have other agencies perform work which is done by the Barbados Water Authority. It is at that point that I am going to summarise to say that Senator Thompson was very much on the ball when she made the point that if we allow, and I was going to say Tom, Dick and Mary, but that is not proper language, everyone...

Mr. PRESIDENT: Tom, Dick and Harry would be all right.

SENATOR Sir ROY TROTMAN: No, Sir. That would be discriminatory. I cannot accept discrimination.

Mr. PRESIDENT: There are things that Mary cannot do.

SENATOR Sir ROY TROTMAN: Let me just say that everybody.

Asides.

SENATOR Sir ROY TROTMAN: Senator Thompson made the point, very well, that if you allow water installation to be governed by the profit motive, then we will be going down the road where we seek to do the work that is required at least cost to the developer, and greatest profit to him or her, and then the connections of the water would have the same effect, as we had some five or six years ago in an area in St. Thomas. I will not say exactly where because I have not sought your permission to make reference to any member of the public, by name. So I am not going to deal with the area, but we had examples

where developers have put down the water mains, they have been badly done because of the profit urge, and the result is the Barbados Water Authority had to do it over. We have to guard, not only the quantity of water, we have to guard the quality of the water to ensure the health of the people.

Sir, I am willing again, as I said, to sympathise with the Government. I am not happy that we are going at the 60 per cent one time, but nonetheless, I support the validation of the Bill that goes back to January 1, 2005.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Sir John.

SENATOR Sir JOHN STANLEY GODDARD: Sir, Barbados has been described by international agencies as a water scarce country, and I think all of us would agree with that. I think it would be more accurate to say that we are a water wasteful society. I saw a good example of that two days ago, when after two inches of rain, approximately, on Monday of this week, there was water all over the place and no effort has been, or is being made, as far as I am aware, to channel that water into underground aquifers, rather than to be allowed to run off into the ocean, which does us no good whatsoever. Let us keep that in mind. Water scarce yes, but more important, water wasteful.

I did a little research on the Internet on the Barbados Water Authority (BWA), short and sweet. Most of our water that goes into the aquifers comes from the rain. We all know that. In addition, there are two spring sources, Codrington College Spring and Benns Spring. I do not know where Benns Spring is, but I know where Codrington College Spring is.

Asides.

SENATOR Sir JOHN STANLEY GODDARD: There are 22 well sources and seven bore holes. Of course, more recently, we have added desalination, at Spring Garden. Our water consumption has increased dramatically over the last 50/60 years. We now have a thriving tourism industry, cruise ships collecting water, we have industrialised to some extent, and the population has grown, so the demand on the Barbados Water Authority has grown significantly. That water is stored in 27 reservoirs.

The distribution mains connected to those reservoirs are the 22 pumping stations and 14 repumping stations, which require a high maintenance cost of the pumps. You can have all of the pumping stations and all the reservoirs, if the pumps are not working properly, as happens quite frequently, how are you going to get the water into the reservoirs for distribution to the public? The Barbados Water Authority is a far more complicated type of business than we first recognised.

In addition, the water distribution is just over 2 000 miles of transmission and distribution mains. That could only be an estimate, because the Barbados Water Authority does not even know where some of the mains are. Some of those mains have been there for over 100 years. Sir, that figure surprised me, over 2 000 miles of transmission and distribution. This is just to summarise the complexity of the organisation and the management concerns.

The Barbados Water Authority derives its revenue through meters, and there are 100 000 meter connections. Those meters go bad from time to time, and have to be replaced. I am speaking of my own experience. They get clogged with air, mud, or what have you, and they do not function. That is a tremendous benefit to the consumer, but it is unfair. There may be new forms of meters to be installed. I do not really know.

Sir, we then have the operating expenses. I do not know what they are, but I know that the Barbados Water Authority has incurred considerable financial losses from year to year, substantial. I was very pleased to hear the Leader say that there will be a review, strongly supported by Senator Trotman, of all the procedures and processing to ensure that management at all levels, and workers have a better understanding of their goals and aims.

Sir, more recently Government has announced, based on what I read in the newspaper, that there will be a 60 per cent increase in the water rates, though I know it is not part of this Bill, but it is very topical. That seems to be a large increase at one swoop, and I cannot support such a large imposition on the public.

5.30 p.m.

Sequence 39

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

Senate A19, Sequence 40, 5.30 p.m.

SENATOR Sir JOHN STANLEY GODDARD: Is the Government planning to finance the replacement of mains through revenue, which would be a mistake because that is part of the infrastructure, and any infrastructural changes need to be financed out of long term debt? I do not know what their plans are but I think that needs to be answered.

Another point, and there must be a good reason for this, the Barbados Water Authority is a Government-owned monopoly, and I have no quarrel with the monopoly or being Government-owned, but should it be allowed to increase rates without reference first to the Fair Trading Commission? There might be a good reason for that but the Fair Trading Commission is an independent authority,

which would be able to evaluate the needs, and make a determination on the quantum of increases being sought.

Mr. President, we are all dependent on good, clean water for drinking, bathing, housekeeping, a myriad of reasons, but I do think that successive Governments - and I am not blaming any one Government - have paid sufficient attention to the proper functioning of the Barbados Water Authority, over the years. Certainly, inevitable changes have just been postponed, differed. I think the day of reckoning has come. Something has to be done now.

The Government may feel that the increase of 60 per cent is a way to start. I think it is excessive, but I stand to be convinced. I know it is an expensive operation to maintain the high standards that it has set, and I hope it will be able to maintain those high standards, in the interest of the general public.

I thank you, Sir.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Benn.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Mr. President, I rise to give support to this Bill. I listened to the presentation made by Senator Thompson, and did enjoy the first part of the delivery. It was educational at the most, but I kept wondering at the time how the management of the Barbados Water Authority - she spoke about it with a tip of incompetence - survived under the Barbados Labour Party, and they were able to inherit such management, and continue to work with such incompetence.

Sir, I believe that this Honourable Senate must serve from time to time - if not at all times - to educate our public, and to inform them adequately and properly on matters that are before us. I therefore, with your support, Sir, would wish to give a little background.

The Barbados Water Authority is, as everybody knows, a statutory body, established by an Act of the Legislature to replace the Water Works Department, as we all knew it. It commenced operation in April 1981. It is the entity in Barbados, charged with supplying the island with potable water, as well as the provision of waste water treatment and disposal services.

The Barbados Water Authority is also responsible, Sir, for monitoring, accessing, controlling and protecting the water resources in the public's interest. As you heard, Senator Goddard indicated that the Barbados Water Authority currently operates two waste water treatment plants. It provides more than 1 400 customers in Bridgetown and approximately 3 000 customers on the South Coast.

The Barbados Water Authority employs just under 900 people, who work at 70 facilities across the island. There are pumping stations, reservoirs, repumping stations, sewerage treatment plants, and payment facilities and offices.

Sir, the Barbados Water Authority supplies potable water, 24 hours a day to the public from two spring sources, and as Senator Goddard said, 22 wells, 8 bore holes, 27 reservoirs and 14 re pumping stations - and he did indicate correctly - from a network of 2 000 miles of transmission and distribution mains.

The Barbados Water Authority has been adjudged by the FAO as a water scarce country, and we know why it has been.

Sir, the rate in existence today, came into effect and that Bill is to validate the revenue collected under the statute protection to ensure that it has been carefully done. The rate in existence today, or before July 1, came into effect on January 1, 2005. Neither the Lower House nor the Upper House of Parliament, approved the increase, hence the rates were not valid, and the Bill before us today, once passed, will validate this increase since January 2005. Otherwise, the Barbados Water Authority will have to refund every householder the increased rate paid since January, 2005 to present.

Mr. President, water is a commodity, which we in Barbados seem to take for granted. There have been increases for the demand in water, as a result of rapid housing development, over the past 10 to 15 years. The difficulties as well were brought about by changing climate conditions. Sir, the country has had, therefore, to focus greater attention on the water industry.

The industry must, therefore, undergo some strategic shifts in direction from being a public utility, heavily dependent on subsidies from Government as it did when it was the Water Works Department, now a public enterprise, competing in the marketplace for its share of customers' spend.

Sir, we know that customers in Barbados would readily pay their light bills because they do not want the lights to be cut off. They want to watch television, use the microwave and the electric kettle, and whatever sources the electrical supply provides. They will pay their telephone bills because they want to be able to talk on their telephone on a regular basis, but when it comes to water, they would say that you can cut off the water, I can go at my neighbour and get some, I can go at my brother and sister and bathe. Therefore, the water payment becomes not a priority in many people's case, but the Barbados Water Authority is mandated by the Act to provide the public of Barbados

with a potable water supply for domestic and other described uses.

Sir, the Barbados Water Authority has a customer base of less than 100 000 water customers, and 4 500 waste water customers to whom it bills for its services, which bring in about \$80 million a year, but it costs the Barbados Water Authority around \$100 million each year to operate. Its total revenue base is \$80 million a year if everybody pays up, but it is costing us \$100 million to operate.

Mr. President, from as far back as 2004 the external auditors of the Barbados Water Authority conducted a study, and expressed doubts about the future of the Barbados Water Authority as a growing concern. It said that they had accumulated losses over several years, that its expenses were continuing to outstrip the incomes, and the revenue base was fixed and inadequate.

Senate A19, Sequence 40, 5.40 p.m.

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Mr. President, the auditors advised that positive corrective action had to be taken. Against this background, the Barbados Water Authority requested, and was granted by Government, an interim rate of increase of 38 per cent across the board effective January, 2005.

Mr. President, the word "interim" means for the time being. "Interim" means something that will come later. From the outset it was recognised that though this increase would lead to some operational improvement in the short-term, it would not bring the Barbados Water Authority to viability over the medium-term. Sir, that interim rate increase in 2004-2005 was done, obviously under the Barbados Labour Party Government.

The Barbados Water Authority faced at this time several challenges with salaries and wages, the cost of electricity and the purchase of desalinated water. Sir, those represent about 80 per cent of its expenses and about 96 per cent of its current revenue. Sir, salaries and wages at the Barbados Water Authority are the largest cost item. It represents 32 per cent of the total expenditure on average. In 2008/2009, overtime represented 39 per cent of the basic salaries and wages of the Barbados Water Authority, which represents a fair amount of millions of dollars.

Mr. President, I am sorry that Sir Roy Trotman is not here. I am also sorry that I did not speak before him as well. There are workers in the Barbados Water Authority - I am not criticising them, I am not jealous of their take home pay, some of whom sit nicely, or turn up for work very early on mornings and remain there for the entire day,

and just as the clock strikes 5:00 o'clock and overtime comes in, work starts.

The union, in an effort to do a good job for the workers, embarked on a productivity payment and some weeks you could find a truck driver taking home \$3 000 in overtime and all. Sir, that is why I support any call for measures to curtail overtime, and I am supporting that the Barbados Water Authority should be planning to introduce a 24-hour service which would reduce overtime cost.

Mr. President, earlier, I reminded this Senate that the Barbados Water Authority evolved out of the Water Works Department, which was a department of Government and financed out of the Consolidated Fund. The focus was on getting the work done with little attention paid to cost efficiency. With its creation in 1981, the Authority inherited a workforce that was large by industry standards. It now stands at under 900 for a customer base of just under 100 000, representing 8.2 employees for 1 000 services when the industry standard is 3 to 5 employees per 100 services. The result is that the Barbados Water Authority has a wages bill of over \$30 million a year.

Mr. President, the Barbados Water Authority was forced to borrow in order to sustain its operations. I heard Senator Thompson speak about the \$41.1 million that was provided by the Planning and Priorities Committee and the \$150 million which was borrowed. Sir, one would wonder where all of that money would have gone. The total debt now stands at over \$150 million which will attract annual payments of interest of \$9.1 million over the next 25 years.

When the first payment was due in 2008, this Government have to intervene as the Barbados Water Authority did not have the required funds. Sir, this could become the pattern in the future unless the water rates are increased. This Government was not responsible for the \$150 million. We had just come into office and we had to intervene and pay it.

Sir, there is a desalination plant. The Barbados Water Authority purchases \$10 million in water every year from Ionics Freshwater Limited, a plant that was built under the Barbados Labour Party by a private sector interest. That represents 12 per cent of the total water demands.

This contractual obligation is for 15 years, of which nine years have already passed, so we have six more years under that obligation. It is at \$10 million now but it could be \$12 million in the future. Sir, I believe that perhaps the Government might want to express an interest in purchasing that desalination plant. Do you know, Sir, what it is to spend \$10 to \$12 million in 15 years, with nine years gone and six more to go?

Mr. President, there are other challenges which the Barbados Water Authority faces. It has technical problems, operational problems and human resource problems. There are people at the Barbados Water Authority who are the hierarchy of the union stewardship that have more power, perhaps, than the General Manager of the Barbados Water Authority. We know that. If the General Manager says to do this, and this shop steward snaps his fingers and says do the next, the next would be done. That is a fact. It does not make any sense, but it costs us dollars.

Sir, there is also the public's perception that they do not have to pay their water rates as a priority, or practise water conservation. Mr. President, we have a commodity that is precious and must be used wisely.

I did not indicate that I benefitted from the first half of the Senator's presentation, it was so educational, but the second half was a little bit of a platform campaign delivery, but it is all right.

Mr. President, a lot of us might try to make the Barbadian public believe that everything that is happening in Barbados came about since January 2008, and that if the Barbados Labour Party was in office, it could not happen, that they would have done things differently. Mr. President, the Barbadian public is more educated than a lot of us think. They are aware of what is happening in the outside world. They listen to Fox, CNN and those stations. They know what is going on. Up to last week I heard a report from the Cayman Islands that the people who own the malls called the bank and said: This is your mall, nobody ain't passing through, come back for it."

Sir, it is not in Barbados alone. I am sure that when President Obama took office and made a lot of promises in the United States of America that things would happen, he did not anticipate what he came and found. When we came to office in 2008, we promised a lot of things such as tackling the cost of living, but there are a lot of things that we found that we did not expect either.

Senate A19 Sequence 41

5.50 p.m.

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Mr. President, Senator Thompson talked about subsidising, the Honourable Senator talked about the money spent, including the Barbados Turf Club and others, but do you know - I suspect that those monies we could have used to provide subsidies now - we had to find to pay for building the prison. We had to come here and increase the borrowing to look for money to pay for roads. Sir, we had to look for more than \$680 million, which we could have

used elsewhere. Sir, that is money the Barbados Labour Party did not account for. We now have to pay for the building at Warrens, among other things.

Sir, the public is more intelligent than the Opposition thinks. Some people get the impression that they could grandstand and shout. Sir, things have gone up, there is no denying that, but Barbados has no control over the oil prices. Barbados faced three major crises in quick succession, one of which was the food crisis.

Sir, last year July, I was in Rome at the invitation of the Food and Administration Office where we discussed the world's food crisis. Sir, following that we had the energy crisis and we had then the financial crisis.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Mr. President, I am saying we have a commodity in Barbados that is precious, it must be used wisely, and we must not be satisfied to be labelled any more as a water-scarce country. Therefore, in my support, as we seek to validate this Bill and in the face of the increase of 60 per cent since July 1, I want to indicate to the public that water conservation is the most cost-effective and environmentally sound way to reduce our demand for water.

