
THE SENATE DEBATES

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

SECOND SESSION 2008 – 2013

THE SENATE

Wednesday, March 25, 2009

The Senate met in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, on Wednesday, March 25, 2009, at 11.10 a.m.

PRESENT

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

Her Honour SENATOR K. F. IFILL, M.B.A., B.Sc.(Hons.), (Deputy President)

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

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

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

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)

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

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

SENATOR the Very Rev. H.E. CRICHLow, G.C.M., B.A. (Hons.) Duenelm

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

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

SENATOR J.A.C. HUTSON, B.C.H., MRAC.

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

Prayers were led by Rev. Father Errington Massiah.

Mr. PRESIDENT: This Senate is in session.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR THE PRESIDENT

Mr. PRESIDENT: I am in receipt of communication from three Senators. Perhaps I should read the letter from Senator Trotman.

He writes to request my kind permission for him to be absent from any meetings, or any functions required by the Senate in the period March 2 to 27, 2009. This absence will be occasioned by his having to fulfill duties at the level of Workers Group Chairman, Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation.

Senator Trotman regrets any inconvenience which his absence will have caused.

I am also in receipt of communication from Senator Griffith, who is somewhat under the weather and Senator Thompson who is out of the country on business.

Those Senators have asked to be excused and I hear no objections, I therefore deem that they have been properly excused.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS

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

1. Report on the Audit of the Accounts of the Catastrophe Fund, 2007.
2. Report on the Audit of the Accounts of the Severance Fund, 2004 and 2005.

3. Report on the Audit of the Accounts of the Unemployment Fund for the years 2004 and 2005.
4. Annual Report of the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. for the year 2007.
5. Annual Report of the Barbados International Business Promotion Corporation Invest Barbados for the year 2007.
6. Duties, Taxes and Other Payment (Exemptions) (Express Crane Services Inc.) Order, 2009.
7. Value Added Tax (Remit Barbados McBride Caribbean) Order, 2009.
8. Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemptions) (Salvation Army) Order, 2009.
9. Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemptions) (Sustainable Barbados Cycling Center Inc.) Order, 2009.
10. Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemptions) (Scotia Trust and Merchant Bank Limited), Order, 2009.
11. Annual Report for (The Port Inc.) for the year 2007.
12. Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemptions) (Foster and Ince Cruise Services Inc.) Order, 2009.
13. Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemptions) (Edghill Associates Limited) Order, 2009.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Sir, I beg to move that Standing Orders No. 22(1) and 45(2) be suspended for the remainder of the Sitting.

The question was put and agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I beg to give notice of the following Bills and ask that they be read a first time:

1. Appropriation Bill, 2009.
2. Income Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2009.
3. Property Transfer Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2009.
4. Land Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2009.

On the motion of SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN, the Bills were read a first time.

The question was put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 1 – SECOND READING OF THE APPROPRIATION BILL, 2009

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator McClean.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, as we commence the debate on the Estimates for the financial year 2009-2010, or as the Order Paper says, the Bill which will provide for a sum of money specifically, \$1 920 772 158 from the Consolidated Fund to run the affairs of this country, as we do this for the second time as the new Administration, we are doing so against the background of a world financial system in turmoil.

In fact, I have seen the situation facing the world economy described as dramatic and unprecedented. Depending on where you are in the world, it appears that we can describe it in one of several ways. We can describe it as being struck by an economic hurricane, a tornado or even a cyclone. We in this part of the world certainly know the dangers of those things.

In the major and, indeed, if not all financial centres around the world, there is a preoccupation with the need to revisit existing public policy, and the way business in the private sector is conducted.

In Barbados, as a small open economy, we are being affected by international developments. In fact, coming out of the debates which went on in the Other Place, I have been asked by some individuals to help them to understand the situation, and how and why we are, or will be affected. I therefore propose to spend some time speaking to the background to this international global crisis, explaining in the process the suggested origins or causes of the crisis and how it has come to envelop the entire world.

Sir, by doing so, I believe it will become clear why we, as a government, are pursuing these strategies. We intend to continue, and the Estimates of Expenditure why they have been developed in the way they have been developed to support the execution of these strategies.

In effect, it should become clear that there are multiple factors influencing the scope and size of these Estimates. In addition to the overview, I feel compelled also to say something during the course of my presentation about the discussion of the local economic situation, focussing on a number of indicators commonly cited as indicators of the health of our economy.

Sir, attempting to understand the international situation, some concerned citizens have signalled to me that they are left confused as they try to understand the local situation.

11.30 a.m.

I trust, therefore, Mr. President, that I may be able to assist in bringing some clarity, by the end of my contribution. If I may start, Sir, by saying something about the rationale behind the Estimates.

As you know, Sir, the Estimates exercise is about allocating resources. Small open developing countries like Barbados typically have limited resources. We also have what is referred to as the soft currency, meaning simply that we cannot, outside of the borders of Barbados and, to some extent, the Region, transact business in our local currency. It is, therefore, of crucial importance that we pay special attention to the allocation of those resources.

Historically, Mr. President, Barbados has put its resources into programmes and projects that increase welfare and contribute to raising the standard of living for Barbadians. Clearly, as we look at the Estimates, we will see that this trend continues. Emphasis is placed on health, education and housing to name a few. These, for example, absorb most of the financial resources.

As described above, this is the general approach to the Estimates exercise. However, this year's allocations have to be crafted much more carefully because of the unfolding of the economic and financial scenario around the world, and the likely impact and the impact so far, I must, of course, say that it has had and could have on the Barbadian economy.

Mr. President, I consider it imperative that I do this as the discussion on the allocation of funds to specific Ministries, Departments and Heads, really will mean little to those citizens who listen to these debates, unless those allocations are put into some sensible and realistic context. I am positive that will be said about these by my colleagues, and the Honourable Chamber, as was done in the Other Place.

Therefore, in my initial comments, I propose to speak in broad terms, setting the context and explaining the framework within which this Appropriation Bill would have been constructed.

If I may now touch, Sir, on the causes of the financial crisis of 2007-2008, or the beginnings of the crisis, as we now see it unfolding. Mr. President, to speak of the international financial crisis as a set of words, is not enough. Therefore, I will take some time, to explain some of the suggestions, or to share some of the suggestions, as to its origin and its impact on our economy.

Across the world, public sector and private sector decision-makers and individual citizens, of course, are preoccupied with understanding and trying to solve the

crisis. There is a school of thought that it had its origins in the sub prime mortgage market of the United States of America.

I will explain that concept a bit because I recognise that with this crisis, there are a lot of terms being played out in the media, on the lips of decision-makers, and on the lips of the citizens, but sometimes some people query exactly what we are talking about.

This business practice of offering to the consumers, what are called, sub prime mortgages came about at a time when the regulatory and business environment in the major markets, particularly the United States of America, were pushing for deregulation, the notion that the free market would obtain, and would ensure that things are regulated properly, and they will regulate themselves.

Mr. President, self regulation was perhaps seen as the order of the day. Free market practices were seen as the best way to go, and as this happened, we also saw the impact that this attitude, or this orientation to deregulation had on business practice and, unfortunately, the negative impact it has had on business ethics, and the focus on short-term profitability.

As I said, Mr. President, it is important that I elaborate on the term "sub prime mortgage market". This term refers very simply to a loan product or service, a practice in business of lending mortgage loans to what are classified as high-risk clients, persons who could barely afford to service loans at the initial repayment level. The terms and conditions of these loans served to make them even more risky for the borrower.

I want to emphasise this too, because, I think, as we observe this country, we would recognise the regulations of successive Governments. Sir, I have to recognise that, as a country, we have been fortunate to operate within certain parameters from which we do not deviate too far, as various Governments. But it also speaks to why, perhaps, we may see ourselves not facing some of the conditions that befall some other countries.

As I was saying, Sir, a sub prime loan is one in which the individual is high-risk. The terms and conditions of the loan, as I said before, serve to make it more risky and, for this reason, many of the loans were classified as hybrid adjustable rate mortgages. Sir, these fancy terms have simple explanations.

Basically, what it meant was that they were mortgages which were fixed in terms of the interest rates charged for two or three years, and adjustable thereafter. Sir, this created a lot of problems. When in the case of these banks, companies create products like this, they anticipate that there will be some bad debt, so to speak. There will be some defaults.

Therefore, lending institutions, as part of their business, would allocate a certain percentage of the loan portfolios, as bad debts. They anticipated that would happen. However, between 2004 and 2006, interest rates in the United States of America rose from around 1 per cent to about 5.35 per cent, and this clearly had a ripple effect, in relation to this category of loan product, these sub prime mortgage loans. This led to the slowing down in the housing market.

Sir, what happened was that even in the regular loan market, the cost of borrowing had gone up and the demand for housing had fallen, and that translated into a decrease in the prices. Sir, it also meant, on the other hand, that persons who were already involved in a transaction, or who had entered into a transaction with a commercial bank, for example, or a mortgage entity, found himself or herself having to pay more money.

If you recall, Mr. President, I indicated that those persons were challenged already, to meet the debts, and with the increased cost, some of them found it impossible. Sir, as the cost of the mortgages increased and the repayments moved in this same direction, borrowers found themselves unable to service their loans, and a rise in the numbers of defaults. We also saw in that market, the quality of mortgage loans declined.

Now you may ask, Mr. President, what has this got to do with our discussion of the Estimates and, what has it got to do with Barbados?

The reality is that we live in a globalised world and that will be demonstrated over and over again, and it is being played out in the marketplace. There was, therefore, a spate of defaults and foreclosures. Sir, people had to hand over the keys to their houses; the banks called in the loans; people could not pay and, therefore, lost their houses, in plain and simple words.

Mr. President, I read somewhere that between 2007 and 2008, in the United States of America, for example, foreclosures jumped 81 per cent from the previous years, with more than three million foreclosure filings, and you can think of that, but that was domestic, so far.

Sir, the reality also is that there is a relationship between financial institutions worldwide. Therefore, what we say, in terms of relating this, as I said, to the Barbados

Estimates, is that for us, we were affected because of our dependence on foreign exchange earnings in the US market, our dependence on foreign exchange earnings in Europe and around the world, because of tourism, our offshore financial sector, and other kinds of business and economic activity.

What happened in relation to these sub prime mortgages, Sir, is that in the United States of America, and outside of the United States of America, other financial institutions had invested in these loans. Again, this was one of the strategies of investment, and the spreading of business risk, et cetera.

11.40 p.m.

Mr. President, through a process of securitisation, which, basically, is a process of selling part or all of a mortgage portfolio to another bank or other types of investors... Perhaps, Mr. President, you can see the connection starting to happen. We have to get foreign investments. We benefit from foreign direct investment. We benefit as a nation from remittances from Barbadians overseas.

Mr. President, I am sure that caught up in this sub prime mortgage crisis might have been a couple Barbadians. If they were not directly affected, they might have been affected at their workplace and so on.

Mr. President, in terms of looking at the impact on the international financial sector, the commercial banks and other financial institutions, what we had is a situation where because of securitisation, as I defined it just now, the mortgage lenders transferred their risk to other persons who saw that they probably could buy these at a discount and, on the repayment, would earn interest, et cetera.

Mr. President, the intention then for the companies that offer mortgages was to transfer their initial risk off of their balance sheets to the investors in the economy, or in other economies, who bought those assets. Mr. President, a North American bank sold some of those sub prime mortgages or elements of their portfolio to British banks, French banks and banks across the European Union. Some of them also retained substantial proportions of those portfolios.

Mr. President, the provider of the mortgage became the bad debt of a multiplicity of financial institutions across the world. Mr. President, what we are, no doubt, aware of by looking at that is that globalisation is very real. For us, therefore, we must recognise that somewhere in there we have been and will be affected.

Sir, our economy is affected by developments in other economies especially those of our major trading

partners as I indicated before. We must, therefore, recognise some obvious facts. Mr. President, as we make our projection of expenditures and revenues, we cannot do that in isolation, we have to do that within the context of the realities of the international situation which influences small open economies like ours.

Mr. President, what are some of the facts that we need to focus on when we talk about this crisis and so on? As I said before, because of that and other kinds of financial decisions which have impacted on the performance of critical companies, our trading partner economies are in decline. In fact, one could argue that they are currently facing the worst economic and financial crisis since the Great Depression. Most of us, I do not think, would have been around at the time.

Mr. President, this depression, or this downturn, or decline, applies to the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Germany, which is considered the strongest economy in the European Union is also challenged. I recall reading as far back as mid last year in relation to Dubai... Many of us look to Dubai and the United Arab Emirates because of the impact of oil prices. Of course, we know that oil prices sky-rocketed and then plummeted in an equally dramatic fashion.

Sir, when we look at the luxurious jurisdictions, for want of a better word, such as Dubai and so on, the countries which comprise the United Arab Emirates, we saw in the last few years a tremendous increase in investments in what I would describe as exotic, high-end, high-price real estate. Mr. President, like the sub-prime market, 2008 saw the beginning of defaults. This is important because I want to set the stage of understanding that when we look at Barbados, we have to be realistic within the context of what transpires around us.

Sir, these defaults, in the case of Dubai, were not in the sub-prime market, quite the opposite. They are defaults among high-end real estate clients, persons who were investing multimillion dollars in condominiums and in suites in fancy hotels, et cetera. These persons also found themselves affected by what came out of the decline in the sub prime market.

Mr. President, another effect of this which would have triggered defaults in Other Places such as I described just now in Dubai was the fact that, as a consequence of the troubles of the sub prime market, the availability of credit started to dry up. Mr. President, as these things started to happen, and as credit dried up, people started to lose their homes and, as we would imagine, the whole question of confidence in the future and in the financial situation started to be affected in a negative way.

Mr. President, as these economies came under stress, there has been a clear impact on unemployment levels. Sir, I heard references in Barbados to unemployment levels all the time, and I want to suggest that the figures in Barbados are not much worse, if at all, at this point in time than those in some of these developed countries.

Mr. President, I indicated earlier that Germany is considered one of Europe's strongest economies. Sir, the 2009 statistics that I looked at suggested that unemployment in the United States of America, in the first couple months of this year, stood at around 8 per cent. In relation to France, the figure I saw was 7.8 per cent. We can round that off to 8 per cent. In Germany, the strongest economy in the European Union, it has risen in these first few months to 7.9 per cent. We can round that off to 8 per cent. In Spain, it is almost doubled that. The figure is 14 per cent.

Mr. President, I am not an economist. Unfortunately, I cannot consult the greatest economist that this country saw, my brother, but...

Mr. PRESIDENT: If you wish to consult him, that is not difficult.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: No, it is not. I am sure he would inspire me nevertheless.

There is a suggestion in an article I read that if we calculate the unemployment rate in the United States of America on the same basis that it is calculated in Germany, and I need to do some more homework, that we would find that the United States of America rate would actually look like 15 per cent.

Mr. President, I have cited those statistics to demonstrate that we in the world, and we in Barbados as part of that world, are facing some very similar challenges, unemployment being one of those.

Sir, in addition to that, when we try to set the context to understand the economic framework within which we make these decisions, the International Monetary Fund forecast that during 2009, for the first time in about 60 years, the entire global economy, not my words, will decline. Mr. President, this is somewhat unusual certainly since the Great Depression.

Mr. President, I will explain what is unusual about it. In the past, what we typically saw manifesting itself was a situation where, in a downturn, the developed economies would be offset by growth among developing or emerging economies.

Sir, if the developed countries, let us say many of the countries in Europe, saw a decline in their growth, it was

offset by growth in the developing world, but that is not happening and we are seeing a decline around the world.

Mr. President, I have sought in those words to set the kind of international context, and the question now is what are the effects on Barbados. Mr. President, if I may bring this situation home, I hope that it would be obvious that this recession will negatively impact Barbados in its various sectors, exports, tourism arrivals, tourist expenditures and foreign investments, both in the manufacturing and international business sectors.

11.50 a.m.

We could anticipate that those Barbadians who commit themselves to remitting some of their earnings in other countries, North American, Britain, et cetera, would find themselves being challenged to maintain the same level of remittances. Therefore, we will see challenges to our foreign exchange earnings and to our ability to engage in certain kinds of new products, and so we will be challenged to focus on how we utilise the foreign exchange that we generate.

Mr. President, I also want to say a little about why we have to be cautious, prudent and careful. The nature of our business, and I will use tourism as an example, is such that there has been what I would call a lag effect. Sir, I believe I might have spoken to this on another occasion in this Honourable Chamber. If we focus on passenger behaviour in the cruise sector, what we would find would be a situation where a significantly large percent of cruise passengers often make decisions about a cruise in advance.

The policies of the cruise lines typically dictate that there are no refunds, and so you might find persons who might have booked a cruise a year ago, would opt to take that cruise rather than lose his or her payment. However, we could anticipate that we would see - and there are some reports - a reduction in spending.

Mr. President, I am happy to suggest that all is not doom and gloom in that respect, notwithstanding that Barbados continues to be a very attractive destination, not only for cruise passengers, but for long-stay visitors. Therefore, it is important for us, as a government and as a people, to pay some attention to ensuring that we provide the quality of service, and that we maintain our tourism product in a way that maintains a high level of competitiveness in the industry. Notwithstanding that, given the forces outside of Barbados - and I tend not to use the jargon of the economists but I think they call it "exogenous" forces - we will expect to have some declines in our key sectors.

Mr. President, in addition, because of the financial turmoil, there is or has been, for some time, an attempt to

use, perhaps as a scapegoat, the offshore banking sector as one of the explanations for this crisis. But I think as an offshore financial jurisdiction which is under threat, Barbados needs and has obviously done much at the moment is doing more, to establish for the world that we, as an offshore jurisdiction, are by no means a tax haven.

Barbados is a jurisdiction which has sought to maintain the positive reputation it has built up over the years since it has been a player in that sector. We operate on the basis of treaties that have been negotiated with our partners. We operate within the framework set up by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and, therefore, we are proud to say that we have been making these representations.

Mr. President, there is a plan which is unfolding as I speak, to ensure that key decision makers, for example, very soon the Leaders of the G-20, those powerful developing countries, including the United States of America and the countries of the European Union, are going to meet in London. I was happy to hear that reported only today that initiatives taken and implemented have had some positive impact on shifting - and hopefully it would be a complete shift - of mind set, in terms of recognising the need to differentiate between jurisdictions and to recognise that Barbados, perhaps, characterises best practices in this area.

Mr. President, what I am suggesting to this Honourable Chamber is that there is evidence that global events are beginning to hit home. We have seen tourist arrivals declining somewhat. When we look at the provisions of the Estimates, we will see that Government has in the financial year which ends now and certainly the one to come, made provisions to support this very critical sector. Government has also made provision to support, not only the hotel sector, but the ancillary services.

Mr. President, I have deliberately opted to save some of the references to specific dollars figures for later. I think, as I said before, it is important to contextualise the situation of determining Estimates and to paint a broad picture. High profile projects, as we know, have been affected by the credit squeeze. I know that much has been said and written about the Four Seasons Project, as an example, and I anticipate, or rather hope that there would be some movement in relation to that project in the very near future. I anticipate that we will see that project back on stream soon.

Mr. President, I want to comment on a debate of the Other Side because I think part of what I started to say was that I was asked by some persons to clarify. Sir, to the extent that some persons were confused by what they would have heard in the Other Place, I think it is necessary for me to try to provide some clarification. Some people

are confused as to the current economic challenges and the international events that led to these. I sought to explain, not in a totally comprehensive way, but to highlight some of the critical factors which have given rise to the problem.

Mr. President, it is against that background that I need to focus more directly on what currently obtains in Barbados, as this certainly has informed this year's Appropriation Bill. Sir, I am happy to recognise that Barbadians are tuning in, more and more, and are paying rapt attention to Parliamentary debates, and that they are tuning into our debates in this Honourable Senate. As I listened, I was concerned that I was getting some mixed signals and I, therefore, felt that I should spend some time focussing on those.

I heard some comments which, as I suppose in keeping with the discipline in economics which, I think, if I remember correctly, is referred to as the dismal science, I may be prejudiced because I did not do well in economics, notwithstanding the help my brother tried to give me. He was my first lecturer and, probably would have almost thrown up his hands in despair, but I think I have come at this stage to be able to understand some basic concepts, in terms of macroeconomics, monetary policies and fiscal policies, et cetera.

Mr. President, I am referring to this because I think that as we talk about the Estimates, and as we try to debate and discuss these issues, as a society, as spokespersons, as policymakers, as decision-makers, we have to ensure that we paint an accurate picture of the situation facing this country.

I spoke of doom. I spoke of decline, but we have to be careful that as we speak of the challenges of the difficulties facing not only Barbados, but the world, when we put numbers or statistics out there, that we do so in a manner that says this is what it is, this is what the record is and that when we use a term, that we do not choose to define it in our own way but that we use what are considered standard definitions which appear as indicated by our financial reports from our institutions, Central Bank's statistics, et cetera.

12:00 noon.

I would have seen references, and when we analyse our Central Bank of Barbados Report, we hear of reserves and we hear of the net international reserves, et cetera.

Mr. President, basically, I want to emphasis that we need to focus on statistics and that we need to focus on how statistics are used. Sir, as people who influence the opinion of the public here and in the Other Place, we might be in a position to influence the decisions, and more specifically, the financial decisions of persons within the economy and

persons looking in to invest in this economy, and we want to be sure we do not send the wrong signal by using information in a way that creates a different picture, or a picture which does not fit the realities of the situation.

Mr. President, what I am basically saying is that when we start to talk numbers, we have to recognise that any reference to statistics can serve to either clarify, confuse or even misrepresent a situation. I spoke to a few persons and, as I have said, they have asked me to talk about some of these things. I must admit that few persons like myself may understand some of it, but when we get into the jargon of economics we also lose a lot of people. Sir, we lose people. They think they understand but, quite frankly, they do not understand so I will try in this presentation to review some of the clarification.

Mr. President, in looking at the statistics from the Central Bank of Barbados, when commenting on the net international reserves - I am speaking in general terms - I want to emphasise that they mean something very specific in the context of our financial situation and, Sir, not only to Barbados.

Mr. President, it must be pointed out that the concept of net international reserves was first used during the 1991 to 1993 stabilisation programme with the International Monetary Fund and it was introduced for a very specific purpose. Sir, I do not have to go back into the challenges that the world was facing at that time and, certainly, Barbados as well. Sir, it was introduced to ensure that when we talk about measuring foreign reserves, those reserves included only reserves that the Government and the Central Bank of Barbados actually owned.

Sir, when people use numbers we want to be sure we are comparing apples with apples. If we do not, we may be saying something, sending one message but when we start to analyse, perhaps, that message should not have gone out because it does not accord with what is considered the convention.

Mr. President, the Government and the Central Bank of Barbados have no control over the foreign reserves held by the commercial banks in Barbados. When referring to Government's reserves, et cetera, we have to be very clear. Sir, I want to repeat that the Government and the Central Bank of Barbados have no control over the foreign reserves held by commercial banks. They may set certain policies but they cannot, in layperson's language, dictate to them or have absolute control.

Therefore, the criteria which is used by all countries state that for reserves to be included by the monetary authorities, in this case, our Government and the Central Bank of Barbados, that they have to be under their control

and available to meet a balance of payments needs if this becomes necessary.

Mr. President, what I am really saying is that when we start to talk about reserves, reserves are not reserves. We have certain types of reserves when we look at a composite position and then we have to disaggregate those to identify those reserves that fall under the control of Government and the Central Bank of Barbados and those that do not.

Mr. President, this is important because when we look at these numbers and we speak of a decline in foreign reserves or foreign exchange and we use numbers that are not the convention, we may paint one picture and, according to the convention, there is another picture painted.

Mr. President, I want to emphasise that all references to net international reserves by the Central Bank of Barbados whether at Press Conference, during speeches, or other presentations as well, in their publications have always meant the net international reserves of the monetary authorities, that is, the Government of Barbados and the Central Bank of Barbados. For example, at August 1994, the net international reserves stood at \$251 million and at December 2007 the figure stood at \$1.5 billion. Sir, I think we need to be careful about these things.

Mr. President, I could go into probably citing some other statistics. Sir, as I have said, if we look at the figures in terms of 2007, they stood at \$1.5 million approximately and one year later at December 31, 2008, they stood at \$1.342 billion and, Sir, this is a decline of \$206 million. We could then look at the level of international reserves held by commercial banks. Sir, I do not think it is necessary to go into a lot of statistics.

Mr. President, I want to reiterate this point. Sir, when we start to dialogue around statistics, we want to be speaking a common language so that we do not confuse lay-persons, or even young economists, in the making. We could also ask ourselves because this is also important. In addition to getting the figure right, we also have to get right the reasons for any changes in those figures. When we look at declines, we recognise, as I mentioned earlier in my presentation that this country, like all countries around the world, face a dramatic increase in oil prices and that we have to pay for oil in foreign currency.

Mr. President, the first half of the year we had a situation where there were dramatic increases in oil prices and this led to greater demand for foreign exchange to do that and, we could go on to look at those kinds of performances. In essence, Mr. President, in looking at the question of the discussion of the context within which we are making decisions about how we allocate the resources

of Government within the Appropriation Bill, or within the Estimates, we have to bear all those things in mind.

We also have to understand what have been the trends in the situation. In essence, Barbados, like most of the world, has been facing harsh conditions. We are an open economy, one in which we have to respond to the realities of the international economy and so, Mr. President, as we start to look at this, what I have painted is, to a large extent, part of the picture, a picture which talks about the external factor, which are going to impact on any decision that the Government has to make. Therefore, Barbados, like all the other economies around the world, is facing similar challenges.

Mr. President, in terms of the other half of the picture, so to speak, having established that we are challenged by difficult economic times, internationally and so on, our Estimates are based on the other part by an understanding, or an acceptance of a philosophy which would guide the actions of this Administration. We are grounded in a philosophy which informs the priorities of this Government. If we think in terms of the situation facing this Government, we have to recognise that the philosophy of the incumbent Administration...

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: ..I would say new because we are still new and in another few months we will be obviously a little more mature, but we are new in this term.

12.10 a.m.

The philosophy of the Government is one in which there is a recognition that social policy and appropriate relevant policy must drive all other decisions of the Government. Therefore, based on that, and our commitment to provide the best opportunities for Barbados, I would argue that this Administration has chartered a path, which is built around some basic or major commitments or factors that we recognise.

It is based on a recognition that we must put people first. It is also premised on the recognition that the quality of the life of those people will be affected, among other things, by the environment, physical and otherwise within which they live. Specifically in relation to the physical environment, the strategies going forward that are captured and financed by the Estimates, recognise that Barbados must be the green society of Latin America in the Caribbean.

We are committed to this and, therefore, when we look at the environmental policies that will play out, the programmes that will translate those policies into some

very direct actions recognise that we have to work towards those things, therefore, a focus on alternative energy.

Sir, in many situations we have had reference to greening. We have had references to alternative energy and as oil prices move up and down, the interest waxes and wanes according to how they move up and down. There is on the part of this Government, as we will see, when we look at what will be done by the Minister of the Environment, that Barbados is committed to building on that.

We have developed this economy largely on at least one of the major pillars being tourism. The quality of our environment will, in fact, determine people's interest in continuing to visit Barbados.

Another pillow of our economy is in the area of the financial sector. Investment has been one of the engines on which this economy has been thriving. Therefore, the position is, we are working towards achieving the goal of Barbados being the first place of choice for investment.

Sir, let me say very clearly that when we talk about investment in Barbados, we are talking about foreign direct investment, but there is also a recognition by this Administration that there are thousands of Barbadians outside of this country with means, and thousands of Barbadians outside of Barbados who are committed to making a contribution to the financial success of Barbados, who will be shown that Barbados has a jurisdiction of opportunities for them to realise profitable and rewarding investments. Sir, particularly in the climate of what has transpired in the international area, I believe it is critical that we recognise and appreciate that we have neglected for too long the Barbadian overseas who has the potential of being a solid investor.

I spoke of remittances but, as you know, those tend to come in a very unstructured way, but we can have remittances of a different way where people are seeing investment vehicles established in Barbados which are competitive internationally.

How do we achieve addressing the needs of Barbadians, placing Barbadians and the people of this country at the center of what we do? How do we achieve a green Barbados? How do we make Barbados a jurisdiction of first choice investors? We have to do this through an approach of team work.

Starting in the financial year that is ending, and continuing into the next financial year, this Administration has made a decision to structure the interactions between various agencies, for example, the Consular Offices across the world, our offices of the Barbados Tourism Authority, agencies relating to Invest Barbados or the offices of these.

They are not going to operate as silos. That mentality is eliminated.

We have been adopting a team approach and that team approach is intended to maximise the level of efficiency and effectiveness of our people as they serve this country, of our efforts to address whether it is to address the needs of Barbadians overseas, to facilitate visitors to this country, to facilitate investors, and to facilitate Barbadians doing business with the rest of the world. A team approach is required at the level of economic activity.

I also want to say that the notion of a team approach moves beyond the collaboration of public servants, public officials and the political directorate. It is also about a team approach at the level of the citizens.

We previously debated in this Chamber the Constituency Council Bill, and that has passed into legislation. Part of that team approach as members of the various sectors, employees, employers, Government and citizens in our own capacities are part of this big team that we want to call Barbados. It is not just playing on words or using buzz words. I am not one to fall too easily into the repetition of the words of the moment, the "flavour of the day", so to speak.