Mr. President, I want to encourage the public to use water wisely. We are a responsible Government. Sir, a few weeks ago, in my capacity as Acting Minister of the Environment, I announced in a speech that I gave - without any shame - that the water rates will go up. There was no indictment against the Government. Now that the water rates have gone up and we are facing increased costs, I am urging all Honourable Senators, especially Senator Symmonds, to water his lawns early in the morning.

Sir, I used the plural "lawns" because I know that Senator Symmonds has more than one house. I urge Senator Symmonds to fix leaky faucets and plumbing joints. Do not run the hose while washing his car or cars, to use a bucket of water and a quick hose rinse at the end, install water-saving devices.

Mr. President, through you, I am giving Senator Thompson the opportunity to benefit from this. I am urging Senator Thompson to install water-saving showerheads.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The President has already done all of those things.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: I am urging the public to run only full loads in their washing machines and dishwashers. This would save gallons of water per month. I am saying to shorten their showers, to use a broom instead of a hose to clean driveways and sideways,

not to use toilets as an ashtray, or waste paper basket. That would save between 400 to 600 gallons of water per month, to capture tap water. While waiting for hot water to run, catch the run-off in a watering can, to be used later on house plants.

Mr. President, I am also urging my farmers to practise water conservation. Sir, we have been in discussion with some agencies, both local and overseas, in having proper water-harvesting devices.

Senator Goddard spoke about the millions of gallons of water that was not captured last Monday when the rains fell. I am hoping that as we enter into the very rainy season that our farmers in Barbados, who are presently crying out, particularly livestock farmers...We are going to be looking at building facilities for them with the help of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture.

We are in the process of discussing building facilities around Barbados on farms, to capture water from the roofs of their existing buildings. This water can then be used on the pig and dairy farms for washing down, and on vegetable farms for irrigation. I am, therefore, urging our people to let us find ways of capturing and harvesting that water.

Mr. President, I believe we could do a lot within our power to assist Barbadians. I am suggesting that some incentives could be put in place for householders, particularly new householders, those who are now building and those who are in the process of finishing. Sir, I am suggesting that we create incentives for those persons to get rebates. I am sure some of these things are already in place and that we can give rebates to those persons who install water tanks.

I am hoping those farmers who are going to be looking at building those facilities would be able to get some up-front rebates, instead of them having to wait until they have spent money they did not have, then to be reimbursed. I am sure we are going to put something on the table very shortly in their favour, which I am sure will gain the attention of our Prime Minister and Minister of Finance.

Mr. President, we are looking at ways in which we can assist the public in this matter. Sir, I would want to say that there is no point getting up and shouting across the airwaves, trying to catch the attention of the public, or trying to be emotional. Sir, water rates have gone up from \$20 to \$32. Sir, 60 per cent sounds like a lot of money, but let us look at the dollar value, it has gone from \$20 to \$32.

Mr. President, I had a number of short stints in St. Lucia, where I had to get up early at 5.00 a.m. and catch water in a "pep" bottle in order to bathe. Sir, there are other

countries in the Caribbean that do not have access to water in the way we have.

Sir, I was speaking to a lady from Canada about three days ago and although she understood that the water rates have gone up by 60 per cent, she said: "Benn, I don't understand what you all are shouting about. What you pay for water in a year, it costs me that in two months."

Mr. President, I lived for a short while in a place called Saskatoon. Saskatchewan and the water that we used was drawn from the Moose River. There were times we thought that water came straight from the moose. Sir, we are so blessed with good quality water. For years the rates have been manageable and well-subsidised. Those rates have gone up now.

Mr. President, this morning while watching local television, I saw the Government Information Service promotion about the increase in rates. I smiled when I saw those rates. The lowest rate is from \$20 to \$32. Sir, I am calling on the public, in the face of the increase, to let us find ways to conserve, to let us find ways to use it wisely.

We in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development are going to find ways to assist our farmers in harvesting the water. We will assist them in finding better ways of water use. We are going to find better ways of providing up-front incentives for them to be able to put systems in place to harvest and to use that water.

Sir, let us join hands together in finding solutions to whatever problems we have, rather than making everybody believe that the sky is falling and that the world is coming to an end. The Barbadian public is more educated than we think.

Mr. President, I thank you.

6.00 p.m.

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Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Chandler.

SENATOR Dr. F. L. CHANDLER: Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, this is one of a number of Bills seeking to validate regulations many years after they have been in effect, which have come before this Chamber, while I have been a Senator and I really do not understand why this situation is allowed to continue.

It all comes back to a lack of accountability in the Public Service and really demonstrates that public sector reform is a myth. Sir, until some Administration comes to grips with this problem, bites the political bullet and deals

with it, I think it could only get worse and we live up to our Caribbean reputation of being "laid-back".

Mr. President, related to this issue is the number of Bills which come to this Chamber which are badly written with errors, which give them meanings that are exactly opposite to what is intended. How could such important matters as Laws be treated in such an off-handed manner?

Mr. President, regarding the Bill before us today, this increase in water rates has been in effect for the last four years, but it has not apparently helped the financial situation of the Barbados Water Authority. I am aware that there are a number of other factors involved. The Chairman has exposed a number of these publicly, but one of those factors is the non-payment of water bills, so what is the point of continually raising the rates, if we are not going to collect the payment? I cannot see that this is really a difficult problem to solve.

Mr. President, there was some excuse about the archaic billing system, but I cannot see how an archaic billing system could have any effect on collection of water bills. I would say that there is something wrong with the billing system when someone could get a bill which says that he is in credit but, at the same time, saying that the water would be disconnected shortly.

Mr. President, the Barbados Water Authority has apparently stopped reading meters, as far as I could see and consumers continue to get estimated meters.

Sir, the Barbados Light & Power Company reads its meters every month and there is no problem there because the estimate is based on your normal usage, but an organisation which I volunteer with recently received a bill for June for over \$700 and we had not used that amount in water for the entire year. When I questioned it, it was said that it was built on the summer peak of 2003, which was when we had a burst pipe and did not know about it for a long time. I think that if estimates are going to be done, they should be based on some sensible estimate.

Mr. President, of course, the perennial problem of unaccounted for water, as Senator Thompson mentioned, this 60 per cent, or so, of the water pumped from the aquifers is made up due to leaking mains, which I have been hearing about for decades and, as far as I am aware, very little has been done about it over the time and also, incorrect meter reading, because the meters are maintained very poorly, if at all so, therefore, the meters give wrong readings.

Mr. President, I am not an accountant but it seems to me that if your costs are based on 100 per cent of the water being pumped from the aquifers, at a great electricity cost and other costs, and your revenue is based on 40 per cent of

the product, then I think you would soon end up in a negative position. Sir, that is just on one item alone, apart from the others like inefficient and unproductive labour, the poor organisational structure, the poor hiring, the problem with overtime and the unions, in spite of what Senator Trotman said.

Mr. President, I think if the Barbados Water Authority tackles just one of these problems, you would see a great improvement in performance. Sir, my choice would be the human resource problem, again, in spite of what Senator Trotman said. I think that we need to tackle the overtime, the lack of productivity and the whole attitude where I think the tail is wagging the dog at the Barbados Water Authority. Mr. President, I am sure if that were done, a lot of the other problems would be taken care of.

Mr. President, I am not against an increase in water rates, especially for domestic use. I think if we increase the commercial rates that it would come back to the consumer a second time, but the cost of water is very low, about one cent a gallon in some instances but, of course, the quantum of the increase at one time could be debated.

Mr. President, Senator Benn was mentioning all the ways we could conserve water and I think that domestic users could do a lot more to conserve water and also to harvest rain water. If every household harvested some rain water, the overall impact would be substantial. This is being done in parts of the Caribbean. In fact, I think that in Carricou, that is the only source of water and everybody has to collect rain water.

Mr. President, Town & Country Planning has regulations in place for tanks to be built for commercial buildings and for domestic buildings over a certain size, but apparently, the Environmental Department has not kept pace with their own regulations in policing and regulating the plumbing of this rain water, so that you would have a separate supply that takes care of toilets, and separates it from the potable water for drinking purposes. What happens is that most of these tanks just collect water, harbour mosquitoes and the water is not used except for people who might have large gardens, who use it for irrigation.

Sir, the separation of the two sources of water is very easy by using non-return valves and other types of technology. Mr. President, all these things are possible, but you just have to have the will to do all of these things.

Mr. President, I think there should be some consideration for small farmers who have to use the public supply. The Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (BADMC) supplies about 500 farmers with subsidised water, but there are over 2 500 farmers in this country. Of course, a lot of those are large

farmers, who have their own supply from a well, but a lot of the small farmers must use the public supply.

I think that even if the Barbados Water Authority was paid the full price, then the Ministry of Agriculture could probably think of some sort of subsidy for these farmers. Sir, there again, I do not think that farmers take enough advantage of the incentive already given for rain water harvesting. There is one already given, and I really do not think that large and small farmers take enough advantage of that.

Mr. President, on the matter of Barbados being a water scarce country, I think that might be based on false statistics because, as far as I understand, it is worked out by dividing the quantity of water sold by the population, and if the quantity of water sold is only 40 per cent of what we really have, then, of course, it would make it a very false statistic.

Mr. President, we now have another rate increase proposed which would be the subject of another debate but I am left to wonder when that would come to this Chamber. Will we have a repeat of what is happening today, many years after bringing this new regulation to be validated? I hope not. The people's business, as far as I am concerned, needs to be dealt within a much more orderly and timely fashion.

I thank you, Mr. President.

6.10 p.m.

Sequence 43

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Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Symmonds.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. President, I want at the outset, to reflect on the much belaboured point of the 2005 increase. I think the mere fact that one has seen such little transformation at the Barbados Water Authority, would suggest that there is more to this matter than just the balled question of financing. From my perspective.

I think that is an excellent point of departure, because it lends to the view, which I have, that there should be more coming from the Government than the simple pursuit of revenue, or the simple collection of revenue which is, according to Government's policy, or those who articulate Government's policy, as I understand it, the centrepiece of the way in which Government sees the problems of the Barbados Water Authority being resolved.

Sir, I have no doubt, in my mind, that this is a tricky issue. This is an issue which has been in the making for

some time. The mere fact that in the year 2009, we are speaking the language of replacing mains which were in existence for 140 years, suggests that this is not an issue of the Barbados Labour Party, or the Democratic Labour Party. It might even have been an issue, quite frankly, which found its genesis in the colonial Government. That notwithstanding, today we have to resolve a lot of these problems. Therefore, I do not just want to go down the road of partisan divide.

I was heartened by the latter part of Senator Benn's contribution when he made some very encouraging suggestions, with respect to water harvesting and securing the well-being of the public, by the throwing out of ideas how they may conserve better. Of course, he could not resist telling, what outside of this Chamber would be called an untruth, but I allowed it to pass.

Asides.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: I am glad that he wishes me to be in a position to have so much prosperity, that I have houses and cars. I look forward to the day that I can join him in that happy circumstance.

Sir, I think that the public deserves a little bit of elucidation on some of the fundamental issues which are facing this country as it pertains to the question of water. I want to begin from the public document, which is the Order Paper. I say the public document, because I do not want to appear to be trampling on the Rules which insist that we do not anticipate debates that are to come. The Order Paper from the Other Place is a public document, and part of that Order Paper speaks to the question of the Barbados Water Authority going before the Fair Trading Commission.

Sir, what we are faced within Barbados today is the very interesting collision of approaches, because on one hand, we have Government by way of its placing on the Order Paper a policy perspective which says, Government is going to take this critical institution, this problem-plagued institution, to the Fair Trading Commission to have resolution brought in a fair and just way, according to the fair principles of fair competition, which I will expatiate upon in due course, and on the other hand, you have a Government saying, prior to going there, we are coming straight to the public to do what some might best describe as lambaste the public with a 60 per cent increase. Sir, the question is, why the collision of policy approach?

In the context of what we understand to be the business of the Fair Trading Commission, you are seeking, essentially, to take a monopoly, to assess the monopoly in a broad and all-encompassing way as possible, means the operational procedure of the monopoly, the business practices of the monopoly, and you want to shield the

public, the consumer, as best as possible, from any of the fallout, which may come from the negative operational procedures and practices taking place in that monopolistic exercise. That is what the business of the Fair Trading Commission is about.

I do a lot of this outside of this jurisdiction, in the context of competition Law, and I do not want to give the Chamber a lecture, but the reality is, there are some fundamentals that come before you swiftly, as this Government appears to be doing, in a blinding, almost maddening rush to the public purse.

Before you come there, there are certain fundamentals the Government, by its own action in placing on the Order Paper, has indicated to the public that it understands, should be a priority, but somehow has allowed itself to drop that ball in order to rush to get the 60 per cent increase. Some of those fundamentals which the Fair Trading Commission would have had to look at would have been the efficiency of the production process. By that, what do I mean?

Sir, we have heard some colleague Senators speak quite effectively to the question of labour and labour cost. I agree with Senator Benn that labour cost has to be a fundamental concern, but the flip side of that coin is also the productivity of the workforce. Is it correct to say, for argument sake, that there may actually be more people employed at the institution in question than are really needed? Is it correct to say, Sir?

Above and beyond the question of labour, you have the issue of plant and machinery, how well is it maintained. Is it maintained in a cost-effective manner? What type of technology has been introduced which would shield the public from increases they are now being asked and expected to pay, as though it was a fait accompli, and in that regard, we then have to deal with the question of how efficient is the operation of that equipment.

For example, it is argued by those who claim to have deep knowledge of these matters, that after an outage, the pressure comes back on, flowing water, flowing through the tap back to your home, that automatically, before you even get water for a period of time, your meter is registering and registering rapidly. That is because there is a gush of air coming through, and you are paying for that. The exact amount, I could not speak to, but you are paying for the movement in the meter, because you are going to be metered accordingly, but you have received nothing in return.

How efficient and how effective can that be in the context of creating a fair billing system for the public of Barbados, and what steps can be taken by the Barbados Water Authority to shield the public from that. Those are

some of the issues which the Fair Trading Commission would have had to test, cross-examine and hear evidence on before they come to the decision whether or not an increase, that the public is asked to bear, is really a valid increase, or a valid proposition.

Sir, the question of the efficiency of supply, that which we call lost in transmission, and the whole question of whether or not it would be more cost-effective to introduce the so-called SCADA System which would help us detect the leak in the mains.

Sir, I want to lay this to rest, because I said at the beginning that I will not be partisan in this matter, and I will not be lured into that den of political iniquity. The reality is, the partisan side of this debate is what has caused this country to be facing this foolishness today. We have a developmental issue. We do not have a partisan political issue. We have an issue of access to scarce resources to develop a fundamental thing in this country, which is our water supply.

Let us not fool ourselves about that. Nor should we fool the public that there is anybody in the Barbados Labour Party that was prepared to spurn the opportunity to develop the Barbados Water Authority. I would never be heard to say that there is someone, or some people in the Democratic Labour Party who would do likewise. Therefore, let us not

6.20 p.m.