I believe that, as a small country, we have been able to succeed, to a large measure, by the pooling of our resources, the building of the intellectual capacity of our people and the involvement of our people in the various spheres of our life. If we are able to do that, we will find ourselves faced with a situation where we can, in fact, enhance the quality of life for our people. In doing that, I believe an examination and discussion of the Estimates as they will unfold in this Chamber, I anticipate on all Sides, and certainly on my Side, solid contributions in relation to how the Estimates translate into the achievement of those things.

In the context of that, I am happy to say we have in fact been able to, in support of those basic pillars, which inform and shape our action, we can identify within the Estimates some critical priority areas. I have touched on some of those things.

Sir, priorities for this Government, if we put people first, would be housing. We have heard of the successes of the Minister of Housing and I want to laud his successes. I am sure again we will hear, and I certainly will come back, Mr. President, when I speak again to talk about that.

In the area of the environment, that must be a priority. Barbados, as a small island State, is challenged by climate change. Sea level rising, something which as a country of the topography of Barbados - we are a small flat island. Sea level rise can pose a major threat to this

country. Climate change is manifesting itself in unusual weather patterns. Therefore, our agriculture is something that can be affected by climate change.

We have seen in Barbados, for example, the impact of heavy rainfall and sometimes not so heavy rainfall, as we have problems of flooding et cetera. Therefore, serious attention has to be paid to our physical environment, ensuring we address issues of drainage, water capture, water preservation and so on. Issues relating to the environment will take a very important place within the provisions of these Estimates

12.20 p.m.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: I want to say, Mr. President, that when we talk about dollars and cents, it is important to recognise that when we talk about priority, it is not only about throwing large sums of money within certain Heads, it is about utilising that money in a way that pays attention to good stewardship, et cetera.

I also want to say, Mr. President, that a priority for us would be the Ministry of Transportation and Works, in terms of another Head within the Estimates. We have got the task of completing the Highways. We have got the task of rehabilitating a number of roads, minor roads and major roads. We have got the task of ensuring that public transportation, as a public good, is one that is duly attended to, Sir.

Mr. President, of course, I must repeat at this point that initiatives which were received last year with scepticism, in terms of free bus rides for children of school age, have been very successful. I believe I should say, successful, beyond imagination, for those persons who could not imagine it happening, and who anticipated all kinds of complications and failures.

I also want to stress this point, Mr. President, and laud the Minister of Transport and Works, and more particularly, the staff of the Transport Board, the drivers and the persons who maintain those vehicles, that up to this point in time, about one year later, not a new bus has been bought by the Transport Board.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: We have been able to deliver a service. I continue to be amazed and, as they say, time will tell, Mr. President, but I continue to be amazed that as I drive around the streets of Barbados on mornings, I do not see the phenomena of children hanging about the roads.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: I think that apart from the benefits in the pockets of the parents, it has done something about getting children to school. I think that is important, and clearly, that is one of the initiatives that will continue, as we seek to manage the traffic on the roads.

Sir, another area that I am sure we will hear much about as well, and an area of focus and priority, is that of the Attorney-General's office and, more specifically, the area of police stations. In the Estimates, Mr. President, provision has been made for the construction of three new police stations, as well as the repair and maintenance of existing stations.

Anybody in Barbados who has to visit our police stations - and most of them will apply but I am sure we will hear of specific ones across the country - what you will hear is, how can these gentlemen and ladies work under these conditions?

We hear of the salaries that they are paid and they are concerned about their salaries, given the nature of the job, but apart from salaries, the physical environment, the conditions under which people work will also impact, Mr. President, on their motivation, their sheer ability to function. Therefore, what we are looking at, of course, is the whole business of ensuring that proper attention is paid to the maintenance of that.

Sir, while I am talking about police stations, I want to say something, Mr. President, about the provision for new office accommodation. When this Administration came into office last year, my first office was in Government Headquarters. I want to stress, "located in Government Headquarters".

Sir, that building is very well located. From the front, it has an excellent view. I miss those days when I could look at the sea, especially this time of the year when the water is lovely and blue, but I was very concerned when I drove in the back and parked my vehicle and saw the condition of Government Headquarters.

The office of the Prime Minister and critical offices, I would describe that as the front door of Government's accommodation. Some people in Barbados do not even let you in through their front doors. In this case, in some of these buildings, you could not go through the front door because you had some problems, certainly not in the main building, but in some of the adjoining buildings.

Sir, the point I am making is that this Administration recognises the need to focus on the quality of accommodation for public servants. It is very important and, to that end, provision is being made to ensure that new

accommodation is provided, or certainly started, within this coming financial year and within these Estimates.

Sir, if we cannot as an employer set the example, we cannot go and say to other employers in the private sector or elsewhere, you need to address these issues on behalf of your employees. Government, therefore, must be leading by example.

Therefore, Mr. President, when we look at the levels of expenditure, et cetera, those are the things we see. So in terms of the expenditures, you will see them in several areas. We have main allocations in terms of the Barbados Water Authority. I want to say something about that, because I want to tie the Barbados Water Authority, or the provision of water to some of those pillars which inform what we do.

We talk about people first, and we talk about the quality of life, and the greening of Barbados, et cetera. The Barbados Water Authority for a long time has been leaking, and we have been losing a lot of water. There are some suggestions that we are losing perhaps half or more of the water. Sir, we have talked about it for several years, but the Government of Barbados has to do something, and has decided it will do something about this matter.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Therefore, about \$9 million have been provided, certainly, to address some of those issues.

Mr. President, while I am talking about water, I also want to say, though, that the people of Barbados also need to recognise that this is an important resource, and the provision of this can only be done, if the Barbados Water Authority has money.

Mr. President, I want to express a very personal view here now that people who do not pay their water bills, should feel it the same way as those who probably do not pay the electricity bills or telephone bills.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: There is this notion, not only that it is Government, but you know what I find particularly upsetting, Mr. President, is the fact that of all the utilities we pay, water is the cheapest. Maybe that is why people are taking it for granted, I do not know. I believe that notwithstanding the concerns expressed by some citizens who - and I went through this myself - I paid the bill. I never found any fault. The bill did not go back up. I had to pay, but my water was turned off one day, the day before Christmas Eve, because I was disputing a bill.

They did not find any leakages on my side, but it happened at a time when we were getting several outages which, I suspect, as somebody said, you may have had air in your meter and when the water came on, there was a rush of the thing and so on and the meter probably went crazy. I paid the bill, but they owed me.

The point I am making, outside of those kinds of issues, a substantial percentage of people do not have many queries with the Barbados Water Authority. They refuse to pay their bills. I believe it is time for this Administration, when it commits to spending the kind of money that has been allocated to the Barbados Water Authority, needs to do something to say to the citizens of this country who refuse to pay their bills, that some harsh action will be taken, because we cannot live without water.

I know people will argue that we should not deprive people, but people need to not deprive themselves, because if they fail to do the right thing, then they create problems for all of us.

12.30 p.m.

Mr. President, when we look at the allocations in the area of health, that addresses the issue of people first. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital has been in the news for a very long time. This Government came into power with a commitment to rescue the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Mr. President, the current Minister is doing his utmost to ensure that is happening. Of course, as we know, the conditions are such that he has a herculean task, but I believe that he is strong enough and big enough and with the support of his personnel, he would get that address. Mr. President, I mentioned tourism earlier in my discussion. The Government has established a fund to support the industry. Mr. President, I want to make an appeal because, in addresses like these, we often talk about what has to happen to support it. The Government has established a \$15 million fund, but the players in the industry have to be up front, forthright and honest with the industry.

Mr. President, I just want to share a situation that developed some years ago. Mr. President, I cannot remember how many years ago, but when I described it, you probably can help me. Mr. President, many years ago, there used to be an institution called the Barbados Development Bank. Sir, before that Bank was reorganised and absorbed into other things and went out of existence as we knew it then, there was a situation where a number of properties had owed funds to that organisation. They had borrowed money to renovate. Mr. President, a situation arose where many of them were heavily indebted and the bank sent in persons to act as receivers.

Mr. President, I remember that a young man, he happened to be a student of mine at the University at the

time, went to work with a West Coast property and he called me after about two weeks on the job and said to me that his assignment was over. I asked him what he meant. Mr. President, basically what it was is that when he went in and he recognised the business practices of that particular body, the people quickly settled their debt, because he discovered that they were only telling half of the tale when they spoke in terms of the revenues generated.

Mr. President, the point I am making is that Government would have to help out. Mr. President, we need to help institutions who are being up front and honest with the policymakers because an opportunity to make your situation look bad would not help anybody. Therefore, as Government commits taxpayers' funds, we want to ensure that it is done within the context of an environment in which we are all being open and transparent.

As we look at the terms and conditions under which our players in the tourism industry across the subsector seek to survive these challenging times they should seek to do so in a way that is transparent and honest as they seek Government assistance.

Mr. President, on that note, I want to also mention the importance of retaining your employees as far as is possible. Recently, Mr. President, I had to address the Human Resource Management Association of Barbados at their Annual General Meeting. One of the things that I chose to speak about was this whole question of layoffs and terminations as a first resort. Mr. President, I want to emphasise as a first resort as opposed to a last resort.

Mr. President, I painted a picture of what is happening in the world economy. It will mean that in some instances, the level of business normally realised by any business entity in Barbados may change. For some, it may change drastically, for others it may change marginally depending on the sector in which you are in, or depending on the source and sources of business, et cetera.

However, Mr. President, these conditions should not be used by any employer to get rid of staff. People who see lay-offs or terminations as a short-term solution to their profitability situation... Sir, sometimes you may find that people are not necessarily in a loss position. They may have been experiencing declined profitability or no declines at all, but they may see it as an opportunity to use the situation as an excuse.

Mr. President, what I can tell you from my experience, as I told those persons there as Human Resource Managers who would face the heat, so to speak, when they have to deal with employees is that decisions to terminate, to lay-off and to reduce staff tend to have long-term negative impacts on an organisation, and therefore also impact on the very profitability that some people may

be looking to protect, and therefore it is important that creative ways be found to share jobs, maybe to reduce hours, where necessary.

Mr. President, by talking and sharing honestly with your employees what is happening, creative ways need to be found to ensure that jobs are preserved. Clearly for this Government, the preservation of jobs is one of our major short-term considerations. That explains why a number of projects within the construction sector have been identified. I made reference to the intention of Government to establish some new Government accommodation. We have talked about upgrading the road systems. Allocations have been made for that. We talked about the construction of schools as well.

Mr. President, as somebody said, the President of the United States of America must have been listening to Barbados because we suggested some of these... Sir, part of his attempt to keep people employed has been done within the context of spending heavily on the maintenance of roads, bridges, et cetera which, because of practices in the past, were often neglected.

Mr. President, as I said, our tourism sector would be impacted. We have looked clearly at identifying areas in which, based on the projected declines in our revenues, we can trim the fat. It is the commitment of this Administration to ensure that decision-makers within our Ministries spend Government's money in a way that ensures that we are being careful and prudent with the financial resources of the people of this country.

Mr. President, I certainly will use the opportunity when I speak again to elaborate on a number of matters on which I have pretty much touched in a kind of broad brush way. I believe that as we examine the Estimates and the various Heads in our discussion, and as I return to those things, we would see that this Administration has carefully crafted a set of Estimates which seek to ensure that the critical activities of Government are maintained and that we do so in a manner which is supportive of our philosophy of putting people first and looking after their interests.

Mr. President, as I said before, our housing programmes and initiatives are intended to focus on those categories of persons who are hard-pressed to find houses. Our support for the tourism sector recognises the importance of that sector to the economy and the need to maintain our competitiveness in that area. Our commitment to the young people of this country by the provision of transportation and the unfolding and reinforcing of that programme which is already in existence are but examples of this Government's commitment to improve the quality of life of Barbadians.

12.40 p.m.

Mr. President, I assure you that our traditional emphasis on health and education is in no way being diminished. We will see, over the financial year, the unfolding of improvements in our health system, not only at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital but also the better utilisation of our Polyclinics, to ensure that we make most efficient use of our time.

I believe with those opening comments, I have sought to paint a picture of the international context, those factors outside of Barbados over which we have no control but over which, in fact, exert pressure or influence on what we do and are able to do as a country. I have sought to talk about some of the factors internal to Barbados which will impact upon, or which have influenced our Estimates. Sir, I specifically highlighted elements of the philosophy of this Government of the factors which drive or inform the pillars which structure or anchor our programmes.

I believe these Estimates are an example or are illustrative of what must be done, in order to ensure that we continue, as a small nation, to ride the stormy waves that we face. I trust that as we ride those stormy waves that we do not have, in the coming months, to be dealing with the other kinds of stormy waves. We are looking to ensure, in terms of our drainage, that we try to minimise any problems that might arise.

Mr. President, overall I anticipate that through the use of the resources allocated in this set of Estimates, this Government will be able to continue to roll out its programme, to achieve its objectives and, at the end of the day, to improve the quality of life for Barbadians. They will also help to maintain the very things that have made Barbados attractive to those outside of Barbados.

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

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. President, I do not know. I had not canvassed the idea, but if you want to take the interval, I am not opposed to it, Sir.

Asides.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: I can start and stop.

Asides.

Mr. PRESIDENT: He does not have to start and stop. He does not have to speak at all.

Asides.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Okay, fine, no problem.

Asides.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. President, I am ready to speak. It is being indicated to me that there may have been a preference that we take the luncheon interval now. It is ten minutes to one o'clock. We are in your hands.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Let no one mislead you about what is going to happen. Please address the Chair and the Chair will address you.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Very well, Sir. May I speak then?

Mr. PRESIDENT: You have the Floor, Senator Symmonds.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I am not on a point of order but, perhaps, I was going to suggest that at this time we suspend for lunch.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I suspect that is what Senator Symmonds has been led into believing that would happen. That is why we have this "contra" talk, if you would pardon the expression.

Senator, you are now suggesting that we suspend for lunch?

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Yes, Mr. President.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I beg to move that this Sitting be now suspended for one hour, to be resumed at 2.00 p.m.

The question that the Sitting be suspended until 2.00 p.m. was put to the Senate and agreed to, and Mr. PRESIDENT suspended the Sitting accordingly.

12.50 p.m.

RESUMPTION

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

SENATOR K.D. SYMMONDS: Mr. President, I would want to begin on the note of recognising the valiant

effort made by the Leader of Government Business in her presentation of this Bill. I recognise that having fought to overcome the tendency myself when I was the junior Minister in the Ministry she now holds, that there is a being that affects foreign Ministers and it is, perhaps, that there is a tendency to speak at length on matters of intellectual significance.