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Senate A19, Sequence 45, 6.20 p.m.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: lure ourselves there. We do ourselves and the public, as Senator Benn, quite accurately said, a public that is far wiser than some of us give credit for, an injustice.

The reality is this, Mr. President, that the SCADA System was supposed to be a system where you could centrally sit down at the Barbados Water Authority Headquarters, and have all 2 000 kilometers of mains on a screen in front of you, and you can identify where there is a drop in pressure, so that you know where there is a leak. Therefore, you do not have a gang on overtime which is the classical thing in Barbados, where you wait until 7⁰⁰ o'clock, and send out a truck with 10 men in it. They dig up the road, hoping to find where the leak is, only to find that, oh dear, this is where the water is, but the leak is a half mile back down the road because it went down the gully, and that is where it popped up, so you have to go and dig up down there again.

Sir, throughout all of that wasteful exercise, people are being paid to be on the job doing that, and it was that way when the Democratic Labour Party was in power, it was that way when the Barbados Labour Party was in power, it is still that way today. Sir, the issue should not be why it happened under the Barbados Labour Party and why it happened under the Democratic Labour Party, but how best can we bring it to resolution. Sir, that is my judgement on the position.

Equally, a fair competition commission will ask the Barbados Water Authority to explain its position, or operational procedures, which are critical. I will give you an example of what happened in the Constituency I represented, St. James Central. We heard Senator Thompson speak about Bagatelle.

Asides.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Could we have some order, please.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Sir, in Bagatelle, the issue of money being spent by the Barbados Water Authority on compensation payments, had to be raised. I remember having a neighbourhood meeting with the management of the Barbados Water Authority and making the point to them that in Bagatelle alone, the Barbados Water Authority had to spend money on replacing people's solar water heaters, because the rust in the water in the Bagatelle district had damaged the solar water heating equipment.

Mr. President, the Barbados Water Authority had to replace people's clothing, they had to replace filters, they even had commercial loss suits, whereby people operating a commercial exercise suffered damage, and then they said the Barbados Water Authority had to pay for it.

The issue that a Tribunal would want to hear, is: Well, look, hang on, if you are going to spend money on all of these things, and you could have found a way to avoid that expenditure, by taking certain steps to mitigate that type of loss, i.e. changing the mains, how now could you come to the public and ask the public to pay for your inefficiency. Sir, that is the issue that would be faced at a Tribunal.

Therefore, Sir, I am making the point at the very outset that I question the Government's approach. Why are we not going to the Fair Trading Commission first? But rather, we are taking an approach, which says that we are going to be largely arbitrary - because we pulled up 60 per cent, non-transparent and, Mr. President, we are doing this in the context of a raft of rate increases in every sector across Barbados.

Mr. President, I am not being political, but I am making the point that the public has been asked to carry price increases in every sector across Barbados, and you can argue whether rightly or wrongly, because I am not going there. Sir, I am saying to you that I agree with the voice I heard today that asked, how much is too much for the public to bear?

Mr. President, there is also the issue of failing to creatively exploit revenue raising opportunities. The legislation which we heard some talk about, but was not really canvassed very extensively, if at all makes a few things very clear to us. The Barbados Water Authority Act is Cap. 274A of the Laws of Barbados. Sir, at section 5 of the Act, the sections of the Authority outlined, and among them include these two:

“Cap. 274A, section 5:

a. to maintain and analyse information and maintain records of the total water resources in Barbados;

b. to manage, allocate and monitor the water resources of Barbados with a view to ensuring their best development, utilisation, conservation and protection in the public’s interest.”

Sir, of course that includes springs, wells, ponds, streams, et cetera.

Sir, Part IV. Section 14 (1) perhaps is the most interesting part.

14. (1) Subject to this section, the Authority, its employees and agents may for any of the purposes of the Authority

a. enter upon premises for the purpose of laying pipes, or for using the water of any stream, spring, or pond thereon;

b. divert, or impound the water from any stream, spring or pond”.

At section 14(1), Sir, and this perhaps is the most interesting part of it. It says that the Authority has the right to utilise or enter upon premises for the purposes of utilising the same for laying pipes, using water from any stream, wells, springs, or ponds thereon. To divert and impound the water from any streams, or ponds or wells.

Mr. President, clearly this gives, in Law, the Barbados Water Authority an extensive amount of domain, over all the water resources that we have in this country. I ask the question from this place, how do we justify against that legislative background, a situation in which a private company, or private companies in Barbados, are allowed to plug into our country’s water resources, even at a time

when we are asking the public to believe that we are deeply and chronically short of water, in order to bottle the same water, having extracted it and then, Sir, to sell that water for private purposes.

Are we at one and the same time asking the public to accept that there is this chronic shortage, and then at the same time you are saying that water is bottled in Barbados and sold for private purposes? It would seem to me that the two concepts collide sharply, especially in the context when the legislation that governs the Barbados Water Authority allows the Barbados Water Authority, quite frankly, Sir, if this is a legitimate revenue exercise that is being conducted in Barbados, then if the Barbados Water Authority wants money, why are you coming to me and you, Sir, why are our pockets being savaged first, rather than exploit the commercial opportunity yourself. Is it because it is easier to lambast the public, rather than to develop a new revenue thrust or stream? This is the issue that has to be raised in this country.

Even as I say that, Sir, I caution those in Barbados who are doing this thing, because you know in Bolivia, they also claim to be chronically short of water and the UN - same agency - indicated the same. They allowed a private company to exploit water and a European company came knocking and said, “listen, if you can bottle it and sell it for private purposes for profit, then we want market access to do the same thing, because we feel we can do it competitively, and do it better than you.” Sir, the World Trade Organisation was asked to rule and they had to rule in favour of the European company.

Sir, we are sitting on a ticking bomb. I throw that out because it is not for me to make the policy, but I hear the debate and I worry that the debate is going in the direction of that which is more in the context of levity, than recognising the very serious issues, which are facing the Barbados Water Authority. I do not know, Sir, that a 60 per cent increase in and of itself, is sufficient to meaningful, seriously and sensibly tackle these legitimate and real concerns.

I go further, Mr. President. I want to say that there is, in my judgment, something of an indictment on both the Board and the Administration of the Barbados Water Authority that this validation exercise comes at a time, when the Barbados Water Authority is itself part of a broader Government exercise, in which we are seeing massive increases in costs for every service. Sir, above and beyond that, it comes at a time when, strangely enough, the Barbados Water Authority itself, is still in the business of cutting off water supply from people who are among the most vulnerable in our society.

Mr. President, Senator Thompson and I would know of a case in Holders Hill, where an elderly couple living

together, and through no fault of their own, a burst pipe takes place on the Other Side of their connection. The Barbados Water Authority is notified, months passed, nobody comes to do anything about it. It is not to say that you do not know. In Law you now become liable, because you have been notified.

Senate A19, Sequence 45, 6.30 p.m.

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SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: The practice of the Barbados Water Authority is not to rush out and fix it. It is to send a bill to the old people for \$1 000 saying that they now have to pay for this excess usage, and when it cannot be paid, they are threatened with disconnection. These are two people in the twilight stage of their lives, 75 and 79, who are being asked to borrow a hose from the next door neighbour and throw it over the pailing so that they can bathe.

Mr. President, you cannot in my judgment fairly and reasonably, and in good conscience, ask a public to accept an arbitrary price increase, not an incremental price increase, of 60 per cent. If you said we are going to increase it by 10 per cent this week, but you are going to have to come back in all likelihood by December and look at this thing again. What is the benchmark? You increase it by 60 per cent across the board, and at the same time, the service which the public is being asked to tolerate, does not improve. It is a worrisome thing.

Mr. President, the reality is that we also have to look at the question of rates. I just made reference to a private company and the exploitation of water resources for private profit.

Mr. President, under the Barbados Water Authority Act, Cap. 274A of the Laws of Barbados, rates payable to the Authority are measured under the following heads: domestic purposes, commercial purposes, including Government offices, schools and apartments, guest houses and hotels, industry and ships. The last one is agricultural purposes payable only to Government-sponsored projects.

Mr. President, if we are going to continue along this very dubious course of people exploiting water to bottle it and sell it off to make profit, there needs to be something built into the regulations now which says that if you are going to do this, you are going to pay a little bit more for it.

I do not know how in good conscience, we could ask a public domestic utiliser of water to be satisfied with a 60 per cent increase because his or her salary does not go up by 60 per cent, his or her land tax does not decline by 60 per cent, or the license that he or she pays to operate a

beauty salon or a rum shop, does not go down by 60 per cent.

Mr. President, at the same time you are saying this to them, industry in Barbados which is using the same resource for private profit, is not being asked to carry a commensurate burden. That is where I say to you that we go into a very dangerous realm if we politicise this debate, because it is a debate about good conscience and what is the equitable developmental course for this country.

Mr. President, unless we are prepared to speak to that free of the Party Whip, so that Senator Benn can share his heartfelt belief, or that which I believe to be heartfelt, that you should conserve water by the following measures, so that I and other Senators could express our own concerns, then we do the country an injustice, and we do the whole concept of how we treat water resources in Barbados an equal injustice.

Sir, clearly from my tone, I think you can understand that I am fundamentally opposed to the carrying out and the conduct of a campaign of revenue collection which is merciless and brutish. I think we may be approaching that stage in the wider context of Barbados, not just in this debate.

Mr. President, I want to urge the Barbados Water Authority to understand that the public of Barbados has always been a public which is willing to cooperate as best as it is humanely possible. Mr. President, you cannot ask people to cooperate with you if there is a difficulty in answering a telephone. You call in and you cannot get the telephone answered because it is too much of a problem. A man wants to report a burst main in front of his house, or to report some problem affecting the water resources in his district, but he cannot get any answer on the telephone.

The Barbados Water Authority writes threatening people with disconnection and sends letters to some lawyer somewhere. The reality is that when the lawyer writes to the person who is accused of not paying, and the person says that there is a legitimate reason why they are in that situation, and he writes a letter back, there is no response to the letter. There is no business in Barbados that can work that way and retain the confidence of its public, so why should the Barbados Water Authority believe that they can get away with it?

Mr. President, this is done at a time when the Government comes... The Minister who spoke in here today indicated that it was he, he is quite right, who articulated the policy. Sir, I remember the speech. It was one of the better speeches that Senator Benn had made.

What was most memorable about the speech was that the speech did not contain a single specific on the

delivery of improved service by the Barbados Water Authority. Senator Benn is here and if I am not telling the truth, he could get up and cite me where he said so in his speech. Mr. President, there was not a specific, and it is not his fault because the speech was too well-written to be his own speech.

Asides.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I am sure that...

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: I said that not in any way to denigrate my illustrious colleague. I said that in the context in which you well know that very often Permanent Secretaries would assist an acting Minister, as Senator Benn then was, but I will withdraw it.

Sir, the larger point that we have in this context is to recognise the importance of the improvement of the delivery of service at the Barbados Water Authority. I have no doubt that as burdensome as this increase appears to be, and as burdensome as it will be on the public, and it is an overtaxed public, let us not fool ourselves. I think that the Barbadian public would want to respond in their characteristic well-intentioned way.

Sir, you rub people the wrong way. The Barbados Water Authority has to get it through the skulls of its staff, that this is a business which is about public service, and the delivery of a public good, and that they have to do simple things like answer the telephone, respond to a letter and come-a-calling when they have been notified that there is a leak that is flooding away districts and inconveniencing people.

They are not to allow people to have the visual impact of three and four and five weeks passing, where water is just gushing down a gutter and then tells them that they have to pay 60 per cent more because Barbados is a water-scarce country. Who are you trying to convince? Mr. President, you are spinning top in mud, and that is where the real problem is with the Barbados Water Authority.

Mr. President, I will have to take the position that it is with a certain degree of critical support that I will acquiesce our support for this Bill, but the reality is that we feel that better can be done and that better must be done.

Before I take my seat, Mr. President, I would hope that the Honourable Leader of Government Business would urgently cause her Government to respond, even if she cannot do so at this particular point, to the issue of why it is that the process the Government began by indicating it was going to follow, which is the Fair Trading Commission process, which is a far more transparent, meaningful, investigatory and deliberative process, has been placed on hold in exchange for a rush to get 60 per cent more from

the public, a percentage which appears to be arbitrary and opaque.

I thank you, Mr. President.

Senate A19 Sequence 46

6.40 p.m.

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Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Inniss.

SENATOR Mrs. P. I. INNISS: Mr. President, I rise to support this Bill which validates the increase in water and sewerage rates, January 2005. I would want to say at the outset that the delay in this validation exercise is very much like the former Barbados Labour Party's delay to deal with water issues in this country.

Mr. President, I sat here, in a very non-partisan way, and heard a lot about the water problems we are facing in Barbados. Sir, it does not have to be a political issue. If I were to start from the top and move downwards on the things that have been neglected in this country, the things have put us in the position in which we are now, in the face of the present hardship, I would want to know what was the former Administration doing to correct, or to solve some of these problems.

Mr. President, the Opposition talked about a number of old people who do not have water. Sir, two years ago, January 2008, I was confronted with the issues facing the Barbados Water Authority, and I am not even a Member of Cabinet. The members and staff of the Barbados Water Authority are crying out for people to listen. I heard the issue of SCADA being mentioned by both Honourable Senators Thompson and Symmonds, who do not seem to understand what it is about.

Sir, even though they were in Government, they have never dealt with it, hence this problem we are having today. Mr. President, officers of the Barbados Water Authority are clear to explain what that system could have done 15 years ago. Sir, I have seen reports where that was mentioned 15 years ago, where it has never been dealt with.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss P. I. INNISS: I am not going into details about what is a SCADA system. Mr. President, through you, and maybe for the information of Opposition Senators, and I will explain, because after 15 years they do not have a clue as to what is the SCADA system. They have never told Barbadians. Sir, SCADA means a Supervisory Controlled and Data Acquisition system. Sir,

from my understanding, that system locates water problems. I surmise the whole detail of that water problem.

Mr. President, for 15 years, officials from the Barbados Water Authority have been throwing themselves backward, trying to explain to the Barbados Labour Party what they needed. Sir, I had to hear about those problems in this Honourable Senate. I had to hear about the fact that we are in an economic crisis and that we are putting more pressure on Barbadians when, for more than 15 years, that SCADA system which was priced at only \$7 million, could have helped us.

Mr. President, I will let Opposition Senators know what is the Geological Information System. Sir, I am only a Senator and not a member of Cabinet, but persons from the Barbados Water Authority have been calling me on more than one occasion. Sir, this means that for the last 15 years they were speaking to Members of the then Government. They were begging for a Geographic Information System, which was then priced at \$2.4 million. Sir, as Barbadians would say, the former Government did not even unpick their teeth.

Sir, this would have solved the problems with the old people and all of this emotional approach we are now hearing would not have faced this Senate today. Sir, had the Barbados Labour Party assisted the Barbados Water Authority, we would not be here dealing with a percentage increase.

Mr. President, after 15 years, the Barbados Labour Party Administration does not even know what is a Hydraulic Network Model (HNM). Sir, I am saying this for the understanding of Barbadians because under a previous Government, they did not let intelligent Barbadians understand what could have been done. Sir, the SCADA system locates problems, while the GIS is like an electronic mapping system, it stores.