Mr. President, you were a foreign Minister and I am sure you would have fought to overcome that as well. Sir, there is a tendency to speak at length on matters of great significance intellectually but there is always a risk that, in the context of the discourse, you become detached from the reality facing the average citizen in Barbados.

Mr. President, I do not say that to be disparaging of the Leader of Government Business, but I think that was really the fatal flaw in her presentation. We are enriched for her very erudite expatiations on the question of sub prime mortgages and so on and so forth, but between 11.35 a.m. and 12.05 p.m., according to my own calculation, without benefit from the Clerks at the Table assisting me, I think that the Leader of Government Business sheltered somewhat behind the global economic downturn and the financial crisis facing the world and did not come squarely to the issues confronting Barbados and Barbadians. Sir, it was an interesting discourse that took us from the United States to Dubai, Germany, Spain and all the way back to the Caribbean again and, Sir, for that we are much the richer.

Mr. President, in the context of the Estimates before us, we are so much the poorer and, Sir, I would wish to structure and deliver my presentation well within the confines of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for 2009-2010, as has been prepared by the Government of Barbados and very diligently distributed to us so that all who have eyes to see could read.

Mr. President, after having listened to the Leader of Government Business the inescapable conclusion that one comes to is that there is value to be had in the reggae song "There are more Questions Than Answers". I think we now all understand the merit in that tune and the more we have found out from the Leader of Government Business, the less we know.

Mr. President, the real issues which we would have wanted to have heard, I imagine, and which Barbadians would have wanted to have heard, would have touched and concerned the challenges which this country is facing, not necessary only from the deteriorating international environment, but the day-to-day realities that we expect the Estimates to be speaking to, to be addressing, and a methodology by which Government will tackle those said issues, and by which Government will give us an insight into its social and economic policy commitments.

Mr. President, the Estimates cannot be just a set of figures and collation of meaningless figures. There has to be an insight into the methodology. Sir, the very distinguished Senator, Senator Boyce, I am sure toiled long in his office with his technical staff with a view to crafting...

Asides.

SENATOR K.D. SYMMONDS: He has not spoken but I hope he will speak. Sir, I hear the asides and I say only in passing that it is now one of the interesting things because, as to the extent that this could be called an intellectual exercise, as the intellectual craftsman behind the Estimates, it would have been an enriching experience to have the benefit of two hours of hearing the craftsman speak of the things that helped him as he structured his craft.

Mr. President, Senator Alleyne cannot be heard by you, Sir, but he is urging me to give way to Senator Boyce because he too, obviously, has doubts. I wish to shield Senator Boyce from the asides of Senator Alleyne and I will continue, Sir.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I wish you to know that I am not hearing any asides and I will not have you addressing any asides, if you do not mind.

SENATOR K.D. SYMMONDS: Indeed, Mr. President. Sir, one of the things we have to do, at the very outset, in my judgment is to review the allocation of the expenditure and the financial projections contained in the Estimates in the context of understanding the extent to which they sensibly relate to the fundamental issues facing Barbados.

Mr. President, I do not intend, in this exercise, to get into the plane of politics. There is no doubt whatsoever in my mind, and I believe I could speak on behalf of the Barbados Labour Party in this regard, that it is a good thing for the children in Barbados to be able to ride free on buses.

2.00 p.m.

There is no doubt about that and there is no debate and none will ensue. It makes no sense Government setting up a straw house in order to knock it back down. That is not where the argument is joined, neither is it an argument that will be joined on the question of utilities, the usefulness and the desirability of Summer Camps, Easter Camps and Christmas Camps. Those things are laudable objectives.

I understand their social value as clearly as the Government understands their political value. Sir, we do

not grudge them the implementation of it, but those things in and out of themselves cannot successfully pilot this country through the challenging economic times with which we are confronted.

Sir, the Government came to office on a platform, and it is important, as I review these Estimates here, the Leader of Government Business, as I fear is the want from the last exercise of this nature, did not make contact with what is contained in the document. I hope, as she wraps up, she will do so. I think it is a useful thing to make contact with what is contained in the document.

Sir, the Government came into office on a platform of fiscal prudence. May I remind Honourable Senators that platform was a three-prong attack on the Barbados Labour Party.

First, that the Barbados Labour Party was guilty of "fiscal recklessness". I note that Senator Boyce puts his pen up, because that is where the craftsmanship of the Estimates should have been directed.

Second, there was a platform, an allegation of runaway expenditure and the third part of the platform, there was an escalating, unmanaged and unbridled debt, also basically coming back to the same point that there was a lack of fiscal prudence on the part of the Barbados Labour Party when it was in Government and, of course, the end result of all of that there was a pledge on the part of the Government to curb that expenditure.

It is in that context that the Estimates of 2008-2009 were crafted. The last fiscal year was presented to the Parliament and the argument then contained in the Estimates was that the deficit could have been brought to 1 per cent of GDP. We cautioned then. I cautioned from This Place, at that time, there was something unrealistic about the projection and that, at that time, the Estimates were not resting on realistic estimates of revenue. Therefore, the entirety of the projection was almost doomed to fail. There was a false and potentially premise, in my judgment, to embark on a programme to radically reduce expenditure in the context of the developmental thrust that Barbados was on, at the time.

Sir, what was that developmental thrust? We had a situation in which we had progressively sought to relieve the Land Tax burden in this country so that persons were enjoying the first \$125 000 of property value tax free, and it was in the process of being increased to \$150 000. We had a situation in which Personal Income Tax was carried to a threshold of \$25 000 tax free and Corporation Tax receipts would have been falling because we were reducing the Corporate Tax take systematically from 40 per cent, where it was inherited under the Democratic Labour Party down to 25 per cent.

Sir, only last night President Obama of the United States of America made the point that you do not take an economy and seek to turn it around on a dime, as he puts it, as though it was a speed boat, because an economy functions more like a cruise liner. What we implored Senator Boyce to come to the understanding about was, that it would not have been practical, feasible or logical to seek to alter in such a radical way the deficit from the 3.4 per cent down to 1 per cent of GDP in one financial year, and if he sought to do so, he would not only fail but in his effort...

SENATOR the Hon. D.W. BOYCE: On a point of order. Mr. President, I do not recall that in the Estimates discussion of last year there was any mention of bringing the deficit down to 1 tenth. I believe that the target at that time was that we aimed to bring it down to something around 1.9 to 2 per cent in the first year. There is a substantial difference. The Estimates of Expenditure for last year would show the improved Estimates did not contemplate any 1 per cent figure for the Estimates last year.

Mr. PRESIDENT: And the point of order is that he is misleading the House?

SENATOR K.D. SYMMONDS: Sir, I hold in my hand the Estimates for 2008-2009, which is a document of this House, and it says at Page 3 that the Approved Estimates for fiscal year 2008-2009, under the rubric Government Operating Financing, on the accrual basis the net operating balance is \$85.1 million, or projected at 1.1 per cent of GDP. When converted to the international financial institution basis, the fiscal deficit is projected at 1.9 per cent of GDP.

Sir, I am not going to get side-tracked into this kind of to and fro. Depending on which basis Senator Boyce wishes to speak as reflected in the Estimates.

SENATOR the Hon. D.W. BOYCE: On a point of order. Sir, if the Honourable Member wishes to use 1 per cent of GDP, then he should say the basis on which he is saying that is the accrual basis, and then he should make the comparison with the accrual basis.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Point made.

SENATOR K.D. SYMMONDS: Sir, the point is, the caution was sent from This Place to Senator Boyce that the Minister of Finance would have to come back with large Supplementaries, or in the alternative draconian budgetary measures in order to compensate for an inevitable revenue shortage. That is the point, Sir.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that it came to pass that we witnessed both phenomena. Let this Chamber not

forget that on July 7, 2008, the Government brought to the Other Place a tax take, a measure which constituted an overall tax take of \$104 million. If one were to factor in the VAT size and the VAT on energy prices, you would be treading more in the direction of \$160 million.

Sir, that Budget had the effect of inflicting trauma on the freighting sector in this country. It inflicted trauma on the financial services sector in this country. It inflicted trauma on the small business sector. It inflicted trauma on commerce. The traumatic reversal of one of the most progressive Land Tax policies in the Caribbean at the time, and all of that to take Senator Boyce back to a situation, which approximates where he started, an end result with an end result that hovers around 3 per cent of GDP. Sir, what then was achieved? So much for the fiscal prudence argument.

The issue which was not heard at the time, or which was not heeded at the time, because I am sure it was heard, was that the only accomplishment was to unnecessarily distort a growth path that the Barbados economy was on and to inflict, as I said to you, an unnecessary level of trauma. The evidence is there in the distortion of the growth path.

Sir, the Land Tax regime, in one financial year harvested for the Government, the great tax taker, \$27 million, and again I want to be entirely fair to Senator Boyce.

2.10 p.m.

If you go to the Estimates of Expenditure of Current Revenue at page 2 thereof, you will see, Mr. President, under the rubric sub programme 503, Taxes on Property, that you began in a situation where the Estimates of Expenditure for 2008-2009 were at \$85 million for Land Tax.

The anticipation in the last Estimates, Sir, was that you would take \$104 million. We actually took \$112 million, \$27 million, Mr. President, and it is all right for Senator Boyce to smile at it, but it had consequences in this economy, and I will come back to that later.

Sir, it also was a situation in which Corporation Tax receipts went into decline, again, because of the fiscal recklessness of the Democratic Labour Party and the lack of prudence, to use their language. We see again, at the same page in the Current Estimates of Revenue, that for the last fiscal year, Mr. President, there is now a decrease in revenue from Corporation Taxes, of \$69.5 million.

Mr. President, let us remember as well that it is on the back of the Corporation Tax take, because that is the biggest of them, that all of the social transformation, the

social care work, the social projects, the family and the community, all of those wonderful things, laudable objectives, have to be financed through that tax take.

Mr. President, we cautioned Senator Boyce. Sir, it is in that historical conceptualisation of the Estimates, Sir, that again we have to register concern about what is now clearly muddled thinking on the part of the Minister of Finance, particularly, the Prime Minister, in that - in the last exercise, the exercise we are going through now - this is the tail end of it.

It began last week in the Other Place. Sir, if you wanted to have any evidence of the muddled thinking, one only had to listen to that which fell from the lips of the Prime Minister, when he said that he did not understand himself to have any room to implement the counter cyclical fiscal policy, which the Opposition had been calling for since October of last year.

Mr. President, the definition of a counter cyclical fiscal policy is that you raise significantly the fiscal deficit in order to counteract the downturn in the economy. If you look at the Estimates, you will see that the Estimates have moved from a 2.93 per cent of GDP, to what is a projection of 5.5 per cent of GDP, so you have truly come to the point of doubling the deficit by way of your projections. If that is not then the practice of implementing the counter cyclical fiscal deficit, what is?

Sir, what we have, therefore, is a painful experience that there is a Prime Minister, who either does not understand that which has been implemented, or that he is implementing, or why he is implementing what he is implementing. Sir, that is what I mean by the muddled thinking of the Government.

Mr. President, I go further. There is also fuzzy vision of the Government. Now, I say to you, Sir, that you know I represented a northern Constituency, and in many villages across the North, you will come across a fellow with the nickname, "Fuzzy". Almost in every village, there is a fellow called, "Fuzzy". Sir, a nondescript character, neither here nor there, unimpressive fellow; not untidy but not necessarily the most clean-cut; not inarticulate but not necessarily articulate; not too dull but he certainly is not too bright either; not slow mentally but not necessarily sharp.

It came as no surprise to me therefore, Mr. President, when I discovered that colleagues in the Cabinet had started to nickname the Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance, "Fuzzy".

Asides.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: "Fussy", oh!

Mr. President, I thought then that there is obviously some truth to the assertion that this which is governing Barbados is a fuzzy vision. The direction that we are taking, Sir, is rooted in what can only be described as a fuzzy vision. If you wanted to have a clear understanding of what the combination of the muddled thinking of the Prime Minister and the fuzzy vision is all about, then you only have to look at the indices, which constitute the major macro economic indicators in this country. Sir, what are those indices?

The cost of living is, perhaps, the first point of departure, because it was on the platform of the cost of living, Sir, that this Government campaigned Job No. 1, Job 2 and Job 3 we were told, were the cost of living. The reality is that inflation in Barbados and in the year 2007 was at 4 per cent. Last year, Mr. President, it reached 8 per cent.

Sir, the cost of living has been an issue which has been touched on, by none other than the International Monetary Fund. I have heard the Leader of Government Business make reference to the Fund only today in her presentation. I hold in my hand, Sir, the August 2008 IMF Country Report No. 8 of 298, Barbados Article 4 Consultation. If it is not yet a document of the Chamber, I would wish to make it so, Sir.

Mr. President, at page 5 of the said document, it makes the point that Barbados was confronted with a weakening global environment, which no one disputes, rising import food prices, and the Government took a number of important decisions, including, and I quote:

“A joint agreement with CARICOM partners to eliminate or reduce the Common External Tariff on selected food items, on a temporary basis.”

Mr. President, the elimination or reduction of the Common External Tariff would, simply put, have taken a 30 per cent tax on a product, which is produced extra Regionally, as outside of the CARICOM basin - remove that 30 per cent tax on it, so that the consumer in Barbados should, strictly speaking, at the port of entry, be confronted with a product that is 30 per cent cheaper. Sir, in some instances, it may not be as high as 30 per cent. It might be 5 per cent or 10 per cent. They vary, depending on the commodity you are talking about, and there is a schedule of the Tariffs.

Mr. President, the country will remember and therefore you, I am sure, will also remember being sharper than most in the country, Sir, that in March of last year...

Asides.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: It is true. The President is known outside of the Chamber of something of a genius.

Asides.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: The then Foreign Trade Minister, and the Prime Minister, confronted the Press and trumpeted their success at getting from CARICOM an agreement, because if one listened to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Trade Minister, as he then was, one would have thought that nobody else in CARICOM benefitted from such an agreement. It was Barbados that went up there, the great Democratic Labour Party, defenders of the cost of living.

Mr. President, the substance of the agreement was that this Government, if it had cared to, would have been able to remove the Common External Tariff, or reduce the Common External Tariff on fundamentals, like infant formula, juices, diapers, lamb, beef, fruit, soap and vegetables. Those are the important commodities, Sir, which made for the day-to-day living, the little basket of goods that the average person cannot avoid purchasing.

Mr. President, do you understand what a painful thing it is to have to say to this Chamber that, in spite of going all the way to CARICOM, St. Lucia got the same benefit and they implemented the provisions. St. Vincent had the same benefits and they implemented them. Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago implemented the provision.

Mr. President, do you know that this Government, to this day, has not taken up the opportunity presented to it by CARICOM, to shield the taxpayers of Barbados, who elected them, from the additional taxation, under the Common External Tariff. Mr. President, no explanation has been offered to the people.

2.20 p.m.

Mr. President, I would have thought, knowing that it appears in an International Monetary Fund Report, that the commitment had been given, and knowing that nothing had been done, that a presentation of this nature would have mandated, early o'clock, an explanation of the failing.

Mr. President, you cannot on one hand be talking about the cost of living being Job No. 1, Job No. 2 and Job No. 3 and then when you are given the golden and almost unprecedented opportunity, because written into the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas are three ways on which you vary the Common External Tariff, and none of them has anything to do with the cost of living, so it is virtually an unprecedented opportunity... Mr. President, the people once again have been taken for granted.

Sir, the other concern that one has to face is the 77 per cent diesel hike that took place the following month in April. Mr. President, the distributive sector, the small shops, the mini mart operators, the wholesalers, and the supermarkets would have been impacted negatively from the escalation in diesel. The Government took pains to lambast and to pillory the Leader of the Opposition when she, on the day following the Prime Minister's unfortunate declaration of the 77 per cent increase in diesel, went to great lengths to explain what it could do to this economy. It was not the Opposition tactic that they had before when they were in Opposition of doing sweet nothing. It was an Opposition that came forward and said: "Look this is a concern to us".

Mr. President, apart from the Leader of the Opposition taking a large amount of criticism for making a very obvious point, the Government sat on its laurels while the price of food, because that has to be transported by trucks that are burning diesel, clothing, furniture, recreation and the whole cost of living in the country went up long before we came to any time in October with sub prime mortgage issues that the Honourable Leader of Government Business seeks to begin and end her presentation by shielding behind.

Mr. President, there was a period in this country where I say to you in no uncertain and unequivocal terms that fiscal recklessness, fiscal foolishness and fiscal Lawlessness prevailed by a government that treated itself impervious to words of wisdom. Mr. President, that is their right, but the consequential fallout has been in the pocket of the people of Barbados. Sir, that is the problem I have with it.

In spite of the warnings from the Opposition, the grand architect, Senator Boyce, failed to protect ordinary Barbadians when he had room and time so to do. Who did the Government protect at a moment's notice? That is the obvious question you, Sir, not necessarily you, but other persons would ask.

Sir, the Government protected the Barbados Turf Club by giving them \$20 million. Mr. President, within a few days of coming in to office, this Government was able to finance Pinnacle Feeds with a subsidy of over \$1 million.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: On a point of order. Senator Kerrie Symmonds continues to mislead the House every time he gets up to speak about this Government financing Pinnacle Feeds to the tune of millions of dollars.

When the price of feed went up, this Government sought to give the farmers in this country some protection. Recognising that there were a number of logistics, the

safest thing to do was to provide the farmers with the price support by paying the money directly to the Feed Company so that they could keep the prices down.

This Honourable Senator continues to mislead not only the House, but the public because he knows he has an audience and he should desist from it.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The point is made.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. President, I stand on the four corners of my position because I do not know how anyone else defines it, but I know that if you are going to tell me that you gave direct price support, then it constitutes, in economic terms, a subsidy.

Sir, the subsidy went to a company which is part of the group called Barbados Shipping and Trading, not to the poor people, the same Barbados Shipping and Trading that they were going to, with the stroke of a pen upon becoming the Government, protect and shield from being purchased by a Trinidadian company.

Sir, I have been given the time to sit and reflect while Senator Benn interjected, and I do not want to forget CLICO because they too got a little piece of the protective pie only a few weeks ago to the tune of \$10 million. However you want to direct it, CLICO would have been the beneficiary of it.

Mr. President, the point is that when the small man in the country is crying out for protection, the Democratic Labour Party, which spoke the language of protecting the poor, has always found it possible to defend the very wealthy.

SENATOR the Hon. D. W. BOYCE: On a point of order. Mr. President, the Honourable Senator is misleading the House. The Honourable Senator made a point just now that CLICO was the beneficiary of what seems to come over to me as some Government subsidy, or some Government largesse. The impression is given that this Government stepped in and gave some kind of funds to CLICO. He made it in the same context as when he made the point about a subsidy. Mr. President, I think that is misleading and he ought not to carry on with that.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. President, I am grateful to Senator Boyce as I was to Senator Benn for giving me the time to reflect a little bit while I was in my seat because, in addition to all of that, there was an amendment to the Trade, Licences and Profession Act, which again the Opposition warned on the Floor of the Other Place about.

The reality, Mr. President, is that once again the warnings were tossed to the wind. What was the

consequential fallout of that? Sir, in a situation where the cost of living was already trending upwards, you were going to place an imposition on the purchase or the payment of an operational licence for a doctor, a Lawyer, a vet, a dentist, an architect, a florist, a taxi driver and a shopkeeper.

Sir, every tradesman and every profession in Barbados would have been faced with a situation where they were going to have an increase in the amount of money they paid for their operational licence at the time when already the country is labouring under the other impositions that the Government had put in place. So much for the cost of living being Job No. 1, 2 and 3.

Sir, the implications of it were that the professionals and the tradesmen almost undoubtedly, because they are in business to make a profit like anybody else, would quite likely pass that on to the consumer. Those were the implications.

Mr. President, the most sad and sordid part of the exercise was that the Coalition of Service Industries in Barbados convened a meeting at which they had representatives of the legal, the engineering, the dental and veterinary fraternities who implored Senator Boyce, who himself was also present, to go back to his Cabinet and his Finance Minister and seek before the deadline at the end of January to have the imposition, as they were planning it, waived, or suspended, or at least put in such a way that it could be paid incrementally.

Mr. President, January 31, 2009 came and went. The Coalition of Service Industries sent out text messages and emails to people asking them to hold strain, they are hoping to hear back from the Ministry of Finance. Sir, January 31, came and went.

2.30 p.m.

Mr. President, I cannot say if they heard back from the Ministry of Finance but I can tell you that every single one of the professionals, every single one of the tradesmen, every Clerk in this Honourable House, would have had the Professional Registration fee increased. Sir, the reality is that for across the board...

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Symmonds, I do not wish to interrupt you in your speech but I think you are fully aware that you cannot bring the Staff of Parliament into your debate. You know that. I know you know that. Please do not put me in this difficulty. Please continue.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. President, despite the talk about putting people first, the reality is that every single professional person in Barbados would have

had to take the imposition, grin it and bear it, in remembrance of the Democratic Labour Party.

Sir, furthermore, the consumer almost undoubtedly had to take the fallout because the consumer would have had the impost passed on to him or her when they come a-calling - the florist, the taxi driver, the shopkeeper, the seamstress and the tailor, bar none were exempted.

Mr. President, I want to go further and say to you that the other indice was employment. In the last quarter of 2007, unemployment in Barbados had dropped to 6.7 per cent. In mid-2008, when was the last time we got figures - note what I am saying - it was 8.6 per cent. There is today no recent up-to-date publication on the unemployment statistics in this country, and the Government must say why.

It is not good enough that an Estimate Debate could have been led in the Other Place and a Prime Minister could have found it possible to lambast the Independent Senators for their vote on the Constituency Councils, or the positions that they have articulated on the Constituency Councils.

It is not satisfactory that a debate could be led in this Honourable Chamber and the Leader of Government Business does not speak to the question of unemployment statistics. But we do not have the most recent up-to-date statistics on unemployment in the country.

Mr. President, in the absence of that, what then do you do? How do you analyse this package that is put here between the leaves of this Estimates document? What we know is that between December and January, in the height of the winter season and in an unprecedented way, tourism workers in Barbados were being placed on short weeks. We also know that, according to the Prime Minister, Four Seasons - the Mecca, the big project - had closed down for a week.

Sir, this is now six weeks and counting and Four Seasons has not as yet reopened, and we hear from the Leader of Government Business that she hopes it would soon reopen for work. We are hoping and praying too, Sir.

Mr. President, I have already said in this Honourable Chamber that if we were to take this Government at its word, we would all join hands around the Table and sing "Kumbaya, Lord."

Mr. President, Sir Charles Williams predicted in the latter part of last year that, in his opinion, the way he saw the construction sector progressing that there may be as many as 5 000 persons being laid off in the sector by the end of the first quarter. Sir, we need to hear from the Government what is the position with the unemployment

statistics. It is not satisfactory that Government treats to that in silence. It is not an attack on the Government, it is asking the Government to govern in the manner and by the prescriptions for which they had asked the Barbados Labour Party, when in Government, to govern as well.

The other indice to which we must speak is that of the national debt. The Democratic Labour Party's position was that we were a government that was not earning our way, but that we were borrowing our way. We pointed out then that it was all very well and good to say that, but that the issue also has to be what are you borrowing for.

Sir, we pointed to the Barbados Hilton and said that we were building capacity in the tourism sector. We pointed to the Airport and Seaport and in the same vein said we were building vital capacity in our critical sector. We pointed to the Barbados National Oil Company (BNOC) and the storage tanks.

Asides.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. President, the muddled thinking and the fuzzy value continue to a point where in December 2007, we had a national debt that stood at \$5.36 billion. I listened carefully today when I listened to the Leader of Government Business but all that the Leader said did not satisfy me as to why it should be that in September 2008, we had a national debt at \$5.8 billion, because this Government was supposed to be eradicating that. Sir, only last week they came back and borrowed \$300 million more, so that in the space of 14 months of governance, this national debt has escalated by somewhere in the vicinity of \$1 billion.

Mr. President, the other major indices that you have to look at is that of private capital inflows. Sir, Honourable Senators on the Other Side get visibly agitated, and I see them squirming in their seats and scratching their heads, and their faces getting vexed, more vexed than usual. Mr. President, the Central Bank of Barbados in its Economic Review, Volume 35, No. 3, published December 2008 at page 11 - it is not yet a document of this Honourable Senate but I am happy to make it such - says under the rubric Capital and Financial Account:

"The Capital Account surplus for the first nine months of 2008 was \$342.6 million, down from \$565.9 million a year earlier."

Mr. President, I repeat it for the benefit of my friend, the Leader of Government Business on the Other Side.

"The capital account surplus for the first nine months of 2008 was \$342.6 million, down from \$565.9 million a year earlier."

Mr. President, the reason I repeated it for my friend is because of the fact that the gravamen of her argument, as I understood it, was that the world had been thrown into unprecedented crises and the sub prime mortgage situation was something that we were all reeling in shock from.

Asides.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. President, I have paraphrased it and so there is no need for the Leader of Government Business to rise. Sir, the reality is that the first nine months ended in September, so that the multiple millions of dollars of haemorrhaging taking place in the Barbadian economy preceded the collapse of Rockovia(?), Leyman Brothers and Goldman Sax and the difficulties AIG started to face in October. The haemorrhaging that we feel on the Barbados economy was clearly taking place all the time back in June and July of 2008.

Asides.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: I am sure that Honourable Senators will allow me to continue to speak because they will all have a chance to speak in this debate. The agitation is noted. The discomfort is noted, but they will all have a chance to respond.

Mr. President, it goes further, the same Capital Financial Assessment Account of the Central Bank says:

"In the absence of inflows, private capital inflows were down, moving from \$920.1 million in the first three quarters of 2007 to \$409.4 million in 2008."

Mr. President, so that as a macroeconomic indicator, that of private capital inflows, we are seeing what I could only describe as a haemorrhaging under the guidance of the management, or mismanagement, of the very distinguished Senator, Senator Boyce and the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance.

2.40 p.m.

Mr. President, it is a matter that causes the Opposition no pleasure but, clearly, there is a difficulty with attracting private investment into Barbados, I want to put clearly into the lap of the Democratic Labour Party, the blame for the fallout in terms of private investment inflows because there is a disconnection and a mismatch between the destructive rhetoric, which is targetted at foreign investors in this country by the Government, and the policy formulation of this same Government.

Mr. President, did you know it is impossible to find an Agriculture Investment Act in draft or other form in this country, but the Democratic Labour Party was professing

that they would have one for us within the first 100 days of coming to office?

Sir, I go further. It is impossible to find a zone where non-nationals are barred from investment in Barbados. Sir, Senator Benn, as I predicted, begins to look even more uncomfortable. Sir, there are no zones where non-nationals are barred from investment in this country. Why it becomes an important observation is because in this Manifesto entitled, ironically so, "Pathways to Progress" but the people on the street call it "The Pilgrimage to Poverty",...

Asides.

SENATOR K.D. SYMMONDS: Sir, in "Pathways to Progress" at page 8, this is what the Democratic Labour Party says. This is the poisonous rhetoric that has led, in my judgment, to the fallout, in large measure, in the private inflows of capital. At page 8 it says:

"The Democratic Labour Party believes that land ownership is too important to the Barbadian identity to be left totally to marketplace forces. The time has come for the Government to intervene to ensure that every Barbadian gets an opportunity to own a piece of the rock. This can best be achieved through effective zones. The East Coast should be zoned for private residence and "inland tourism" controlled by locals; and most central parishes zoned for farming. Many areas should be zoned for sale only to Barbadians."

Mr. President, it was no surprise to me, when people at Westmoreland asked how do you define inland tourism? It was no surprise to me, because they do not touch the beach. It is no surprise to me when persons who have made investment in this country, but whose navel strings are not buried here, but who are employing people whose navel strings are buried here, ask the question: "What do you mean by zoning land for inland tourism and letting it only be controlled only by locals?"

You cannot expect to say this type of thing in a small, open and vulnerable economy as a commitment to being elected, and expect that the people who are coming to invest would not flee. Sir, it is the same language that President Chavez uses in Venezuela and, Sir, they fled from Venezuela too.

Mr. President, that is what I mean about the mismatch between the policy and the rhetoric. That is what I mean by the destructive tone of the rhetoric. Sir, yet still we hear that Barbados will be the first choice for persons who want to make investments. Mr. President, I heard that today with my own ears. I heard today that Barbados is supposed to be the first choice for people who want to make investment, that it is the place of first choice for investors, but they are carving out pieces of the rock for

only Barbadians to buy, only Barbadians to farm and controlled by Barbadians.

Mr. President, I have no quarrel if that is what the Government wants to do. If the Government feels it must do this, it must make it abundantly clear, but do not, at same time, be heard to say that you are trying to convince people to invest in the country.

Asides.

SENATOR K.D. SYMMONDS: Mr. President, I go further. The other concern that we have is the commitment signalled to the International Monetary Fund, the same document I just indicated we are happy to make a document of the House, with respect to the removal of the cap on Land Tax.

Mr. President, at page 11 of the International Monetary Fund Consultation Report, it is explained that property taxes are currently at the equivalent of US\$30 000 a year, with a maximum tax rate of 75 per cent. Sir, tax becomes effective for properties at or above US\$4 million in value. Sir, on page 12, the Mission says this and I quote:

"The Authorities..."

Sir, I pause at this point because "the Authorities" have to mean the Government for people who do not understand when they hear "the Authorities".