Sir, presently at the Barbados Water Authority, there are a large number of archaic maps that are becoming more and more brittle. Sir, I want to say that the Barbados Water Authority has to deal with as much as three burst mains on a daily basis, but then I am going to hear: "Oh, they have a burst and who is addressing that burst." Mr. President, because of the fact that nothing has been done for so long. The mains repair system is virtually collapsing.

Mr. President, I am not being political here, but praise God the Democratic Labour Party has come to power. Sir, this is not a statement in representation of the Democratic Labour Party. It is a matter of fact. The first time I heard about the problem at the Barbados Water Authority, I got in touch with persons at the Barbados Water Authority and told them that it was "up a creek". Sir,

immediately we started to put things in place because we are going to be in serious trouble if things are not done.

Mr. President, we have the GIS which, in essence, stores. The importance of the GIS is that not only does it store for the Barbados Water Authority, it can store for all utilities, as it is an electronic mapping system. Sir, I want Barbadians to understand, we are all intelligent people.

Sir, I want to say that the Barbados Water Authority has been begging and pleading to a former Government, now Opposition, who is going to come here and stress that it is not political. Sir, they spoke about a Hydraulic Network Model (HNM). This Hydraulic Network Model is so technical, in essence, it looks at all issues relating to our water distribution. It also identifies problems before those problems surface. Sir, for more than 15 years, the Barbados Water Authority has been begging for this system which cost, at that time, some \$6 million. The HNM model also tells you how to improve the water system.

Mr. President, this is what the present Government is going to do, so that when, along with the SCADA...

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: On a point of order. Sir, the Honourable Senator is misleading this Honourable Chamber. If the Honourable Senator is suggesting that the expenditure, the \$21 million, or how much the figure adds up to, would solve the problems at the Barbados Water Authority, then that is an argument for why the 60 per cent is not justified.

Sir, the Honourable Senator is also misleading this Honourable Chamber in relation to what we know and what we do not know about the use of SCADA. There are Government agencies that have this technology, but if you put it into the Barbados Water Authority, does that mean that you do not need a 60 per cent increase? Sir, clearly that is what the Honourable Senator is saying.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Honourable Senator, that is not a point of order.

SENATOR Mrs. P. I. INNIS: Mr. President, they talked about an arbitrary increase of \$38 million. They said they do not understand how this Government is looking to improve things by this rate increase. Sir, the Opposition seem to be saying that like them, we simply said we were going to increase water rates by 60 per cent, that we were letting people pay a 60 per cent increase. Sir, this 60 per cent increase is for a reason, and if the Honourable Senator would wait, the Honourable Senator would hear that reason.

Mr. President, the Hydraulic Network System has also been ignored for 15 years. Sir, what that would have done, which has not been done for more than 15 years,

hence we are crumbling, is that it would have also asked other utilities to come on board. Sir, this is important for people to understand. Sir, that system would show that the demographics of Barbados have changed and that the mains needed to be upgraded.

Mr. President, presently at the Barbados Water Authority what is in place, since 1994, is called "Customer Information System." It is outdated. Therefore, some of the problems which Honourable Senators have mentioned, such as incorrect billing, is on account of that outdated system.

Sir, the Barbados Water Authority has also been begging the former Government to deal with that, but now they have the audacity to come and talk about: "Oh, people's bills are wrong and employees from the Barbados Water Authority are not reading meters properly. Sir, this would be so because of the fact that the system has collapsed. No money has been given to updating a Customer Information System since 1994. Sir, part of that increase rate will go towards such a system. You have to have a properly functioning computer system, so that part of the rate increases will help upgrade and develop the GIS.

Sir, that 60 per cent is not an arbitrary figure. There are enough of us on This Side and enough Barbadians to understand that we simply cannot throw out a figure, as has been done with the 38 per cent validation, 2005, which now comes here. Therefore, they presume that we want to throw on another 60 per cent, but that we do not have a clue as to what we are doing. Sir, that is one of the things that will be done.

6.50 p.m.

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

SENATOR Miss P. I. INNISS: Sir, it is a lack of knowledge. The speaker before me, who I often like to listen to, seems not to understand why there needs to be a rate increase, but I am convinced though that Barbadians understand this. Sir, the Barbados Water Authority has been "ballowing" it and you just cannot get the Fair Trading Commission to do a rate increase, or to have a utility rate increase unless certain systems are in place. Sir, part of the money of the rate increase has to go to that, but the Fair Trading Commission is not a throw-by-night and you have to have your house in order.

Sir, to answer Senator Chandler's question, to answer Senator Trotman's question, and to answer Senator Goddard's question, you do not have to look at the specifics because the Barbados Water Authority knows what it is doing. It is going to also put its house in order so that they have the courage to go to the Fair Trading Commission, say that they are in trouble, and that the

Democratic Labour Party has helped sufficiently with a non-arbitrary, clear rate increase so that we could put books to it that look sensible. Sir, a lot of Barbadians understand this.

Mr. President, a lot of what has happened in this Honourable Chamber today is an attempt to confuse, "cuffuffle" throw things all over the place and, maybe it has done this to some in here, but I stay convinced that Barbadians are clear. Sir, what we have here now is the need for this increase.

Mr. President, I have heard over and over again, Honourable Members from the Other Side, and in the Other Place being emotional but, Sir, it did not move me. They stated things about how Government is not aware of the hardship that Barbadians are facing. I thought that the Honourable Senator Thompson was going to cry when she stated that gas had gone up and that electricity had gone up.

Sir, we know these things and we know they were unavoidable. Sir, "cudh lawd", rather than fixing the problem for 15 years so that at this juncture, where this unplanned for disaster is happening, that you would have something to fall back on, what we have is a situation where you cannot do anything about it. Sir, you cannot allow the Barbados Water Authority to go into a precipice because that is where it is going and Barbadians understand this.

Mr. President, I have been hearing all the time and again today, that we do not understand the hardship that Barbadians are under but, Sir, we know what the hardship is and I have experienced the hardship because I have to pay increased water rates too. Sir, they seem to think that Government is some monarchy untouched by natural events, but we all have to pay rate increases.

Mr. President, Barbadians have to deal with the problem. They say they are not political but I am hoping to remain calm, so that before I sit I could explain to Barbadians the huge hole that has been dug. Sir, to make matters worse, the hole that has been dug for us is now in hard mud because water is scarce. We have a huge hole, so do not let this sentimentality fool you about putting hardship on people because we have to understand the hole that has been dug and what we came and found.

They say we are not helping, but we have given free transportation and free fuel savings have been passed on to Barbadians. Sir, fuel concessions have been given by the Democratic Labour Party since it took up office. It has paid off the energy bills and has given a number of incentives towards the hardship.

Mr. President, it pleases me to hear a few days ago over the radio, businessmen saying that the cost of water

has gone up but, that they are going to offset that with the reduced feed cost and a number of things. I am convinced that Barbadians understand that this is inevitable and they are trying to balance it out. I am imploring that more Barbadians do this and take this to heart. Sir, this is not a Democratic Labour Party policy of rate increase. This is something that we cannot escape and members of the Barbados Labour Party have to come to this understanding.

Mr. President, I heard it being said in the Other Place that Government should shoulder the burden and, Sir, it irked me.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. President, on a point of order. The Honourable Senator has, I believe, unwittingly misled the Chamber. The report to which she was alluding indicated that the price of feed had gone down, but that is because water rates were now going up and that the benefit which would have been passed on to the consumers would have been eroded by a certain percentage. If the Honourable Senator wanted to make that point in defence of what we were warning the Government about, she could have consulted me before and I would have clarified it.

Sir, I thank you.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Your point is made.

SENATOR Miss P. I. INNISS: Mr. President, the Honourable Senator has clearly expressed my point that people are doing what they need to do to make sure that the end result benefits Barbadians. I hope that more Barbadian businessmen would do this, as the Leader of Government Business has spoken to, and Senator Trotman as well.

Mr. President, I sat quietly today, but I heard that this 60 per cent is arbitrary. Sir, remember that during analysis, when the Authority looked at the problem, that it wanted 100 per cent increase and the Government said it could not happen, and it cut, contrived and did all kinds of things, like a good housewife, and said that the most it could get was 60 per cent and that it would do certain things to help the Barbados Water Authority to put its house in order.

Mr. President, I am not going to spell out for the Honourable Senators on the Other Side what those things are because it is not arbitrary, unlike the 30 per cent in 2005, which was supposed to help and sustain the Mains Replacement Programme, but it was more like a mains patch programme because it has not had any effect in Barbados but, Sir, I will come to that.

Mr. President, 60 per cent is not necessarily a permanent figure either because, if you realise, once the Barbados Water Authority gets its house in order and can

pay the Fair Trading Commission, the Fair Trading Commission will then look at "fair", will look at sound prices and then Barbados will, for the first time in its history, have water rates commensurate with the cost of water production in Barbados.

Mr. President, we have a number of persons who do not pay water costs at all. There are farmers, as have been mentioned, who do not pay water rates because they pump their own water. Sir, we heard of the subsidies with Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (BADM). There are illegal persons, who tap water and there are meter issues, and these problems have to be addressed. Sir, the Barbados Water Authority has been struggling to deal with the meter issues. I am not going partisan when I say that for years we have been asking a former Government to put in better meters, but nothing has ever been done.

Mr. President, these things will come again and when the Opposition goes down the road of meters, we will talk about meters. Sir, because of a deaf ear, we have problems today with meters often malfunctioning and being faulty even though I heard today that it is the fault of the Barbados Water Authority when they have been begging.

Mr. President, they are trying to deal with meters, they are trying to deal with persons tapping into the water illegally. Sir, all these things, the rate increase would probably go to, because its house has to be in a certain order.

7.00 p.m.

Sequence 48

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

SENATOR Miss P. I. INNISS: Sir, there has to be a certain order before it goes to the Fair Trading Commission. When rates are regulated, it will be a fair trade, where it says Barbadians should not pay X, Y, or Z, then a proper system would be implemented. If that is not strategic and correct, I do not know what is. That is what is going to be done.

One important point which was made by the Barbados Water Authority - we heard the talk that Barbadians do not conserve, and it is true. I am not going to sit in any Chamber debating the difference of scarcity and water stress. We are in trouble, full stop. If the Honourable Senators want to have a great time with words and listen to themselves speak, go ahead. My issue is, we are in trouble, a deep hole has been dug in this country.

Barbadians are not conserving and we all know this. Maybe, increasing water rates, and as hard as it sounds, again. I am saying, Government is no Great God in the sky, detached from us. We all are going to be dealing with this situation. If you are going to pay a little money, instead of \$1 per gallon, maybe you might realise that you cannot peel potatoes, run to answer the phone, while the pipe is running.

Senator Chandler spoke of a system I would love to see in place, with regard to conservation. You called it by one term and I call it another, the dual plumbing system. That is important. Under the present water regulation, a water tank is mandatory, but as you said, this water is not utilised. I am looking forward to the day, and I am encouraging the Government, if we do have this dual plumbing system, and it is entered into the building code. Again, a building code, we are not going there. Please do not cite me for drifting too far.

The former Government “en pick a teet” with the building code, which would have said, let us have a dual plumbing system. Once you install a tank, you have a dual plumbing. You would have a smaller flow of plumbing where non-potable water goes to your toilet, or washing the car, and a number of other things. This is not political - As people say, cheese and crackers. Can I say that, Mr. President? It has not been done for 15 years. No one did it. If I am saying this is where the fault is, how can you call me political?

Sir, because there is a system like that, the only water being used is ordinary potable water. If we introduce the dual plumbing system, it can also deal with conservation. Senator Benn spoke about a number of conservation issues. I am not going to repeat them.

Sir, even the solar water company is looking at the problem with runoff water. They are trying to introduce a system where the water is heated as soon as it comes off. Things are being worked on.

Sir, I remember sometimes I spoke to the fact that there are so many problems. You often have to IV drip. We are still IV dripping. We have to do many things. I am not being political when I said nothing was done. That is another part of a conservation. Left, right and center the Barbados Water Authority is talking about conservation, who listens, unfortunately? Sir, maybe as hard as that bullet is, this can help Barbadians realise that water costs a lot.

Sir, we are a water scarce country. One-tenth of the Barbados Water Authority customers are not paying their bills, that is one in ten. When we say not paying their bills, these are the ones whose bills are in arrears over 60 days. This is not the 30-day shut down, but over 60 days. As is well said, “I can run over to my neighbour and get water.” I

am hoping this is the case. I know that there may be some case, but that will have to be dealt with. There are some services which pay water bills for people in Barbados in genuine cases.

Sir, if you ask, some of these people do not have problems. They are just not paying their water bills. The Barbados Water Authority now has an improved system. That also comes under the Customer Information Department which will get an injection for a better billing system. Do not sit here and blame the Barbados Water Authority workers, because they have an old-fashioned system that cannot get things done. They come in here and bellowing about how things will improve. The Fair Trading Commission will do it. You do not understand the way it works. You have to get your house in order first. This 60 per cent increase, as hard as it is, has to happen.

Sir, I am going to tell you why it has to happen. The hardship that is on this country, the hardship we are facing - I am sorry. I will try for this to be the last time. It is because of 15 years neglect.

Sir, I stop looking at the figures. Let me tell you, if I may. I want to explain to you. Let me come with some facts, water loss. We all heard about the water loss issue. It was banded about at 20 to 60 per cent. Senator Chandler spoke to it. Guess what? That equates to \$1 million a month that Government is paying, because of that water. That is like, literally, buying ice and putting it in the sun. That is what is happening.

Sir, when they talk about the burden is too hard, and Government should take some of the burden, guess what? Government is taking the burden, because first of all, it is paying \$1 million a month literally just being thrown away. Sir, the SCADA, the GIS, the hydraulics, and all the little things the Barbados Water Authority has been begging for many years, nothing was done.

We know the expenses of outstripping revenue, as Senator Benn said, but the same Waste Water Division - Mr. President, I am not dealing with that now. When the next water issue comes to this Senate, I will deal with waste water. Where Senator Thompson is speaking about plans, and I got some of her terms that I thought were so cute and endearing, long-term planning, broad philosophical questions regarding the Barbados Water Authority. I thought, what the heck? She is talking about Waste Water Division that every month is spewing out \$20 million in losses? This has nothing to do with the operations, because of neglect, and I know in Another Place a Minister, especially in the City, would speak about...

Asides.

SENATOR Miss P. I. INNISS: I am not going there. It will come again, I am sure, because we have to talk about water in this country.

Sir, \$12 million, in essence, Government is subsidising. I hope you can keep a figure, and I hope Barbadians are making notes. I do not have all. Sir, \$12 million annually, that is just the water that is leaking, \$20 million, \$1 million a month times 12, for those who may not be able to, times \$20 million for the Waste Water Division, the electricity that the Barbados Water Authority. I am not going to talk about the total electricity in Barbados. I am not going there. Government in 2008 subsidised the electricity by zero rating VAT on electricity of the Barbados Water Authority, never done in a former Administration. Government is subsidising another \$4 million a year for electricity, added together, we are not talking about depreciation which has occurred by the Barbados Water Authority. They have cried and said that you need to maintain your systems, not done. This is not political.