It says:

"The Authorities broadly agreed with the need for and suggested magnitude of medium-term fiscal review. They also view subsidies as distortive and were open to further adjustments in controlled prices, as well as a possible lifting of the Property Tax cap at a later stage."

Sir, you want to invite the people to come and invest, a cap is placed at \$60 000 tax harvest for the investor who comes here and builds a property valued at \$4 million or more. You want it to be an investment friendly country, the first of first choice for the investor but, at the same time that you say that, you pledge to the IMF that you would raise the cap to make Barbados even more potentially uncompetitive in difficult economic circumstances where people are looking for the best possible place to get a return on their investment.

Mr. President, I hear the rhetoric, but it worries me in the context of the mismatch, in the context of the dissonance and the inconsistency, and I say the more I hear from the Democratic Labour Party the least I know.

Mr. President, all of the indices show that the cost of living doubled, the employment increased, the national

debt increased, private capital inflows reduced and the international reserves are down. What then, Sir, do they have to show after one year?

Mr. President, in the context of that, we have in contra-distinction, a Barbados Labour Party that was strong in its export performance, strong capital inflows and strong tourism receipts. If the Cabinet, in my judgment, does not persuade the Prime Minister to politically embalm Senator Boyce, we will all soon have to call in the embalmers physically, because we will not be here for much longer. The pockets are straining beyond the point that you can take it.

Mr. President housing. Sir, we have to be very clear about what is happening with respect to housing in Barbados. Sir, page 9 of the Democratic Labour Party Manifesto gave a very solemn commitment in the context of housing, and the macro financing capacity of the country. It said they would establish a home-owning revolving fund for public sector workers, providing interest free loans to appointed public servants with five years' service who are first-time home owners, and that they would capitalise that revolving loan with an injection of \$40 million. Needless to say, there is nothing to be found in these Estimates that takes us a step further in that direction and, Sir, these are Estimates No. 2 of the Government.

Mr. President, I have a larger concern and it is on this very interesting idea of giving housing units to tenants. Sir, I think I understand what the Government is attempting to do but, as I have cautioned the Government in other regards, you could do something very wise or desirable but you could also do it in a very foolish and undesirable way.

Mr. President, the difficulty that the Government is facing is that the Housing Act of Barbados, which is found at Cap. 226 of the Laws of Barbados, in Section 9 - and there is a tendency on the part of the Government not to wish to hear the letter of the Law. I think it was Al Gore, the former Vice President of the United States of America, who coined the phrase "an inconvenient truth", and for some, Sir, the Law is an inconvenient truth but, nonetheless, it is the Law.

2.50 p.m.

"The functions of the Corporation under that Act are to acquire, hold, manage land and property of any kind whatsoever and to sell, let, lease or otherwise dispose of such land or other property on such terms and conditions as the Minister determines."

The question that the Opposition is trying to get across to the Government in very simple language is this. If the Minister is intent on giving the land, the Minister must do so in the context of the letter of the Law which says that

the National Housing Corporation can sell, it can let, it can lease or otherwise dispose of.

Sir, the critical issue therefore becomes what do we need in the language of the Law by the phrase "otherwise disposed of." The author who write on Statutory Interpretation, Francis Brennan, who perhaps is the principal scholar of them all, has made the point, that is, you use a set of words, for example, a string specified as boots, shoes, stockings and other articles, that imports that a genus, a kind, and that particular kind of footwear rather than the wider category of clothing apparel. You look at the language which precedes the general and you give to the general the tone and tenor of the preceding language.

Sir, therefore, if you have a string of words which say a railway, a road, a pipeline or other facility, the context of "other facility" imports a facility for carrying goods and, therefore, it must exclude, for example, a storage facility.

The point I am making is, when you are talking about sell, let, lease, you are talking about disposition of land for a financial return. To simply say "otherwise dispose of" and to treat it as though you are also capable of including in that a gift, we are submitting, respectfully, is potentially very dangerous, and if the Government does not wish to treat it as though it is a meaningful observation in Law, that is the Government's right, but the point we are making is, an effort to transfer units to tenants as a gift or without any consideration would be ultra vires, or outside the scope of the Housing Act.

I have heard the argument in the Other Place that you can treat part of the payment, or as consideration for payment of rent that was being paid before. Again, I believe that is a colossal non starter. It is a non sequitur. It does not follow, because of the fact the rent was being paid in full settlement of a lease contract. So you cannot just change the purpose for which it was paid. At the end of the contract period say it is for the purpose for something else.

Sir, it is a technical legal point. I raised it for what it is worth at this juncture. It will be raised again, I assure you, and the Government is free to treat it as it cares.

I do not believe there is anything wrong with amending the Housing Act to validate what the Government is attempting to do, but it is what this Government is impervious to reason and I do not suspect the Government will condescend to amend the Act, so we leave that where it is.

Sir, the substance of the Estimates take us to a point where we are able to identify, as we have not yet been able to do anywhere in Barbados, a package that responds to the need for repositioning this country in this difficult financial

circumstances. No doubt we will hear during the course of this debate about the Tourism Relief Fund.

I want to focus my argument particularly on the productive sectors of the economy. The productive sectors of the economy are going to drive this country, whether in good times or bad times. If you do not now try to do the most you can by your productive sectors, and you wish to play politics with the social side, then you do so on your own peril. As I said in the opening part of my presentation, you have to be able to finance the camps. You have to be able to finance the housing projects. You have to be able to finance the subsidised rides on the Transport Board buses.

I want to hear about the productive sectors of this economy which worrisomely were shielded from the debate in the Other Place. The sectors which went into the Heads of the debate were not the productive sectors. We have to speak to them.

Sir, the Tourism Relief Fund has been voted at \$15 million. Thus far \$7.5 million has been distributed. The question is, is it an adequate amount of money in the context of the professed intention of the Fund, which is to transcend just hotels but also go across the wide cross-section of the tourism sector?

SENATOR the Hon. M.P.O. McCLEAN: On a point of order. I really did not want to give my Honourable colleague a chance to catch his breath and think about the next thought. I heard him make a point that the Tourism Relief Fund has disbursed half of the funds. I really would want him to indicate the basis on which he is saying that.

My understanding is, it is a process which requires some very specific information. I find it almost difficult to believe that they have even begun to disburse funds. I would ask the Honourable Senator to clearly indicate to all in earshot here, and elsewhere, on what basis he has arrived at that.

SENATOR K.D. SYMMONDS: Sir, the point I am making is only amplified by what the Leader of Government Business is saying. Let us assume she is right and that nothing has been disbursed as yet, I am quite happy to go that route. The substantial issue is not how much was disbursed. The substantial issue is the professed objective of the...

SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN: On a point of order. If Senator Symmonds is saying that he is prepared, he is lying to the Chamber.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Benn, you have to be careful to accuse a Senator of lying.

SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN: I withdraw that remark, Sir. The Honourable Member is misleading this House, Sir. The way the things have been structured, the hotels have a period of time in which to report to the Committee. They report to that process up to the end of May, and then funds will be disbursed.

If the Honourable Member says that half of the money has been disbursed, and now to rise on his feet and say that he is prepared to go with the Leader of the Senate says naught, it is a serious thing he is doing. This means that we cannot believe anything that he has said before he said that.

SENATOR K.D. SYMMONDS: Sir, the substantial issue, all that notwithstanding, is simply this. I have no quarrel with how much was disbursed. I have a question in my mind which I am putting to the Government. The Government can treat lightly with it, but I am going to put the question. The question is, is it adequate to have a \$15 million Vote for the Tourism Relief Fund if you are saying that the Fund is supposed to be targetted at the wide cross-section of the industry, because there are players in the industry who are not hoteliers. There are players in the industry who are not restaurateurs. There are players in the industry who are ordinary small people who have taxis, et cetera, who should therefore be eligible as well.

The question I am asking, and I am hoping that since Senator Benn has so much to say on it, he can guide me. I am willing to take guidance. I want to hear what is the criteria for the disbursement, and how do we give guarantees that all those at every tier of the tourism industry have an equal opportunity at accessing the Fund.

In the circumstances, therefore, is it an adequate amount of money? It is not a difficult question. I do not understand why that question should agitate anyone. The reality is, we can go further. We have to also look in the context of tourism of the negative impact of the same Land Tax policy.

The Barbados Hotel Association, since the month of October 2008, submitted a rationale to this Government for a re-evaluation of the Land Tax imposition. What is the basis of the rationale? You have 30-room and 40-room hotels in Barbados that under the same observation that was just raised by the International Monetary Fund, are paying \$50 000 in Land Tax or \$40 000 in Land Tax, and it is felt that the tax burden on the small hotels in Barbados is too high under this Land Tax regime. The rationale is to urgently address that. Nothing has happened. It is unsatisfactory at a time of crisis in the industry.

3.00 p.m.

I go further, Mr. President. This Government has added yet another layer of expense on the backs of the hotel sector, and that is the impact of the increase on the excise on alcohol. Mr. President, if the alcohol cost has gone up in the bars and restaurants, it cannot easily be passed on to the consumer, if you are not going to run the risk of driving yourself deeper into a state of uncompetitiveness.

The small hotels of Barbados have asked for redress in that, so it is not only the trades people, and the professionals. I know that they are not getting it, but it is the indifference of the Government in the context of people trying to reach out to say that this is a difficult situation on us, and meet us half way, that I am raising.

Sir, let us go to the Estimates and look at the amount of money budgetted for the development of our tourism potential. Sir, this is at a time when the industry should be benefitting from recapitalisation, and we create new and enhanced attractions for the tourists who come to our shores, so that we will be investing today to reach a harvest tomorrow. But, Mr. President, if I go to the budgetary allocation for 2008, I know I am going to hear that I have to prove that, so let me do so now.

Sir, in the 2008 Estimates of Expenditure, the BTII was given \$15 280 000 under Sub Programme 416. Sir, what is Sub Programme 416? Sir, I quote its purpose:

“The functions embraced by this Sub Programme are those of the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc., which has been given responsibility for managing the implementation of the urban rehabilitation programme in Speightstown, Bridgetown, St. Lawrence...”

In other words, Sir, those areas where the tourists can go and recreate.

Mr. President, in 2009, at the time when we should now be digging a little deeper to try to make sure that we protect this industry, for everything in Barbados turns on the tourism product, the figure, the same Sub Programme 416, is \$15 280 000, not a yen more.

The reality is, Mr. President, that even as I speak to you, in London, there is a Barbadian economist who was carried live on the radio today, Professor Avinash Persuad, who made the same point that now is the time for us to be advancing and building additional capacity in our productive sectors, by infrastructural development; that we should, in his words, be accelerating that investment, by 20 years; and that we should do it now. He went so far as to say that by now, he does not mean next month or six months down the road, but I mean now.

Sir, the Government has budgetted, in a time of crisis, and a time of challenge and threat to the vital tourism sector, which is the bread and butter, and the life of the country, the exact same money for this kind of work, as they budgetted last year. Mr. President, we have a situation where there has to be deep concern.

Sir, of equal concern is the state of play in the country, with respect to the general product. Sir, the Barbados Labour Party would have left, and I have already raised, the Four Seasons Project, but that is now shut down and we do not know when or if, it will start back.

Asides.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: We are not saying that the Government shut it down, but we are saying it has from a macro policy position, to be taking alternative measures, so that we offset the consequential fall-out. This is what I am saying. It cannot be that difficult, even for the uninitiated amongst us.

Asides.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Now, Sir, we have a number of them. Marriott's Courtyard is going in drips and drags. It is still going. It has not stopped. We have Banyan Tree, Sir, that came to a halt. We have North Point, that came to a halt. Sir, while I am at it, I would implore that the Senator amongst us, who is now a Member of the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association, give us some guidance on Rosewood, North Point, to see exactly where it is going and, if and when it will start again, Mr. President, also Sugar Hill and Beach Lands. Sir, Apes Hill has stopped completely. Nobody knows what the fate of all these major projects are, but the mismatch between the reality and the rhetoric is clear.

Sir, the Minister of Tourism has told us that he will be presiding over the construction of one brand-name hotel per year. Where is it coming from? Sir, it is all right to get up and say these things, but when we look at the cold reality, we are seeing that the Government, itself, is drifting.

Mr. President, it is not only a question of that aspect of the productive sectors. You have to look at agriculture as well. Agriculture, Mr. President, must be put under the microscope in this Chamber because this is where the Minister sits. This is a Minister who told us last year, Mr. President, that he came here to drink milk. He did not come here to count cows. I remember that well, Sir, thumping his chest, such as he has, I come here to drink milk, and did not come here to count cows. Mr. President, we must test the amount of milk that is being drunk in the country.

Asides.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: I want to say, Mr. President, that I went to the Estimates. The Agriculture Ministry's objectives are to be found in these Estimates, under the rubric Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Part 1. I am going to read it out because the Minister is looking at me with all of the awe of recent discovery. I suspect, if I read his mind correctly, that he is hearing what is on these pages for the first time.

Mr. President, it says that the objectives of his Ministry are as follows:

- To facilitate access to the domestic and export markets.
- To enhance the competitiveness of the agricultural sector, so that it can compete in both the domestic and international markets and increase output.
- To develop strong, rural community-base services.

In order to develop these objectives, the Ministry proposes to implement the following:

1. Transforming the sugar industry into a sugar cane industry, which is producing refined sugar, special sugars for the domestic and export market, as well as for use in producing molasses, ethanol and electricity.

Mr. President, when I read it, my heart soared. I was proud of Senator Benn. I did not think that he had bought into the Labour Party's policy in that way, but I was proud of him.

Mr. President, I said, but you know, many a slip, trick, stop and lick, let me check to see what money has been put in place. I went to the Sub Programme 0161 of the Ministry of Agriculture for Special Development Projects, because this is where you are getting this new factory.

Mr. President, do you know what I saw? I saw that there was provision made for the purchasing of spare parts, maintenance, and upkeep of equipment, including electrical wiring and renovations. Sir, not a word about the transformation, and not a dollar for the transformation of the sugar industry into a sugar cane industry.

Asides.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Sir, that is written into the Estimates, as one of the principal objectives of his Ministry. I did not make it up. I did not put it in there. I was not consulted. I hope the Minister was consulted. It went further, Sir.

Mr. Presidents, quite frankly, there are two principal objectives listed. The second one is the development of the

Scotland District area, in order to maintain the integrity of the land, as well as to stimulate economic activity.

Asides.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. President, if I had not heard the aside, I would have said it was quite likely that he would not know the Scotland District had something to do with agriculture, so it does not surprise me having heard the aside that it is confirmed.

Mr. President, I want to say, with respect to the Scotland District that the Scotland District Authority Act was passed by the Barbados Labour Party, as an Act of Parliament in December of 2007. Its purpose was to coordinate work in the Scotland District and to ensure that economic activity projects could take place in that area.

3.10 p.m.

Mr. President, among the economic activity projects was a FAO consultancy, that is the Food and Agricultural Organisation for the uninitiated amongst us, that pointed to the potential of the Scotland District for fruit orchard and vegetable production.

Mr. President, as a result of that, one would have thought that a Minister who trumpets on a daily basis the need for food security and import institutions, these are all the catch phrases, the buzz words, and at a time of serious economic contraction, when the Scotland District Authority Act makes a provision for \$30 million in stabilisation and capital works to be done in the Scotland District area so that you could employ people, that this homegrown and ready-made solution of public sector investment would have been put swiftly and speedily into place.

Sir, I have to report to this Chamber that the Scotland District Authority has not yet been operationalised under Senator Benn's watch. It was created by an Act of Parliament and it remains a dead letter in the Statute Book. Mr. President, not a dime to operationalise that. The Minister would however seek the support politically of people who reside in the Scotland District. Mr. President, through you, I say to him this small caveat: "Woe betides you if you do not operationalise it".

Mr. President, that simple Scotland District Authority Act makes provisions for Barbados to have a homegrown, ready-made economic opportunity in stabilisation work, that is the construction side, and food security solutions and import substitution solutions on the agricultural side, for Senator Benn's benefit.

Mr. President, it is that type of approach that is more relevant to Barbadians than an hour and a half long treaty on hybrid adjustable rate mortgages because that is not so

relevant to us. That is where the Honourable Leader of Government Business took her march from. Mr. President, we are glad for the erudition, but the people want to put a little bread and butter on the table.

Mr. President, there is an opportunity abegging if only this Government, after two Estimates exercises, was willing to put political spite behind it and operationalise an Act created by the Barbados Labour Party so that people in rural Barbados would have an opportunity to earn a living in keeping with their capacity.

Mr. President, the Scotland District Authority is not only about the dump. There is an unfortunate hodgepodge of views out there which needs to be corrected. Sir, it is also important that we get serious about the value-added for our sugar industry. Mr. President, I made the point that the provision in the Estimates that would allow us to transform the sugar industry into a sugar cane industry has been treated as though it was nothingness.

Mr. President, if we do not get serious about the value-added in the industry, we are going to suffer even more. Sir, there is a practice that we have had of selling bulk sugar to the United Kingdom. British sugar is now doing its own value-added, for Senator Benn's benefit. It is taking the bulk sugar that it imports from Other Places, packaging it, branding it and marketing it in Europe on supermarket shelves alongside our own plantation reserve.

Mr. President, we are enjoying a profitability margin under the branded plantation reserve that we never enjoyed under the bulk sugar commodity. It was a good thing for Barbados to do, but Barbados' product is now being matched and competed against, therefore, the Government cannot rest eternally on its laurels, but must find alacrity somewhere so that you can bring further value-added to the industry. It has nothing to do with being partisan political. That is crying out for Senator Benn to be responsible.

Sir, I am saying to you that the value-added components that were contemplated are enumerated here in the Estimates, if only Senator Benn would have read them. Sir, the specialty sugars which the Estimates talks about to replace the bulk sugar is already reaping in some instances twice as much as the bulk sugar would have been reaping on the European market; the generation of electricity from bagasse by utilising fuel cane.

Mr. President, I have heard Senator Benn ad nauseam on the 4H Movement, and on the importance of catching and killing snails. I do not dispute any of those things as being of high importance, but there is something else to agriculture. Sir, I would want to hear during this debate the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, who has been sitting in his Chair now for 14 months, talk to us a little bit about where we are with the project or the

ideal of having fuel cane being planted in Barbados, and that we use the bagasse from the fuel to generate electricity.

Mr. President, where are we with the commitment that was given by the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited to purchase such and put it into the national grid so that we offset some of the expense to the consumer in Barbados, bearing in mind that Job No. 1, 2 and 3 is cost of living? Where we are at with this homegrown solution that helps us offset importing fuel oil? I would like to hear the Minister of Agriculture on that.

Mr. President, I would also like to hear the Minister of Agriculture on the issue of ethanol production, which is in the Estimates, I am not creating it. It does not suffice for the Minister to treat to it in silence, equally, the question of high grade molasses and inputs into the rum industry.

Mr. President, this project, had it not been put aside by the Government, was a project which potentially was going to serve the tourism product, cultural industries in Barbados and the manufacturing of the rum. It was going to help improve our export profile as a trading partner. All of these benefits stood to be reaped. Mr. President, none of them have been reaped and the Government treats to it in silence.

Mr. President, I would also want to hear the Minister of Agriculture talk to us a little bit about fishing because it was in January of 2008 that a delegation from Europe came to Barbados and conducted an inspection of our fish markets.

Senator Benn would have come to office and understood, or should have understood, were he being diligent, that one of the objectives of that inspection was to ensure that there was a common understanding about how we could make our fish markets HACCP compliant so that the precondition of getting access to the European market for fish and fish related products could be met.

Mr. President, that precondition is that from the time the fish is caught until the time the fish gets to be cooked, the fish is kept at a minimum temperature, so that the scaling, the boning and the packaging are done under certain predetermined conditions.

As a by-product of all of that, we then stood to be able to do the derivatives, the fish oils, taking turpits and processing and packaging them into salted fish, the import substitution that Senator Benn likes to talk about but does nothing about, so that we would not be importing these things from Canada.

Mr. President, I would want to hear him tell us what is the position with the market refurbishment to make these

things come to pass. Sir, market refurbishment was a key component of making all of these things happen. Mr. President, when you consult the Estimates, there is not a dime for market refurbishment. We just made a big song and dance about signing an economic trade pact with Europe so that we could guarantee to our people, whosoever may be involved in economic activity, access to the largest single marketplace in the world, the European market.

Mr. President, this Government must now stand condemned for being absolutely less than diligent by failing to even put a penny in the direction of assisting the fisher folks in Barbados to be able to access this new European marketplace.

3.20 p.m.

Mr. President, do you know where it is happening? If you go to St. Vincent, you would see that they have already transformed two fish markets and are working on a third. Do you know where it is happening? If you go to Antigua, you would see they are working on it too? In Guyana, they are working on it too but we who have prided ourselves on our fishing community, we who took a silver dollar and put a flying fish on the back of it, as part of the Pride and Industry.

Asides.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. President, I do not know how we could have done it, when the Europeans only came here in January 2008 to do the assessment, when the trade pact under which you entered Europe was only signed in August, but that tells you how we are going in agriculture and fishery to the precipice to what, were we outside of this Parliament, could only be described as buffoonery.

Mr. President, the other concern we must have when we look at the productive sectors is the International Business Sector. Sir, the International Business Sector is a sector that causes much concern because it is from that sector that comes 65 per cent of the Corporate Tax take. I have already made the point that we are looking at a \$65 million depletion in our Corporate Tax take in the last financial year, so somewhere in that corporate profile there is serious hemmoring taking place.

Mr. President, I say again to this Government, take it seriously. It is through that Corporation Tax that whether or not you like it, the work of the Rural Development Commission was done; the work of the Urban Development Commission was done. Sir, it is through those receipts, whether this Government cares to like it or not, that the work of the Ministry of Social Transformation as it was then, was done. It was through that tax take that

we were able to create a Poverty Relief Fund, an Agricultural Development Fund, and all those social initiatives that we like to talk about, but that we have to finance somehow. Sir, a word to the wise is sufficient.

Mr. President, the first concern one has to raise in this matter is the political issue with the International Business Sector. Sir, the sector is answerable to a Minister of International Business, but the marketing thrust of the sector, which is where all its work has to be done, because of the fact it is an International Business Sector and, therefore, has to market its services, is done through the Office of the Prime Minister in the person of Senator Boyce.

Mr. President, who do they answer to and who has control over the sector? Sir, again there is the hodgepodge, the fuzzy vision, the mix-match, the muddle thinking. Those are the issues that we have to look at.

Mr. President, in addition, when we look at the Estimates, there has been a cut in the Treaty negotiations allocation. The Prime Minister of Barbados has said, and we have to take him at his word, that the centrepiece of the International Business Sector's thrust was going to be building out our Treaty network, our double taxation Bilateral Investment Treaties. He wanted to invite people to come and use this jurisdiction through its network, but yet we have cut the Vote for building out the network.

Mr. President, I want to hear, when Senator Boyce gets up - if he gets up - the logic behind that mix-match. I also want to hear what has become of the ideal of having a centre for commercial arbitration located here in Barbados. We said when we were in Government that Barbados was in an excellent position to leverage its excellent position as a jurisdiction, one that is renowned for the rule of Law.

Sir, for example, you use an existing Treaty. There are people in Brazil who I have met when I was Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who used the Bilateral Investment Treaty with China, so as to do business, through Barbados, with China.

Their concern was that if a dispute were to arise, it would be a wonderful thing if they could choose the jurisdiction where you could settle the dispute, where the dispute could be arbitrated. Sir, because of Barbados' excellent reputation for the rule of Law, it was, of course, chosen as the preferred jurisdiction.

Mr. President, we were building out a series of Treaties around the world, inviting people to do business through Barbados, to utilise the Treaty and to exploit the opportunities but Sir, you are only now seeking to amplify that economic opportunity by creating yet another tier and having Barbados as a centre for commercial arbitration.

Mr. President, not a dime has been placed towards operationalisation of that, although it passed Parliament like the Scotland District Authority in 2007. The issue has, therefore, to be raised. How serious does this Government take the sector?

Mr. President, we have the issue of medical transcription. The projection for medical transcription was that there would be, by this time, a target of at least 2 400 persons, who would have been trained in Barbados to participate in what is now a \$15 billion to \$20 billion industry internationally.

Sir, what is medical transcription? Simply put, there are hospitals in the United States of America where you will have a medical staff of several hundreds. What you are seeking to do is to take clients' notes and have them properly prepared, filed and stored electronically.

Sir, the Americans are saying that because of the cost incurred of employing someone in America to do it, it would be exceptionally high, but if you could find someone with the same quality, because these people are being paid at one-half less because of the ratio of the Barbados dollar against that of the American dollar, that it would be done here in Barbados. Sir, this is an opportunity for us to take a lot of young people who have five or six "O" Levels, who are looking for something productive to do, to give them an economic opportunity that was unprecedented when I was a boy at school.

Mr. President, the Medical Transcription Course still continues to lag. We are far behind the target. I do not know how many more, other than the first batch that have been trained. Sir, I would want to get from Senator Boyce, not just a cruel look, because I asked the question, because the cruel look does not frighten me, horrific though it may be, but I would want to get from Senator Boyce a clear understanding as to his thinking on the future of medical transcription in this country. That is what is important, not the cruel look. I am not going to flee from in here because of the cruel look.

Mr. President, I also would want to hear about the Coalition of Services Industries. Sir, the Coalition of Services Industries is that industry that is designed to ensure that we take our local service providers and help them source markets around the world and around the Region, that we help and prepare them for selling their services around the Region and to reap the reward for doing so.

Mr. President, the Coalition of Services Industry is poised in a very interesting position because it is against the Barbados model that Trinidad and Tobago, and Guyana built out their Coalition. Sir, in fact, most countries in CARICOM have taken the lead from us. Sir, do you know

what these countries are doing? Sir, while we twiddle our thumbs, these countries are seeking to ensure that the European Union is penetrated, in terms of the economic opportunity that their service providers in Trinidad and Tobago could leverage.

Mr. President, a lot of work is taking place with their coalition, but I am not hearing, neither am I seeing anything in these Estimates. It might have missed me, so if it has, I would like to get the benefit of the guidance. What are we doing in order to ensure the capacity of the local Coalition of Services Industries? What are we doing to ensure that they are in a position, in these trying and economic times, to capitalise on new markets that have been created?

Mr. President, we have to understand that because the world is in turmoil, it does not mean that commerce or commercial activity has come to an end or necessarily has gone into perpetual decline. If you had trade agreements that guaranteed you market access, now is the time that you should be seeking to capitalise on those markets that are opened because you have an option beyond the 166 square miles of our shores. This is where the blessing of the trade liberalisation is to be found.

3.30 p.m.

This where the blessing of the trade liberalisation is to be found. Before the trade liberalisation process we were confined and constrained to Barbados, 166 square miles, like it or leave it. Now, through CARICOM there is virtually no limit to where you could go, once you have built out the agreement that guarantee the level of market access.

Mr. President, the point is, we should be now putting our service providers in a position where they can leverage new opportunities in market places that may not have been interesting before but because you have, in simple language, as a result of Senator Boyce, you have to pay the Government \$5 000 in professional fees and \$5 000 more a month in land taxes and then, if you are tenant, the rent goes up by \$2 000 and your overheads have gone through the roof, all of a sudden.

Mr. President, you are driving to work so you have to pay more money to drive your car on the highway and license it. Sir, you want to use every economic opportunity at your disposal and that is why, all of a sudden, you would find service providers seeking to go a little further afield when, before it was cool and it was contentment to stay here in Barbados because things were good but, Sir, things are no longer rosy. They are no longer good and, therefore, the Democratic Labour Party, as a Government, has to carry the service providers in the country.

Mr. President, through you, to Senator Boyce, I am only a caveat. I know that one of the concerns that we have heard repeatedly about this system of Westminster that we practise is that (15:32:04)... - this is not a personal assessment by any stretch of the imagination but the Smith of Constitution of constitutional law makes the point that when you have Executive Authority without having had to face the polls yourself, sometimes there is a tendency that you have to resist; the tendency to be a little complacent.

Mr. President, I am sure that Senator Boyce, being a professional in his own right would want to resist that tendency because he is a professional in his own right but, Mr. President, Sir, we have to ensure that no stone is left unturned in order to get the best for the people of Barbados and when I speak about the service providers, I am speaking about a lot of small business people, who really and truly are the backbone of this economy. They have market access opportunities out there and now is the time for Government to help them in hard times to secure those things and understand what is happening.

Mr. Speaker, there is a whole raft of issues, therefore, that I have raised, with which I must tell you I have had some difficulty. We have gone through the key economic indicators and, Sir, they have left us in a situation where we really should have been a lot better off. I have looked at the Estimates and I see between the pages of the Estimates document a real lack of commitment to the stimulation of our productive sector. It is a worrisome things, Sir, because I am the first to laud what is happening, if you are going to tell me you want to help people in housing.

Mr. President, I have no quarrel with that because the Barbados Labour Party, I have said in another debate was equally committed to people in the housing sector. I have no quarrel whatsoever with children on the Transport bus. I understand the political interest the Government takes in these things but there is more to the management of an economy than an election profile and an election date, etched somewhere in your brain on a calendar, down the road you are going to come to that point. Sir, there is more to it than that because long before you get there, you had to be preparing the wicket to bat on and we are not paying satisfactory attention to the economic indicators in this country.