Sir, if you call anybody from the Barbados Water Authority, if you have a friend, or a friend of a friend, ask them. The system has not been replaced, repaired, or replenished. It is amazing that the Barbados Water Authority is still under WHO guidelines. I commend them that after all of this neglect they are still under the World Health Organisation guidelines.

Sir, I hope you are not getting tired of the figures. Of the \$150 million which the Barbados Water Authority borrowed to sustain its operations. Imagine we are in a country, now, where Barbadians have to realise that our Barbados Water Authority had to borrow \$150 million recently, to sustain its operations. Do you know what happened? It could not pay the arrears, so Government is also subsidising that and paying \$9.1 million, as Senator Benn spoke of.

Sir, when they talk about hardship and that Government should help the Barbados Water Authority, Government is helping the Barbados Water Authority, in my calculation, with over \$45 million. Do you know what? It is still operating at a loss.

Sir, do you understand the dilemma we are in? Do you understand the hole that has been dug? Let no man from this day forth talk about economic hardship and they are putting this on Barbadians.

Sir, we have 80 per cent of the expenses of the Barbados Water Authority virtually going up in revenue. Government is paying \$45 million in subsidies. What is Government to do?

7.10 p.m.

Sequence 49

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

Senate A19, Sequence 50, 7.10 p.m.

SENATOR Mrs. P. I. INNISS: It has to say to intelligent human beings, we have a problem, we have to pay our water rates; we have to pay the cost of producing it, and that is what this 60 per cent increase, as hard as it may seem, has to do, so the Government is doing such, Mr. President.

I am not going to be much longer.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator, you only have two minutes more to conclude.

SENATOR Mrs. P. I. INNISS: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. President, the problem has been exacerbated. The Barbados Water Authority is now in crisis. The rate is not arbitrary. The 35 per cent has been arbitrary because the Mains Replacement Programme has been a Mains "Patchment" Programme, and this is why we are in the same position we are in today.

Sir, when I talked about the rate increase and what has been spoken by the Minister and all related to it, has not even suggested that the rate increase was about maintaining systems, so that the FTA could come in. When the Barbados Water Authority is standing on its own, as it has to do, which this Government is determined to ensure, and which Barbadians now by biting this bullet are trying to ensure, then guess what? We still have problems with the reverse osmosis. I could continue, Sir.

Sir, we need the reverse osmosis because you know what, our waters, as we all heard, are contaminated with the nitrate level high. Sir, apart from money, we may be going to the doctor, and I would not even know the number of persons going to the doctor, and also spending money in other ways, because of water problems. Sir, nitrates are associated with carcinogenic issues and numbers of things.

The reverse osmosis, the West Coast Project still has to be looked at, the reuse of waste water. I total it at something like \$840 million. This has nothing to do with the present Barbados Water Authority. That is after the Barbados Water Authority is on its feet. Do you know what is horrendous? This is not new. That is the horrendous part. This is old talk.

Asides.

SENATOR Mrs. P. I. INNISS: Sir, I am winding up.

Sir, if we do not fix this problem and have a good grip on it - and these are not my words, this is from the BWA Report - many of them are going to grind to a halt. This is what is going to happen.

Sir, I support this validation. I have no problem with biting my portion of the bullet. I call all Barbadians to do so. There is much work to be done. Let us move ahead from the chatter and realise that if we do not save ourselves, nobody, and surely not the Barbados Labour Party, is going to save us.

I thank you, Sir.

Asides.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Sandiford-Garner.

SENATOR Mrs. V. I. SANDIFORD-GARNER: Thank you, Mr. President.

Sir, I do not wish to prolong this debate because I know it has been a long day, but I just want to digress a bit. I woke up this morning in another jurisdiction. Sir, and I just want to illustrate that Barbadians do not understand or appreciate what they have. I woke up in a place that is economically more advanced than we are, and infrastructurally more advanced than we are and for four hours yesterday, their City had no electricity, an old rich state, because their company could not manage to provide that country with the level of service which they require, a country much better off than we are. The City was without electricity for four full hours and there were no monkeys around.

Asides.

SENATOR Mrs. V. I. SANDIFORD-GARNER: What I would like to do this afternoon is to emphasise that some serious remedial work has to be done at the Barbados Water Authority. As the young people would say, the Barbados Water Authority is one hot mess. I think we sat here and we heard a number of reasons why steps have to be taken.

Sir, as I rise to support this Validation Bill, I would wish to outline the scenario with which we are faced right now. I heard Senator Chandler speak earlier about the non-payment of bills. I heard Senator Inniss also make reference. I do not know if you all know that there are 100 000 people in Barbados receiving water and, as at the end of June this year, \$24 million were owed to the Barbados Water Authority. This is debt of over a year. Sir, \$24 million owed by consumers, 70 per cent of whom are domestic customers. I think they said that 5 per cent was Government, 2 per cent hotels, and the others were businesses, doctors' offices, shops, et cetera.

Senator Benn spoke about people not paying their water bills, but I do not know if the Chamber knows that research was done recently, which revealed that the water bill is the last bill that Barbadians pay.

Asides.

SENATOR Mrs. V. I. SANDIFORD-GARNER: Actually, they said that it is the last bill a consumer will pay and why is it, because the consumers apparently do not rate the utility at the same level they rate the electricity and the telephone bills.

Asides.

SENATOR Mrs. V. I. SANDIFORD-GARNER: Sir, I could go on. I learnt that 35 million gallons of water go into the system every year and 31 million of that is from ground water, 4 million from the desalination plant, but 45 per cent is lost to leakage, and as Senator Inniss said, this did not start yesterday.

I do not understand how in good conscience, we can be expected as an Administration to continue with business as usual. We cannot. Serious decisions will have to be taken. Although we know there is a plethora of technical problems - I am sorry Sir Roy is not here - we have a number of operational issues to address, which will boil down to human resource issues. There is no shying away from it. We have to address them. Sir, thousands of Barbadians know what I am talking about.

We heard from Senator Symmonds and others regarding the length of time it takes to answer problem calls. It is almost folklore now that the Barbados Water Authority is tardy, in terms of answering problem calls. I know of a situation where a simple name change took seven years. It has not changed yet, a personal situation, where all you ask for was the water bill to come in the name of the current inhabitant of the building. This is seven years and it has not happened.

Consumers complain about three figure water bills when the water bill should be two figures. Again, another personal issue, at April where the bill came to \$532, after battling with the Barbados Water Authority for about two months, the bill is now at the \$40 it should be because nobody lives in the house.

Mr. President, we heard about the billing system which is antiquated, which tells us there is a real dysfunction in that area. I would wish to know why it is that only now, under this present Administration - because I heard the Financial Controller on the radio on Sunday - does she feel empowered to go out for Terms of Reference to update her billing system? Only now she is free to do that. I could tell she was reticent in giving the real reasons

it was not done before. But we in this Government know why it was not done before. She is now going for Terms of Reference to update the dysfunctional Billing System that they have in the Barbados Water Authority, and dysfunctional is just a mild, mild adjective.

There are also people who are under billed because there is a very high level of corruption in certain quarters, where you have systems that you can get water, without paying a cent, hooked up passing certain instruments.

Asides.

SENATOR Mrs. V. I. SANDIFORD-GARNER: Sir, you would not know about that. You certainly would not know about that. You do not want to know either, so I will go on.

Sir, they are people who are under-billed and have been under-billed for years, because they have learnt how to beat the system. Sir, not only do we recognise the technical issues, but the operational problems have to be tackled and that means that we are going to have to look at organisational restructuring.

Sequence 50, 7.20 p.m.

Wednesday, July 21, 2009

SENATOR Mrs. V. I. SANDIFORD-GARNER: Mr. President, I heard the Chairman of the Board speak last weekend about corporatisation. I would not wish to be previous, but I think that whenever the Chairman is ready to speak to whoever he needs to speak to, he shall discuss that in detail. I noted from Senator Trotman's discourse that there seems to be a marked timidity when we speak about organisational restructuring.

Sir, if we intend to ensure that we have an efficient system, issues that the previous Government skirted around would have to be addressed by this Administration. It is always our lot as an Administration to face the difficult problems head on, so we are accustomed to doing it and we are going to do it in this instance.

I am sure that once the basic tenets in industrial relations practice are adhered to, there should be no problem. Sir, once we observe the protocols that are necessary for good industrial relations, and once we understand that efficiencies must be brought to bear.

I heard Sir John Stanley say earlier that the day of reckoning has come, and he is right - we know that efficiencies must be brought to bear in the operation of the Barbados Water Authority. As I support this Validation Amendment, I would wish to say that this Government is the Government to do so.

I thank you, Sir.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Hutson.

SENATOR J. A. C. HUTSON: Mr. President, I rise to support this Bill. There is no doubt about it that the Barbados Water Authority has many problems, but I would like to congratulate them for the quality of water which I consider to be the best in the world. How long it would last, I do not know, because the Belle Pumping Station is having problems with impurities which come from many sources.

I understand that water to the Belle comes from up in St. Thomas down through the gullies. The amount of waste matter that is thrown into those gullies that are causing pollution is unbelievable. I believe that housing around the Belle is also causing a bit of a problem.

Mr. President, why is the Barbados Water Authority in this financial situation? Is it because they have not collected money over the last few years? If that is so, why not shut off the water and they would be paid in due course? Persons may borrow from their next door neighbour for a while but they would get tired of that and they will go and pay their bills.

Mr. President, I am also told that persons in some of these gated communities on the West Coast have not paid their bills, but the Authority is told not to shut off their water, they are a tourist organisation and ease them, but that is not good enough. I am sure that if the owners of those houses knew that their water had not been paid for by the landlord, so to speak, they would make sure that it is paid.

Mr. President, going back to the tardiness of the telephone calls, I know that everybody does not have fax machines, but I have always found that the best way to contact the Barbados Water Authority is to write a little note and fax it through. When you phone, you definitely sort of hear like a tardiness on the Other Side, a don't carish attitude. Mr. President, a lot has to be done and will be done, I hope, shortly.

I thank you, Sir.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Alleyne.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: Mr. President, I shall not be too long. It was very warming to hear at least some Senators had something good to say about the Barbados Water Authority because I was wondering if it was Barbados I was in, because in spite of all the difficulties, I can turn my tap on and out flushes fresh, clear, clean potable water and I can take a shower.

Asides.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: Sir, I am also told that in the worst year of drought, 1994, the Barbados Water Authority was able to supply 97 per cent of households with water. Sir, I want to start on a positive note so that the impression is not given that the Senate of July 2009, can say nothing positive about the Barbados Water Authority. A few Senators did say something positive and I was grateful for Senator Hutson for taking that positive view of our Water Authority.

Sir, my contribution here is not really to deal with the issue of the Barbados Water Authority as an entity, but to deal with the treatment of the matter by the Opposition. Mr. President, anytime I hear a politician say that he or she is not being political, my ears prick like the spines or spikes on the back of a porcupine. They become sharp and ready. Sir, I sat with ears pricked well and listened to the contributions. Sir, I am not going to be long, I just want to make a few points.

Sir, I want some questions answered about the desalination plant. Who introduced it? Who organised the contract? Who determined we pay \$10 million a year? Is it to our advantage? Was it to our disadvantage? Is it a burden on the taxpayers? Must it be reorganised? Must it be renegotiated? That is a burden that this Administration has inherited. Both Senators, former Ministers in the last Government, had an opportunity for the first time to explain the origins, the owners, the reasons and the rationale behind that facility, but they are asking us now to explain a 60 per cent increase.

Sir, it hurts because there is a level of hypocrisy in Barbados that should not be in the Senate, and I know that you would not allow it to come in here. That is why I went for the dictionary to look for the word “validate”, because I thought it was from the Latin word “validare” and I found that I was correct. What it says is to “make legal.” Sir, all this Administration is seeking to do is to make legal an instrument that was prepared in 2005. The hypocrisy by the Opposition today is that they did not tell the Senate...

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: On a point of order. The Honourable Senator knows better. He cannot accuse Honourable Senators of being hypocritical. It is unparliamentary.

Asides.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The cross-talk would get us nowhere. The point of order is made.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: Sir, I was going to make a point about the presentation and not the presenters, but I would rephrase it.

The unfairness of the presentation was that neither of the Senators who had the background of the Cabinet in 2005 and had the background of the Lower House informed this august Chamber that in 2005, a letter from the Minister was sent to the Barbados Water Authority giving an order to increase the rates. It never came to the Lower House. It never came to the Upper House.

Senate A19 Sequence 51

7.30 p.m.

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: There was no validation, there was no discussion, the public did not know, and now Opposition Senators come here asking us to explain something. Sir, they should be ashamed.

Sir, the point I want to make is that when Honourable Senators come to this Chamber and say they are not being biased, I want them to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. I want them to come straight and not to hide behind a cloak saying they are not biased. Sir, there was a letter ordering the Barbados Water Authority to increase the rates by 38 per cent and the public did not know, there was no debate.

Asides.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: Mr. President, there are other points here that we are not touching. There was a decision given all over Barbados to build houses, with approval given here and there. Sir, there was no effort to increase the storage...

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: On a point of order. I am a little bit surprised. I would have thought that the Honourable Senator, having cast the aspersion, especially in the context of vilifying anything that was hypocritical and less than forthright, would have automatically felt a duty to present the letter to which he is referring.

Sir, clearly the Honourable Senator would have to know that neither Senator Thompson, nor I, have ever had responsibility for the Barbados Water Authority. Therefore, we would all need to understand what the Honourable Senator is speaking about. If the Honourable Senator is making an allegation of that nature, the Honourable Senator should produce the document and make it a document of this Honourable Senate, so that all of Barbados would know what it is that Senator Alleyne is speaking about.

Mr. President, the only person in Barbados who I have heard made reference to this - I almost said mythical,

but mysterious - letter is Senator Alleyne and Senator Alleyne should produce that letter.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Symmonds, your point is made.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: Mr. President, I do not get into hysterics, I may get hysterical. I do not get confused, I may get into confusion. Sir, I do not have to produce any letter, I said a letter was sent by the Minister. I said the only instruction given to the Barbados Water Authority was a letter from the Minister with responsibility for the Barbados Water Authority, in 2005. There was no debate in the Lower House, there was no debate in the Upper House, there was no public statement, so how did the water rates get increased by 38 per cent? Sir, if the former Cabinet Minister wants to get up and tell me how the instrument was made, I would sit and give way. I am waiting to give way.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: On a point of order. Mr. President, Senator Alleyne is misleading this Honourable Senate and as long as I am in this Honourable Chamber, he is not going to be allowed to get away with it. Senator Alleyne has made a startling allegation. He has not condescended to support the allegation by even a shred of evidence. It cannot be that public debate in this country has been reduced now to the fact that anybody could get up and treat the Honourable Senate of Barbados as though it is a soap box under a dunks tree and say whatever comes to his mind about a former Member of Government and that is sufficient. Sir, Senator Alleyne must produce the letter or be made to withdraw the allegation. He really must. Sir, it is highly improper.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I do not wish to become involved in the cross-talk, but that is not a point of order.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: Mr. President, I have never quoted from a letter. The only way I would have to produce a letter would be if I made a quotation from such a letter. Sir, I can speak about a letter.

Mr. President, Senator Symmonds has a responsibility as a former Cabinet Minister. If Senator Symmonds is saying that what I am saying has no truth, or that there is no foundation to it, then Senator Symmonds must tell the public of Barbados what is the truth. How were the rates increased? Under what instrument were the rates increased? Were they done by a telephone call after 12:00 midnight?

Mr. President, I was making the point about construction and water. I have some friends from St. John and St. Philip. Sir, we decided that we were going to move the prison because it got burned down. We decided that we were going to put it in St. Philip. I do not know the true

population of the prison, which now amounts to more than 1 000 persons. Sir, these are people who have to bathe, who have to use potable water and for whom we have to cook.

Sir, what happened is that people in the immediate vicinity have been struggling, for the last three years, to be able to have proper baths on mornings. Sir, people in the surrounding communities are having problems on mornings and every time you look around, there is an application for housing in St. Philip.

Mr. President, this Government now has the responsibility to find reservoirs, storage areas, new pipelines, to service those people in St. Philip and St. John. Sir, I must repeat this for Senator Symmonds, for whom I have the highest of respect. Sir, when I see him on That Side, I go back to those glorious days when he used to be next to me.

Asides.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, please.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: Mr. President, the one thing that we always do is to do our research. We have always prepared ourselves for when we are to speak on platforms or in any public gathering. Therefore, when I checked the Validation Bill, I said it was not a matter that I wanted to speak too much on because to me, this is a matter on which Both Sides should agree.

We can play politics on the 60 per cent as we probably played in the 38 per cent when it was \$7 at the base and moved to 38 per cent. That was the time when the then Opposition Member, the Honourable Denis Kellman, introduced the matter into the Lower Chamber.

Sir, the Barbados Labour Party said then that it was only a slight movement from \$7 to \$10. Sir, we are saying that it is a slight movement from \$20 to \$32, yet the Opposition said it was going to kill Barbadians. In 2005, when the Opposition increased the rate, it probably would have cut off a finger, but now that we have increased it, the Opposition is saying that it is going to kill Barbadians.

Mr. President, if you do not want to be political, do not get involved in politics, be neutral. I have never walked in the middle of the road. I either walk on the left, or on the right. Sir, I always either right, or wrong because I always have an opinion and when I stand in this Honourable Chamber, I have always been guided by what comes from the heart, which is on my left side, rather than touching my right side. Sir, I do not want to be too long on this, I just want to get the politics of this right. This Government is caught in having to do what is required. We are caught in an economic situation in which we have no choice.

Sir, no political party feels comfortable with increasing anything. Political parties have to go and face the polls. Do you think we are saying it is sweet to increase water rates and then to ask somebody to vote for us? Do you think if the Democratic Labour Party Government could have gotten away from this increase that they would not have done so? Sir, it is the reality that for 14 years the water situation at the Barbados Water Authority has been crying out for full attention.

I heard here today talks about a \$400 million bond, about \$150 million in loans, about a 38 per cent increase in rates, and the former Minister of the Environment let me know, sotto voce, "I never deal with water, it was not my responsibility." In other words, the Honourable Senator is saying it was somebody else.

Mr. President, I am sorry the Honourable Senator is not in his seat because I would have dealt with that matter because Cabinet, whether Barbados Labour Party or Democratic Labour Party, stands collectively responsible for these matters, therefore, the woes at the Barbados Water Authority are neither Democratic Labour Party nor Barbados Labour Party.

Sir, there is a political dimension to it because we are given a responsibility to take decisions that may be hard, but that must be taken, if we refuse to deal with the water situation that the Honourable Senator Symmonds said is in crisis. He said that, Sir, not me.

Mr. President, what does Senator Symmonds want us to do? Does he want us to do like the Barbados Labour Party and put plaster on it only for political expediency because of an upcoming election? This Government is not irresponsible, this Government is about doing what has to be done, even if it is hard. This Government is about paying the price for making hard decisions, if it is in the interest of this country because all of us have to live here. Sir, as long as I am around this Government, that is the position we will always take.

Sir, I do not know why Senator Symmonds is on That Side. He never used to be like that.

7.40 p.m.

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: Mr. President, I do not want to go on any longer but just to make one other point on the question of meters. Sir, somebody would have felt that somebody at the Barbados Water Authority, some lowly officer decided the quantum, the quality and who would put on the meters.

Mr. President, I visited in the other Chamber, as a personal assistant, when the debate on the metering system took place. Sir, it was a magical thing, the introduction of meters. It was said that people cannot hide and do not pay, that if you bathe your dog that it was going to register and that people would stop washing their cars with hoses. Sir, those are some of the comments made on behalf of meters.

Mr. President, all the bad habits we had would have disappeared with the introduction of meters back in 1997 and, Sir, 12 years later the same issues are still facing us. Sir, why is this? It is because our attitude to water has not changed. I am not spying on my mother, but she turns on the tap and goes into the yard but, that is an old habit and, Sir, old habits die hard.

Mr. President, we need a collective effort from all of us. I know that Mr. President gets a little upset every time I say "my mother", but we will deal with that in the lunchroom about why he gets nervous. Sir, I am seriously saying that when the Conference which they called the Erskine Sandiford Conference came here on sustainable energy, they called it the Sandiford Conference because it was sustainable development at Sherbourne and it was the first time we were going to use it for a big thing.

Asides.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: The President has just reminded me that he led the delegation and I would say with distinction. Sir, they showed us at that conference how to double flush toilets, half a push, an ounce drops out, double push, two ounces drop out and also how to triple push toilets. They showed us how to turn on the shower. If you stand on it, it comes on and if you step back it goes off. Sir, all those fancy things like mixing water and sand to reduce the standard of water. I went and saw all those displays. It is almost 20 years and that effort has not been used for the benefit of generations to come. Sir, not for us because we have bad habits that will die hard, but our children must be schooled in water preservation, in the proper use of water and the proper storage of water but no, Sir, we are fighting here whether or not 60 per cent would make people starve, or whether it would make them fat.

Mr. President, we have our eyes on the short-term. I think this Senate is wise enough and experienced enough with quality people in here sitting, with experiences in agriculture, in law, in engineering and in business, that we can be a vehicle to energise thoughts about how we can really motivate our younger people to make better use of the scare resources we have.

Mr. President, I thank you once again.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Griffith.

SENATOR D. K. A. GRIFFITH: Thank you, Mr. President. I rise to make a very brief contribution on what should have been just a simple Bill about the validation of the water increase from 2005. Sir, we have strayed a little bit from that point to consider a lot of other areas, but the core of that has come down to the fact that we do now have a burden at the Barbados Water Authority which must be met and we have to consider many different options for doing that. Sir, my concern comes in the fact that if we do not address the issues with the Barbados Water Authority now, that they will continue to affect Barbadians for decades to come. It needs to be that we take a very strong and clear role with regards to rectifying the Barbados Water Authority, so that it does not become a situation where my generation and my generation's children do not become a burden with bills for what are excesses now.

Mr. President, I said this because for every major debate we have had in this Chamber over the last year, to deal with how do we approach the impact of the ongoing economic crisis in the world, it has been said from the Opposition, that all we can do is look at more debt to the already debt burden of this country, so we are supposed to carry the Barbados Water Authority and the debt burden.

Sir, last year, we were supposed to carry the price of oil increases and that debt burden, and that at some point, someone would have to pay those fees because, very simply, if you look at a young persons who are now coming into the world of work and they have got their bank account and their credit cards, Sir, when the credit card bill comes at the end of the month, you need to pay it and, Sir, the more money you borrow, the more money you need to pay. It is a simple equation and it can be confusing for those listening out there to hear that the only recourse you have is to borrow because, at the end of the day, how do you pay?

Mr. President, it needs to be a consideration when we go on to discuss the water increase because I think the point has been made very clear, that increasing the cost of water is not just going to solve the problem automatically, but it does put the country in a situation to start rectifying the issues now and let it be care. If you listen to the foremost economists, it is within the period of recession that improvements, whether infrastructural or otherwise, do the best to your nation's makeup. Sir, if we can start to fix the problems that have come forward from the last 15 years and start to fix them now, we will be in a better position when the recession is finally over. We need to tighten our belts, as cliché as it may seem, and go the long and hard route but, in the long run the best route because, at the end of the day, tightening our belts now will reap benefits in the future.

Mr. President, it is unfortunate that the Democratic Labour Party has the history of coming into power at the

time when these hard decisions have to be made but it is very clear that without these decisions, the burdens we would put on our children would be great and would possibly be insurmountable.

Sir, we look to our left, we look to our right, we look to our north, we look to our south, and we look to our neighbours in the Caribbean and, indeed, the world is suffering because of the economic crisis.

I am hoping for the day when we have the opportunity to discover the impact that we have seemingly forgotten, or has gone unnoticed in Barbados. Sir, times are very hard for some people. I saw that while Barbados was able to give an increase in pay to Government workers, that you look to Jamaica and they have had to cut, you look to Trinidad and they have had to cut and you look to St. Lucia, Sir, they have also had to cut.

Mr. President, you can see the elements of the Government's economic policy to deal with these recessionary tactics.

7.50 p.m.

Sequence 53

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

SENATOR D. K. A. GRIFFITH: Sir, I have no doubt in saying that it is my firm belief that we need an increase in water rates to maintain a stable footing, that is much stronger than many of our counterparts, is something we must seriously consider, because we should not, again to use a cliché, put off for tomorrow what we can do today. If we can fix this problem now, let us start, because we need the freedom and flexibility to improve the other sectors of our economy.

If we can manage the problem now, if we can employ people, putting in place the Mains Programme, that was so much touted about under the last Administration, to replace many of these old mains, to reduce the percentage of the water that is wasted on a daily basis in the Barbados Water Authority system, if we can use that now as a form for an economic stimulus, then we will maintain a steady footing now, and be at the forefront of the pack when the economic situation makes a better turn.

I do support this Validation Bill. It is very important that we support it, whether the effects were purported by this Administration or not, it is the responsible thing to do, and responsibility is the reason, the core of us being here, for we have been entrusted by the people of Barbados to take care of their affairs. Therefore, we should not put off for tomorrow what we can do today.

I thank you.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator McClean will now wind up.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Sir, I believe, like many of my colleagues, I anticipated, or let me put it in the negative, I did not anticipate that we would have spent the time that we did on this debate, but on reflection, I believe that coming out of several contributions was the need to clarify, to elucidate, to correct, to expand, and I might start with some words where I tried to capture the exact words. It was suggested by the Honourable colleague on the Other Side that it is unconscionable that a Government should inflict on a people, and went on to speak about a rate increase.

Sir, I want to speak about the Validation Bill and the need to correct, or to make legal, to use the definition as proffered by my colleague on This Side. It was anticipated that having illegally charged higher water rates from January 1, 2005 to January 15, 2008, which subsequently came to light in more recent times, that there would have been evidence of proper judicious use of the significant resources at the disposal of the former Administration.

The day of reckoning has come, I think it was Senator Sir John Goddard who said that, because my colleague on my right, Senator Benn said, on March 31, 2006, the cumulative deficit of the Barbados Water Authority was \$123 million. The Barbados Water Authority has made losses for the last 12 years. Its debt position is in excess of \$150 million.

The interest charges on this would be approximately \$900 million a year. Therefore, if the Barbados Water Authority were to collect all of its accounts receivable, which are estimated to be about \$18 million, let me say that of those accounts receivable, all of them are not easily reconciled. There are challenges to some of those, and I personally, if I had insisted, would have owed the Barbados Water Authority, which I paid after they disconnected my water, a couple years ago, on the day before Christmas Eve. As any law abiding person, I try to pay, but I also needed water for Christmas. The point was, I was contesting that bill, as many people did. Nothing had changed then, as I told them, nothing has changed since. The bill was settled, there was no change, no burst identified on my side or their side, and things went back together. It probably was a faulty meter.

In the same way that a meter, having to respond to a turned off main, has a rush of water through the system causing a meter to spin rapidly and out of control, we also have faulty meters which do not adequately register. The point I am making is, when we start to look at the myriad problems that this country's Barbados Water Authority

faces, it was anticipated that some of that 38 per cent increase, on the then rates in 2005, would have gone somewhere to address this problem.

We are validating rates that were charged over a time-frame when this country had at its disposal significant resources. We are talking about a period, unlike now, when we are facing a worldwide economic challenge, and Barbados is now starting to see the full effects of that. There were financial resources, more than adequate, to address the many problems that this organisation faces. Therefore, when we talk about those things, we have to connect that with the issue which, as was suggested, people have to confront now.

Sir, what Barbados has to confront is a situation where the Barbados Water Authority is facing the eminent collapse of our system if nothing is done. As a consequence, we are talking about substantial sums. I do not necessarily have to repeat all of the issues.

Senator Inniss very eloquently spoke about the kinds of tools and mechanisms that could improve the situation. She talked about the SCADA System using controlled mechanisms to identify problems, the geographical information system which will bring us into the modern age, in terms of applying technology to map what we had, and all of those things. They might not have cost collectively a fraction of the kinds of monies that we need in total, but these were elements of mechanisms for improvement.

Sir, what is probably scandalous, is the fact that I heard some comments on the Other Side, which do not register officially, but we cannot help but hear, which would imply that those were small sums of money, and that makes it more scandalous. If these things were in place, the level of malfunction would not be manifested now.

What it is saying, we thought, when we look back and validated the rate increase of 2005, some of those resources would have gone to correcting the problem which leads to water loss, inaccurate billing, either on the over-billing side or the under billing side, and things of that nature.

Sir, what we saw, because I have to connect this with the issue that the people have to confront now, people have to pay more for water. The same way that oil prices were gradually increasing over several years, instead of being ignored, people would not have been faced with a major increase.

I also want to say that when you say A, you have to say B, as they say. Sir, 60 per cent is a relative figure. We have to look at the absolute figure. I would recommend that Barbadians do some investigations of what people in the

Cayman Islands would pay for equal amounts of water. I am hearing of comparable figures of three hundred and something dollars for comparable periods and comparable usage, for somebody who would probably pay \$32 or \$40 dollars. So we need to look at that.

I believe that the cavalier use of significant and financial resources during a time of plenty, and I will talk about the cavalier use. Greenland that is still there, I am not sure how much was spent and when we will finalise that. The Warrens Building, the "Golden Showers" in the South, Kensington Oval. I was made to understand, just recently, that it cost to acquire the St. Joseph Hospital \$6.1 or \$6.2 million. Yet, there was an expenditure of almost \$4 million in an inquiry, that is two-thirds of the original cost, in an inquiry that generated little, or nothing, the results of which only came to light after several years.

When we want to talk about what people have to confront, people have to confront a situation where this Government, as we have heard before, has been forced to take some hard decisions, hard decisions which at the end of the day will translate into solutions to some crises in the making, or crises that already exist.

8.00 p.m.

Sequence 54

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

Senate A19, Sequence 55, 8.00 p.m.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: I want to say that the commitment of this Government is not to say and do what people want to hear. It is about a commitment to govern. It is about a commitment to taking what we have inherited and making it better. It is about a commitment to understanding that with the bitter comes the sweet, or the other way around. In order to get the sweets, we have to take the bitter pills, and if we are a Government that has inherited a whole set of problems, we have to sort them out. We cannot close our eyes and wish them away.

I think Senator Inniss used some very interesting analogies. She talked about the drip, and we are still at that stage, the patient is not out of the casualty as yet.

Asides.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Accident and Emergency. We do not talk about casualties.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Thank you, Sir.

We are now trying to turn the casualty that we found, called Accident and Emergency, back into an Accident and Emergency Department but, Mr. President, that is a debate for another time.

The point I want to make, Sir, that as we look at a matter that is simple, we have to contextualise the decision that we have been asked to make here, which is to make legal, what was allowed to continue. I found it interesting, the debate on how the decision was made, because while as I started out earlier today and I made the point that a decision to increase a fee, for example, requires administrative and legal action taken, or legal and Administration action, sometimes these things will fall by the wayside. But sometimes one has to wonder if decisions are taken and left there, because people do not want to fully confront, or have the public fully confront those things.

The time for pretending that we do not have problems, has long passed.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: This Government is not gouging anybody's eyes out by asking for a 60 per cent, a relatively high percentage increase on what has been proven to be very low cost for the supply of water.

Several points were made in terms of the importance of conservation, et cetera, but this Government's responsibility is to protect the health and well-being of the citizens. Believe me, Mr. President, if you want to get a sick society, play around with its water supply, and we cannot. We live in a place where the rock is porous, where we rely on supplies of water from underground, and we have to manage that process well.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Thank you.

It requires taking the hard decisions, but we are not talking, Mr. President, about just charging a fee. We are talking about charging a fee which would give this agency, the Barbados Water Authority, breathing space to do what I said this morning.

Get the stakeholders together to understand this Government's vision, as interpreted by the Board, in respect of righting the wrongs at the Barbados Water Authority, in respect of ensuring that as part of our wider social policy, which is an important plank for this Administration now, as it has been in the past, to ensure that a critical input to our very existence, is important.

It is not about a partisan debate. I heard about a political debate. We are in a political Chamber. I do not know the fancy words as well as my dear friend Senator Symmonds. I know he is a wordsmith, or any of those things, but I like to put the facts before everybody, and we have to recognise that this is it, Sir.

Mr. President, when we sum up all the things that have to be done, the rate increase will not cover them. At the end of the day, the Government of Barbados inherited a financial picture for the Barbados Water Authority, which is not gloomy. It is almost indescribable and it is frightening. In fact, it is good that we cannot see that the thing is cloudy because if we really could see clearly, we would probably throw up our hands and play dead, but the Government does not have that option.

We are talking about trying to generate funds to finance the operating budget of the Barbados Water Authority, to finance the capital programme, to meet the debt service costs that are there. I talked about debt servicing of about \$9 million a year. If we have arrears of \$18 million, that is only twice the debt service, so that does not go too far in helping us out of the hole that we described.

We have to find monies to address the leakage as we talked about the percentage waste, we talked about the ageing mains, et cetera. As was pointed out, the demand for water in Barbados has been increasing. In fact, the truth is, until we can get a handle on the real population of this country, we are not even able to clearly access the demand. We also need to be able to access the practices, in terms of accessing water, because we are seeing some strange practices fall in line.

Somebody talked about tapping into the system. I have been around for several decades, but that was something that Barbadians never contemplated in the past, so we have to look at that. Therefore, we have to think in terms of generating new sources of water, and we have to provide more potable water for development purposes. And so, there is a plan to commission a reverse osmosis plant in the Belle. All of that has to be financed at a time when Barbados, as a country, has found itself into a substantial debt position. Sir, that debt position has to be managed, in a way that will allow us to continue to borrow, if and when we need to borrow. Therefore, we cannot isolate these issues. We have to look at them, holistically. We have to balance those decisions against other decisions that have to be taken.

In essence, at the end of the day, for example, if we look at the Mains Replacement Programme and we seek to pursue that programme in a way that is going to have significant effect, we are talking at about maybe \$50 million a year for several years to come. There was one

figure that I heard raised in a discussion that to right many of the wrongs, we are looking at about \$800 million in the next 10 years or less. Mr. President, that is not junk change. It is something that we have to face.

I believe that it is incumbent on all of us, yes, to recognise where we are, and why we got here, and we cannot forget that this Administration is less than two years old, and there was another one in power for three terms. Sir, that is a fact, but we have to recognise that next year, if we do not do something now, we are going to have some serious problems. It would not be 60 per cent, but it would be some other problem.

We may say keep the bills at that, but then we have dry taps, we have water that is contaminated, perhaps, and all of these things. The very things that make Barbados attractive, we have to maintain, and one of those things has to do with our water supply, not only in terms of quantity, but quality and reliability.

Mr. President, we heard what Senator Sandiford-Garner went through yesterday. Those are the things that we have started to see disappear in this country. Sir, I believe that as far as the whole matter of the Barbados Water Authority is concerned, and this validation is concerned, it is recognised that these kinds of things will happen from time to time. It is the commitment of this Government to certainly find all of those that need to be done and deal with them expeditiously but it is also the intention of this Government to minimise the likelihood of it having to have its actions validated.

I believe, Sir, that as we look back to correct this wrong, we also recognise that the Barbados Water Authority, as many of us recognise, has a critical role to play in this country. We cannot dance around the problems, we cannot wish those problems away, we have to face them head-on. Part of it is a debate that will come later, I am sure. It is about finding the resources.

Before I leave, Mr. President, I think it is necessary to probably touch on one of the issues. I think the Honourable Senator Symmonds spoke about the collision of policy approach, why the collision, and why we have not taken the Barbados Water Authority under the Fair Trading Commission. He boasted, Sir, of his professional experience in matters of these kinds. Let me say, Sir, that if that is the case, and I know that it is the case that he has experience, then he should do as Senator Alleyne suggested, to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Senate A19, Sequence 55, 8.10 p.m.

Wednesday, July 21, 2009

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: The truth is, that in order to go to the Fair Trading Commission, like any other entity, if you listen to the comments of Senior Managers of other utilities, you hear that they are preparing to go before the Fair Trading Commission. Sir, a utility has to put its house in order to make such an appeal.

Mr. President, if we look at the Barbados Water Authority at this point in time, we have to ask if it has a house because the windows, the doors and all of these things are falling off, therefore, we have to get it back to a habitable position. It would take a couple of years to sort these things out, and it would take some money to put the systems in place.

By association, I have some idea of the level of preparation it takes, and on the side of the scrutineer, the level of scrutiny involved when you go to the Fair Trading Commission. Sir, I would shudder for the Barbados Water Authority if Wendell McClean was alive and they came before him with rubbish. Sir, you know, and all of us know, that the level of scrutiny that an agency would be put under by objectors and so on, would be such that unless the organisation can present facts...

We heard that their customer information system is not anywhere close to what it should be. Financial statements, as with most statutory corporations when this Government took office, have been behind time. All of those things are issues which would have to be brought up to date, and resources would be needed to do that. I just pointed out that in order to do that you need money. This Government has been subsidising a figure of \$45 million, which was cited quite recently, on a yearly basis.

We also know that in an economic downturn in the magnitude that we now face, Government revenues are falling and can be expected to fall, or remain constant at best, or grow very slowly. Government has inherited a lot of wastage, and therefore we do not have the luxury of the large sums of unexpected VAT revenue that would have been lost in all of those examples that I gave you.

Mr. President, what that translates into is a situation in which the Government cannot go borrowing willy-nilly to finance the Barbados Water Authority, especially in light of a situation where we are paying low rates for water as is. Sir, all of this is critical to us remedying a situation which we inherited and which could not continue one day more.

Sir, I believe that this Bill has been well-ventilated, and therefore, I beg to move that it be read a second time.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

On the motion of SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN, the Senate resolved itself into Committee, Her Honour, SENATOR Miss K. F. IFILL in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Madam CHAIRMAN: The Senate is in Committee.

Clauses 1 to 2 were called and passed.

On the motion of SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN, Madam CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour, the PRESIDENT, the passing of one Bill in Committee and Mr. PRESIDENT resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Barbados Water Authority (Validation of Water and Sewerage Rates) Act, 2009.

ADJOURNMENT

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I beg to move that the Senate do now adjourn until Wednesday, July 29, 2009 at 11.00 a.m.

Mr. President, consequent on the motion of the Adjournment, I am reminded that this is the last Sitting for our Senior Reporter, Mrs. Marjorie Aldridge-Holder who would be retiring. As I look across at Mrs. Aldridge-Holder, I should ask her to present her identification card. While I would have only met Mrs. Aldridge-Holder last year on joining the Senate, my research tells me that Mrs. Aldridge-Holder has worked in the Parliament for almost 28 years.

Barbados, as some of you would know, is her adopted home. She was born in the United States of America and educated there, but she charmed some Barbadian gentleman and decided to come to Barbados. I think that she fell in love, not only with the gentleman, but with the country and has decided to stay and work with us.

I have observed and interacted with Mrs. Aldridge-Holder. She is a very elegant lady who is very helpful and generous in her support to freshmen Senators like myself, fresh ed, as some American universities would talk about, but in these Chambers, I guess we would say freshmen Senators, and her advice was truly appreciated.

Senate A19 Sequence 56

8.20 p.m.

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SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: I also understand that she would have served during the tenure of several Prime Ministers, from the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow until present, therefore, I am sure that, over the years, she would have acquired much knowledge.

Mr. President, on behalf of my Honourable Senator colleagues, I want to wish Mrs. Alridge-Holder well in her retirement. I did cautioned her that retirement really means the starting of another career, but very often the equivalent to two, because everybody knows that she is retired and is supposedly free with nothing to do and so they would find all kinds of things for her to do. Of course, the option to say no is one that I recommend she exercises as often as possible, unless it is something that she truly wants to undertake.

Mr. President, I know Mrs. Alridge-Holder has been involved as a volunteer in many associations, including the returning nationals and others wanting to settle in Barbados. Sir, I want to wish Mrs. Alridge-Holder well.

Mr. President, I believe there needs to be no invitation to come, sit and listen, although having spent 28 years here, she may want to take a break. Sir, on the other hand, she might miss it and decides that she wants to come back, then to gradually withdraw herself. Sir, withdrawing “cold-turkey” may cause her to miss it, so she is welcome to return. She is certainly invited to visit any time. Of course, I am sure if anybody wants assistance, I bet they would call on her to do so.

Mr. President, I want to say that we are happy for her. We are sad to see her leaving her capacity, but we are glad to see that she has the energy and youthfulness on her side, to enjoy all there is about Barbados and elsewhere, places that she has not been able to visit for the years she has been employed here.

Mr. President, I personally want to wish Mrs. Alridge-Holder well and on behalf of my colleagues, I do so, but I am sure that many of them would want to express their best wishes.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Thompson.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, I would wish to join with my colleague Senator on this occasion to extend sincere gratitude to Mrs. Alridge-Holder for her service, not just to the Parliament, but to the country.

Sir, the reality is that although the public sees those of us who sit at this Table and in the Other Place, those who sit on either side of the aisle, what we do, our outreach to the public, the fact that what we say is recorded, the fact

that it is put down to form part of the historical part of Hansard Record, would not be possible unless we had the highest quality professionals and support staff doing the technical job. Sir, that technical job of recording must take the most strenuous kind of attention and effort to listen to every manner and quality of speech, then to accurately record it, to try sometimes to interpret.

Mr. President, language is a fantastic thing, when one is writing. One can read a script very easily but when people are speaking, they infer a lot in an expression. In fact, the Hansard Reporter has to capture what the speaker meant, when that speaker may not have actually conveyed the full import of his or her intent at the time. Sir, I think it must be a difficult job. It requires tremendous and intense focussed concentration. At the end of the day, it requires not only good oral skills, but good writing skills to reproduce it. It also requires the Hansard Reporter to have a fairly good vocabulary.

Sir, sometimes the quality of speeches are at a very high level and sometimes people use all kinds of allegories and references to enrich what they are saying. Therefore, reporters have to be able to capture that, to follow the speaker, to know the references and to duplicate them, et cetera. Sir, we are grateful for all of those who have served, but today in particular we salute Mrs. Holder and hope that she would go into a happy retirement.

Mr. President, at another time, I had the opportunity to have served as her Member of Parliament. Sir, we serve as a Parliamentary Representative for a long time and during that time all kinds of people had to vote for you, until they would stop. Therefore, for me to have gotten three terms, would have meant that all kinds of people had to vote for me until they stopped, but such is the nature of the political cycle.

Mr. President, Mrs. Holder was a very conscientious constituent and that is something I think that Senator McClean alluded to just now in terms of citing some of her associations.

Mr. President, she is a member of BARP, a member of the American Women’s Club of Barbados, the Northern Group for Returning Nationals, among others. Therefore, Mrs. Holder not only served in here, she also had wider social and community service. She was a shop steward in the National Union of Public Workers and so had a view of the labour movement and the importance of labour and industrial relations, and the role that labour plays in bringing to Barbados productivity in the economy.

Sir, I framed her as a constituent in that context, because from her community, she would always draw to your attention problems being experienced in that community. She would do so, not in a partisan way, but

would say there is an issue that needs to be addressed. Sir, that is the hallmark of a good constituent, not to come and harangue, but to say there is an issue which needs addressing.

Sir, I thank her for her service at the various levels, her service to Barbados, to her community. She has certainly been well-trained in the particular area of expertise. In fact, it is because of the work of people like Mrs. Alridge-Holder in this Honourable Chamber, that this Parliament has become the model for several others in the Caribbean, particularly the Eastern Caribbean.

In her time, she would have helped trained many other reporters from other Caribbean islands, to give guidance and to demonstrate to other Parliamentarians who came here from other jurisdictions, to try to find out what we do, how we do it, why our Hansard is so well-done, et cetera.

Mr. President, Hansard is the only perfect and unchallengeable record of what happens in Parliament. Those persons, like Mrs. Holder, are entrusted with producing that document really carries a heavy national responsibility. We get up and speak without thought for who is recording at the time, but we know that we in this Honourable Chamber will get a high-quality reproduction.

I know there have been times when Mrs. Holder had been uncertain, where she has moved with such alacrity to come to any one of us to say that the sound system went out or that there was a challenge at that particular point, can that Honourable Member verify what was written is actually accurate? Sir, this is the ideal way for it to be done, to ensure that the record is not distorted in any way, or that there is no incorrect information going into what should be a perfect record.

Mr. President, the one thing that you had to notice about Mrs. Holder is that she was always very elegantly dressed and smiling, unfailing so in the 15 years that I have had around this Honourable Chamber. I can say that of her, you could always approach her, she would always answer and assist you and unfailing. Sir, always looks magnificent and was always smiling as she went about her work.

I think she has been a tribute to the Chambers and to Parliament by the quality of her professionalism and service. I think she has been an excellent model from which others from the Caribbean could draw. She has made an outstanding national contribution, all in a very quiet way and always smiling.

8.30 p.m.

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: I hope that she would truly enjoy her retirement and, I am sure, given the nature of her personality that she will find things to engage her time and intellect and I trust that she will continue to enjoy them as she goes about her activity.

Mr. President, one wonders, having served 28 years, if she smiles so much because she says to herself "Oh, I have heard this before, this sounds so familiar, I see the wheel turning yet again," but one day she might share the answer to that with us. Those who have observed four Prime Ministers and several changes of Government from that side of the line might want to tell you what it is they see when they look on at us and, perhaps, it accounts for her smile.

Mr. President, I trust she would go smiling into retirement. As she goes, I know certainly she goes with the blessings of Both Sides of this House.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Alleyne.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: Thank you, Mr. President, I want to stand and say, sitting on This Side of the Chamber, I am happy and always lucky to look straight across at my "sister". Sir, you know I can be very rumbustious, but she would give me the correct nod and I would take a hint. Sir, she has always been a source of inspiration to me. I have been around the House for a very long time and I want to say to you not let that quiet, calm demeanour fool you.

Mr. President, she has been focussed as a shop steward, representing the interest of the staff of this Parliament without bending. Sir, once she knew she was on good ground, she stood her ground and that calm assurance that we had, was always that she was doing in the interest and she would be fair.

I want to wish you well in your retirement, feel free anytime to come to the office at Dalkeith because, you will always be welcomed. You were a servant of the workers of Barbados and keep looking good.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Crichlow.

SENATOR the Very Reverend H. E. CRICHLow: Mr. President, I did not have the fortune to be facing Mrs. Holder as my colleague had but, on behalf of the Independent Senators, I should like to thank her for her long and fine service to Parliament and wish her every blessing, continued health and enjoyment in her retirement.

Thank you very much, Sir.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Well, it remains only for me to share in the joy which will come to this young lady. I

cannot accept that it is twenty anything years since she has been here. I recall very well, I had the distinct privilege of serving in the Other Place, I think we are permitted to call it that and, I was there on the day she arrived for the first time.

Fortunately or unfortunately, she has indicated that I was one of the persons who brought her into an understanding of what she was getting into. Of course, she had been introduced earlier by her husband to the Barbadian way of life but, it was the Barbadian Parliament, coming as she did from the United States and having myself been a denizen in that part of the world, both as a student and subsequently as a representative of Barbados, she was told by somebody, who I have always felt was officious, that she should try and keep a close relationship with me because I would help her understand the Barbadian way. I was able to tell her about the Parliament and I am able to announce now that she seems to have grown comfortably into her role.

I recall very well that Mrs. Clarice Gittens was the Senior Reporter at the time. I think that is the title of the person that is in charge of the reporters and, Mrs. Clarice Gittens was an exemplary character around here in the area of reporting. She was not only competent, but she was exquisitely competent and I remember telling Mrs. Holder at that time "If you stick close to Clarice Gittens, you will learn the business." When I came back to this Chamber subsequently, because this is where I started, as the President of the Senate, I was amazed and happy to discover that she had become the Senior Reporter.

We will not spend any time going into a history of how she moved from that position to the present position she occupies but I will merely say that her demeanor throughout all the time she has been here in those 28 years... You recognise, of course, why I would be reluctant to acknowledge 28 years because it would mean I have been around here too long, but I am not going to be overwhelmed by the cat calls, which come from areas of the Senate which, under normal circumstances I would not have acknowledged but, I am going to let it just ride, in that Mrs. Holder has demonstrated that there can be such things as cross-cultural indoctrination.

She has become a quintessential Barbadian, even though she was coming from that place called America, which is so different from the rest of the world, to a place where, finally, I think she not only found a husband, but she found peace and rest in paradise.

Mrs. Holder and I have shared a very interesting relationship over the years but, each time I have teased her about her particular association with this Parliament and I think that she has, although she has never expressed to me personally, I think that there is part of her psyche that

understands political people and more particularly, politicians.

She has gloried in the joy of working for politicians and I wish to regard this Senate as constituted, notwithstanding my former prefect the Dean, talking about Independent Senators because, in this Chamber, every Senator is nothing more and nothing less than a politician, Opposition, Government and Independent. I have often wanted to be an Independent Senator, but apparently, it is never going to happen. It is only in this Chair I get to be independent, and I, independently, say to you Mrs. Aldridge-Holder that you are too young to be retiring.

8.40 p.m.

Sequence 58

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Mr. PRESIDENT: I did not see them. I am not the Leader of Government Business. I am an independent President, and if I did not see, I did not see. I took what Senator Thompson said very seriously, when she indicated she was intrigued by the exquisite dress of this lady from the Other Place who came constantly into focus.

I want to tell you that Mrs. Holder has been a great Ambassador for all that is good and careful about the United States. I say "careful" deliberately, because she is an exquisitely careful person, who tried often not to make any errors in Barbados. So, that constantly she would come and ask if she had done the right thing in a certain circumstance, and always we were able to say, you have done the right thing.

Thank you very much for the time you have spent with us, for the joy you have given us, and for the way in which you made yourself part of the Barbadian scene, and more particularly, part of Parliament. I am pleased to be able to watch you go into retirement. It is due to come to all of them around this Table, sooner or later, mostly sooner in many respects, but later for people like Kerry Symmonds and the Clerk of Parliament, who masquerades as a very young person, often, but I happen to know his real situation. To say nothing of the former Clerk of Parliament, who has been here so long, that he is now regarded in the same vein in which George Brancker was regarded. He is the repository for all knowledge about Parliament, and they all turn to him sooner or later.

You notice I did not say anything about Nigel Jones. I have been warned not to say anything about Nigel Jones, and I will not say anything about Nigel Jones. I will just say that we all loved you while you were here, and we wish you well in your retirement. May God go with you.

Thank you.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator McClean.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, on a sadder note, we also want to acknowledge the passing of another employee of Parliament, Mrs. Muriel Bradshaw, who was a Library Assistant. I understand she passed away last Monday. I probably did not use the Library. I had research done in the Library, but I did not do it myself on those couple of occasions. I did not interface with Mrs. Bradshaw, but from my speaking to persons who would have come into contact with her on occasions, I think Mrs. Bradshaw would have been a longstanding employee who would have given significant service. I really would like to, at this time, offer condolences to her former colleagues, relatives and friends on this occasion.

I trust that the records would show her contribution in the same way we celebrated the contribution in a happier situation of Mrs. Holder. We also would want to recognise the contribution made by Mrs. Bradshaw, and, again, our deepest condolences to her family and friends.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Thompson.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Sir, again, I would wish to join my colleague Senator in extending condolences to the Bradshaw family. Again, I had a Constituency connection to the family. Sir, this matter really makes me pause, because I am at the age where both my parents are still alive, but are themselves at a very advanced age and you are conscious when your parents pass the mid-eighties, that they have had more than their three score and 10, and could go at anytime. Not that I am killing them off.

The point that I am making is, at that point you really do have a high degree of empathy for people who are losing parents. So I am aware of Mrs. Bradshaw's service to the Parliament. In fact, she would still have been working when I first came to the Parliament in 1994, therefore, I would have had an opportunity to interact with her and to see her known degree of professionalism. I think she retired as a result of ill- health, and has had to deal with a number of health challenges over time. She was really very loving and supported by her husband, children and family.

In fact, it is very interesting in the case of Mrs. Bradshaw, that this Parliament spawned a romance. I do not think it is a secret that Mrs. Bradshaw's son came to the Parliament one day to his mother, and before he saw her, saw another member of the parliamentary staff and his eye never left her. They married earlier this year, only a few months ago, and Mrs. Bradshaw was alive and very much in attendance at the wedding. So she was able to see this

romance, where she introduced the two, blossomed. So this Parliament has not only produced excellent Reporters and staff, it has produced romance. That young lady is still very much a member of the staff of this Parliament and continues to live in St. James.

Mrs. Holder therefore contributed to...

Mr. PRESIDENT: I think it is the hour.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: No, it is not the hour or lower blood sugar. It is the age, Sir.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I do not know about these things.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: I apologise.

Mrs. Bradshaw's service, therefore, to the Parliament has been wide. Again, there was a time when the Reporters were not as well-trained as they came to be in more recent years, the Reporters and that level of staff really embraced their training and did extremely well, coming to grips with a lot of technology and new ways of servicing the Parliament, recording the speeches, and so on, and Mrs. Bradshaw was part of that changing process for the technology and service. She gave excellent service to the Parliament.

In fact, I remember very well when she had to retire through ill health. Your Honour was still very much, if my memory serves me correctly, in the Other Place at the time, and we did pay tribute to her because of the quality of work and her conscientiousness and excellent manner, and so on. So we have been well served.

I extend condolences on behalf of the Opposition to the family of Mrs. Bradshaw, her husband, who is very much alive, her children, and in particular her son and daughter-in-law, who is a member of the staff of this Parliament. We hope and pray that Mrs. Bradshaw will rest in peace, and our prayers and condolences for their comfort in their time of mourning, are with the Bradshaw family.

I thank you.

8.50 p.m.

Sequence 59

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

Senate A19, Sequence 60, 8.50 p.m.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Dean Crichlow.

SENATOR the Very Reverend H. E. CRICHLow: Mr. President, on behalf of the Senators nominated by the Governor-General...

Asides.

SENATOR the Very Reverend H. E. CRICHLow: I should like to express our condolences to the family of Mrs. Bradshaw and to her friends on her passing.

Thank you.

Asides.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I would want to add the voice of the President of the Senate and my family. On behalf of my family, I want to share in all that has been said and to extend to the family of Mrs. Bradshaw our condolences in the circumstances.

I regret very much that we were not aware of the passing of this dear lady and, therefore, we may not have been able to show our condolences in the way to which we have become accustomed, but I am going to ask the Senate if you will, to let us stand in our place and express our moments of silence for this dear lady.

Three minutes' silence was observed.

Mr. PRESIDENT: May she, and all of the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen.

Thank you.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I beg to move that the Senate be adjourned until Wednesday, July 29, 2009 at 11.00 a.m.

The question that the Senate do now adjourn until Wednesday, July 29, 2009 at 11.00 a.m. was put to the Senate and agreed to and Mr. PRESIDENT adjourned the Senate accordingly.

Senate A19, Sequence 60, 8.53 p.m.

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CRICHLLOW, Senator the Very Reverend H. E.

GODDARD, Senator Sir JOHN STANLEY

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SANDIFORD-GARNER, Senator Mrs. V. I.
SYMMONDS, Senator K. D.
THOMPSON, Senator Miss H. E.
TROTMAN, Senator Sir ROY

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

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

EDITORIAL QUERIES

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

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

Q2. Dates in the text. The source gives ‘Wednesday, July 21, 2009’ (21 July 2009 was a Tuesday). The weekday and date do not agree; printed as in the source.

Q3. Order No. 2, take-slip Senate A19, Sequence 45, about 6.20 p.m.. Senator K. D. Symmonds’ speech resumes after the take-slip in mid-sentence (‘lure ourselves there.’); some words appear to be missing. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Order No. 2, Senator P. I. Inniss. Senator P. I. Inniss is headed ‘Mrs.’ in some speech headings and ‘Miss’ in others and in the PRESENT list. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Speech headings. Two headings carry a zero for a letter: ‘SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN’ and ‘SENATOR Sir R0Y TROTMAN’. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Adjournment. The retiring Senior Reporter’s name is spelt both ‘Aldridge-Holder’ and ‘Alridge-Holder’. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The Senate met on Wednesday, 22nd July, 2009 at 12.10 p.m., with the President, Senator Dr. B. Taitt, in the Chair; prayers were led by Senator the Very Reverend H. E. Crichlow. The Leader of the Senate, Senator the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McClean, laid five papers, among them the Barbados Water Authority (Water and Sewerage Rates) Regulations, 2009 and the Report of the St. Joseph Hospital Commission of Inquiry. Standing Order 45(2) was suspended, the Barbados Water Authority (Validation of Water and Sewerage Rates) Bill, 2009 and the Arts and Sports Promotion Funds Regulations, 2006 (Validation) Bill, 2009 were read a first time, and notice was given of a Resolution vesting Crown land at Cliffden, St. Philip and Guinea, St. John in the National Housing Corporation.

Order No. 1 was the Resolution to approve the lease of Herbert House, Fontabelle, St. Michael to the Cricket Legends of Barbados Inc. Senator McClean presented it as recognition of the contribution of Barbados’ cricket

legends; on a point of order she told Senator Miss H. E. Thompson that the lease was for 20 years at a nominal \$1 200 a year, with an option to renew for 25 years. Senator Thompson supported it but argued that the Legends had let commercial opportunities pass, including at Cricket World Cup. After two suspensions caused by a fault in the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation’s broadcast of the Chamber, Senator Dr. F. L. Chandler said the company had a business plan prepared around 2007, and Senator K. D. Symmonds turned to the governance of West Indies cricket and the need for the West Indies Cricket Board to answer to political authority. The Resolution was agreed to.

Order No. 2 was the Barbados Water Authority (Validation of Water and Sewerage Rates) Bill, 2009. Senator McClean explained that the water rate increase of 1st January, 2005 had been collected without the necessary legislative action and so needed validation. Senator Thompson spoke of brown water, of \$41.1 million agreed in October 2005 for mains replacement and \$150 million raised in a bond issue, opposed placing water in the hands of a profit-driven private entity, and argued that the public was being asked to bear too many increases. Senator Sir Roy Trotman spoke of the labour movement as an agent of change and the need for the Authority’s workers to be consulted. Senator Sir John Stanley Goddard noted the island’s 22 well sources and seven boreholes, and questioned financing mains replacement from revenue.

Senator the Hon. H. LaV. Benn said the 2005 increase had been an interim one of 38 per cent across the board granted under the Barbados Labour Party Government. Senator Chandler questioned why regulations were being validated years after taking effect, attributing it to a lack of accountability in the Public Service. Senator Symmonds spoke of the SCADA system and of rusty water in Bagatelle damaging solar water heaters. Senator Miss P. I. Inniss defended what she described as a 60 per cent increase, amid points of order from Senators Thompson and Symmonds. Senator Mrs. V. I. Sandiford-Garner called for remedial work at the Authority, Senator J. A. C. Hutson praised the quality of the water, and Senator D. McD. Alleyne said that in the 1994 drought the Authority had supplied 97 per cent of households. Senator D. K. A. Griffith said an increase was needed.

Replying, Senator McClean said Government had been subsidising the Authority by about \$45 million a year and could not borrow ‘willy-nilly’ to finance it. The Bill was read a second time, passed in Committee with Senator Miss K. F. Ifill in the Chair, and read a third time and passed.

On the motion for the adjournment, Senator McClean marked the retirement after some 28 years of the Senior Reporter, Mrs. Marjorie Aldridge-Holder, and Senators Thompson, Alleyne and Crichlow and the

President added tributes. Condolences were then expressed on the death of Mrs. Muriel Bradshaw, a Library Assistant of Parliament. The Senate was adjourned until Wednesday, 29th July, 2009 at 11.00 a.m.

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