Mr. President, it is a worrisome thing but we have heard so little from the Leader of Government Business, who is not now in here seat, on the substance of the productive sector and their performance level. It is an even more worrisome thing that we have heard nothing from the Prime Minister in the Other Place on the substance of the productive sectors and their performance level. What is Barbados if the productive sectors are grinding to a halt.

Mr. President, I have taken the opportunity here in this Chamber to focus largely on the Ministry of Agriculture because there is a Minister here, who I hope is competent to respond. I have raised with him key issues in terms of the capacity of the agriculture industry to drive this nation forward.

Mr. President, not only agriculture but fisheries as well and one hope, therefore, as I take my seat, that we will have the debate being joined in a meaningful and sensible way and that we would hear from the Government a programme that is interested and interesting with respect to the economic future of this country.

Mr. President, as I have said, just by way of a reminder, I do not mind if they want to talk about but I take no real interest right now in hearing the thumping of the chests on matters which are now hollow. Sir, the Transport Board and the carrying of children to school is a good thing. We do not have to debate a good thing and long may it continue so to speak but there are issues out there which are burning and worrying the people of this country financially and those are the issues, Sir, to which I hope we could speak.

Mr. President, I am obliged to you.

MR. PRESIDENT: Senator Goddard.

SIR JOHN STANLEY GODDARD: Thank you,

Mr. President. These Estimates 2009/2010 are being debated in this Chamber against a background of a severe itnel economic and financial crisis which is affecting all countries, including Barbados. The Leader of Government Business gave a very good internationally background, I thought, behind that crisis and the reasons for it.

Mr. President, all economists describe the downturn as a recession while a few are starting to compare it with the depression of the 1920s or 1930s. Sir, economists are unable to predict its severity or duration or the timing and pace of the eventual recovery. I have heard, two years, three years and four years but nobody could predict at this stage with any certainty. We just know it will get worse before it gets better. Mr. President, efforts to combat the crisis are being made by Governments throughout the world by various methods to stimulate their respective economies and by improving international co-operation in trade and finance.

Mr. President, let me just make one comment here. On the Government side I hear such emphasis placed on social programmes and they are important, do not let me ever not say that they are but there has to be a balance between social programme and economic programmes because, as the Leader of the Opposition just pointed out,

social programmes have to be paid out of economic programmes. I would like to caution the Government that while they are focusing on their social programmes and putting people first, this is all very noble, but equal importance must be paid to successful economic programmes.

Mr. President, our important tourism and international financial services sectors have already been affected and downward pressure on them could only increase until the present economic situation is reversed. This would inevitably affect the revenue that both sector contribute to the Treasury as its major contributors. However, this is not reflected in the Estimates at 209210, which projects current revenue of \$2 792 million on the accrual basis. Sir, on the cash basis it is projected that current revenue would be \$2 720 million an amount of 7 per cent above the Revised Estimates of...

3.40 p.m.

On the cash basis, it is projected that the current revenue would be \$2 720 million, an amount of 7 per cent above the revised Estimates of \$2 536 million for the previous year. This projected increase in revenue is optimistic and highly unlikely under present conditions, and circumstances are expected to prevail during this year.

In the current economic situation, Government could reasonably expect an increase in its expenditure to stimulate the economy and to protect jobs as much as possible. This is highly desirable, especially as we live in a small country where alternatives are not easy to come by, and people cannot pick up and go to another island or another State as they can in a big country. It is vital that we try to protect jobs to maintain social stability.

The Estimates for 2009-2010 projects total expenditure of \$3 614 million, an increase of 12.3 per cent over the Revised Estimates of total expenditure in the previous year. This is high, and will inevitably result in increases in both the fiscal and the national debt which was \$5 834.4 million as at September 2008, an increase of \$467.5 million since January 2008.

Sir, the overall fiscal deficit on the Accountant General's basis is projected at \$802 million, or 10 per cent of nominal GDP, as market prices estimated at \$7 488.6 million. When converted to an international financial institution basis, the projected fiscal deficit will be \$406.4 million or 5.4 per cent of GDP.

On the accrual basis, the fiscal deficit is projected to be \$363.2 million or 5.2 per cent of GDP. This is higher than normal, but under existing difficult circumstances it is acceptable, in my opinion, and needs to be reduced as soon as possible, the sooner, the better.

Sir, the expected higher deficit would have to be financed through additional borrowings, and in order to increase its foreign reserves which, as reported, had declined by \$205.5 million in 2008. Government recently and wisely, in my opinion, borrowed US\$150 million overseas towards remedying that situation. Sir, this has been a brief summary of the macro position in Barbados as outlined in the Estimates 2009-2010.

I will now turn to some of the micro issues that concern many of the citizens of this country and impact on the quality of their lives. I would begin with food.

Sir, a significant proportion of the food products that we consume are imported, and this causes a large outflow of foreign exchange. I recall that during World War 11, in the 1940s, under the direction of Sir John Saint, all plantations had to plant a certain percentage of their arable land in food crops to grow ground provisions. It worked well then and should be considered again, if it is not in violation of any Regional or international trading agreements. That would be a giant step towards food security. Of course, it would require restricting the importation of fruits and vegetables.

In order to achieve the desired result, there has to be better control over praedial larceny which, in some instance, has become a business, not a means of feeding a family, and losses caused by tribes of monkeys. This surprised me, but I was talking to a farmer in St. John, who grows vegetables. He told me that his losses from monkeys far exceed his losses from praedial larceny, and that surprised me.

Sir, Government and the Minister responsible are to be commended for their efforts to apply new technology in agriculture such as hydroponics, which I think is the way of the future, and to encouraging school children to become more involved. We need to improve our food security and reduce the price of food to consumers.

I next turn to water. Barbados has been designated as a water scarce country by the United Nations. We know that from our own experience. Many of us have little or no water running through our taps regularly. I suffer from that in my home.

Until the recent introduction of the desalination process, on a limited scale, we have been totally dependent on rainfall to percolate into underground aquifers. That water is then pumped to the surface by the Barbados Water Authority and its various reservoirs to distribution to residents, businesses, hotels, et cetera. The process is very expensive due to the high cost of the fuel needed for pumping, and the large quantities of water wasted due to leakage in the water mains, many of which are old and in need of replacement. I am glad to hear today that this

matter is seen as a serious problem, and efforts would be made to remedy the situation in the near future. Sir, I do not know the exact extent of the leakage but I have heard that it could be as high as 50 per cent, but I do not know for sure.

Against this background Government needs to pay more attention to maximising the quantity of rainfall to be channelled into the underground aquifers from which we all depend. This would require a sustained effort to clear and keep clean drainage wells located throughout the island and to minimise the quantity of water that is allowed to flow into the sea after heavy rainfalls. Dams might need to be constructed in gullies to collect and conserve more water, which can then be channelled or allowed to flow naturally into the underground aquifers.

Sir, waste management: For the past several years this topic has generated a lot of long talk and a lot of long dollars that have been wasted, especially in Greenland, St. Andrew. In the Estimates, the sum of \$19.2 million has been provided for the operation of a Solid Waste Disposal Plant at Vauxcluse, St. Thomas. Government needs to announce and implement a clear policy with regard to garbage collection, separation, storage and final disposal either by landfill, incineration or some other means. This problem has remained without a practical solution for far too long. It must now be addressed with a sense of urgency. "Mount Stinkeroo" must never be relegated to a memory of an unpleasant odour from the past.

Sir, roads and traffic. Government has to be commended for its efforts to improve certain roads, and this is noticeable as you drive around the island. Some of them have deteriorated to the stage of being almost impassable. Cox Hill, St. Philip, where I live, is a good example of a bad situation that is now being corrected after many years. I have lived there for over 32 years, and that road has been in a bad condition and deteriorating.

Asides.

SENATOR Sir JOHN STANLEY GODDARD: Such improvements have improved the Floor of traffic, but congestion remains with the ever increasing number of vehicles on the roads at any given point in time. Solutions to this problem can be found in the experiences of other jurisdictions. For example, with reference to numbers on licence plates, a lot of vehicles on the road whose licence number ends with an even number, on certain designated days only, and an odd number on other days.

3.50 p.m.

This has been tried and worked in other jurisdictions. Why they cannot work here? We want a free-for-all. We cannot deal with it. Some jurisdictions have even limited

the number of cars per household. I think this may be too drastic a step to attempt here.

Regarding the flow of traffic, especially into and out of Bridgetown, it remains a nightmare during morning and afternoon rush hours. Traffic on the ABC Highway might be improved by means of a limited number of flyovers. However, this has become not a traffic issue. This has become an emotive issue. Therefore, it needs to be studied objectively by experts before any major investments are made in the flyovers.

Auditing Services: This is close to my heart, Mr. President, because I was trained as an auditor. The range of services that are provided by Government today, are far more varied and complicated than those that were provided in the earlier times.

Barbados and other countries, in the words of the noted author Alvin Toffler, are now experiencing, in his words, "accelerated rates of change." All organisations, especially the larger ones, require higher levels of transparency and accountability than ever existed before. Government is usually the largest organisation in any country and, certainly, is in Barbados, and this makes effective oversight both more difficult and more important.

Citizens expect to receive value for money, as they have every right to, from the taxes that they are required to pay by Law into the public Treasury. They rely on an effective oversight function, performed on their behalf by independent auditors.

This important oversight role in Government is provided by the Audit Department, under the responsibility of the Minister of Finance. This department is the citizens' watch dog. The sum provided in the Estimates of 2009-2010 is \$4 762 000, as compared with the Approved Estimates of \$4 123 million in the previous year.

The provision of \$460 000 is for professional services, accounts and most of the increase of \$639 337. This is a new provision. I stress that. This is the first time that this provision is in the Estimates, and it is to be welcomed. It should strengthen the effectiveness of the work of the Audit Department.

As a member of the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament, I am sometimes surprised at the wide range of work required to be performed by the Department, with a staff that is often lacking in the relevant auditing qualifications, training and experience. I am not questioning their keenness, but I do not think they are always qualified or sufficiently trained and experienced.

Mr. President, this Department is called on to perform important functions in a timely manner. Only

today we received documents, Mr. President, dating back to 2004. We are now into 2009. Unless you have an effective and efficient Auditing Department that has to sign off on those accounts, this will continue, and it is not good enough. Again, this Department is called on to perform important functions in a timely manner. Any reasonable increase in Government's allocation to it to improve the capabilities of its staff would certainly not be opposed by me.

Mr. President, I would now like to turn to health. All of us are concerned about health. None of us has a lease on life and, therefore, we want to have access to good healthcare at all times. Barbados has been blessed with good doctors, nurses and other healthcare givers. However, many of our public medical institutions have had more than their fair share of physical and management deficiencies for far too long.

The opening of polyclinics in various parts of the island was welcomed, but it appears that the medical services they provide, remain limited. Much of the workload still falls on the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH). This is the problem for which the polyclinics were originally designed and were expected to relieve. It has not come to pass to the extent that had been anticipated or visualised.

Only last Friday, March 20, 2009, I accompanied my wife to the QEH, where she had a 10.00 a.m. appointment to see a doctor. Sir, to find a parking spot at that early hour was a real challenge, but patience ultimately prevailed. The parking lot is large. The ground is uneven. Those of us who have been to that parking lot, know what I am talking about.

Our walk to the doctor's office at the end of a long corridor, provided no surprises. The deplorable condition of the men's room on the ground floor was unchanged, from my last visit, about two years ago. I am sorry I did not take a picture at that time. I would not have to take a picture now. It was the same unkept, untidy, dirty men's room. I did not visit the ladies' room, but I suppose it is the same.

Asides.

SENATOR Sir JOHN STANLEY GODDARD: Okay, there were the usual floor and ceiling tiles missing, and at least one elevator was labelled, "out of order." Nothing had changed.

The QEH is our prime medical facility. It was built without fire walls and sprinklers. It was opened in the 1960s. It seems to have been designed to provide maximum ventilation by fresh air, but it seems that little thought, if any, was given to facilitate the movement of people, the

patients, staff and visitors, or services and I am talking about meals, medicine, equipment, waste, et cetera. In other words, it is tired and it has outlived its usefulness. It has served the purpose for which it was built and the time has come to move on.

While it still provides a variety of invaluable medical services, in many respects it has become an embarrassment, certainly an embarrassment to me, and I do not think I am alone. I have seen far better facilities in Toronto, Canada, both as a patient and as a visitor. We can do better, and we have to do better, but it takes political will. This is the only dimension, in my opinion, that is lacking, and would have prevailed for too long, or lack of.

When the QEH was opened, medical services previously provided at the adjacent Barbados General Hospital on Jemmotts Lane were transferred to it. The buildings on that previous site have not been optimally utilised subsequently, and some of them have even been abandoned over time, but the site itself remains as a valuable piece of real estate.

Jemmotts Lane leads inland, across River Road on to Martindales Road, where the QEH was constructed. This means that Government owns valuable real estate from Bay Street, right across from the Roman Catholic Cathedral, along Jemmotts Lane on the North or City side, on to the adjacent North side of Martindales Road, right up to Constitution Road. This is a big stip of land.

Probably developers would see this piece of land as very suitable and valuable for commercial development. I checked this out with one or two property developers, and they agreed with me on that point. It could provide a significant expansion here for the City of Bridgetown with plenty of room for businesses, offices, restaurants, places of entertainment, et cetera, as well as plenty of space for parking and recreational facilities.

This could be the rebirth of Bridgetown and this idea needs to be explored further. This is taking a long view. It would not happen this year, or next year, but we have to start planning now on what we want to use that land for, well into the future. Sir, it would be of more concern to our children and grandchildren, but we have to start thinking and acting now.

4.00 p.m.

In my opinion, a modern general hospital needs to be built to replace the existing Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Such an important venture would require a lot of time and plenty of money. We need to take a long-term view of such a development. It would be for our benefit and the benefit of our own descendants.

In my opinion, the new hospital should be located outside of Bridgetown, either adjacent to, or close by the ABC Highway with provision for plenty of parking suitably laid out and lighted for nighttime use. There is no lighting in the existing parking area at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, so what happens to those who visit patients after dark? It needs to be a medical facility which all Barbadians can be justifiably proud. I hope I would live to see that come to pass.

In producing the Estimates 2009-2010, I believe that the Government has made its best effort to deal effectively with an economic, financial crisis that it neither inherited nor created. Most economists seem to believe that it started with the meltdown of the sub-prime mortgage market in the United States of America, and the contamination has quickly spread internationally. It is a situation that we just could not avoid. I do not think that we have yet experienced the worse of it. In my opinion, that may be up to two years away based on the world news that I try to follow daily on television and on the Internet.

Mr. President, I support the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for 2009-2010 with all of its shortcomings. As loyal sons and daughters all, we need to plan and work together as all of us are in this worsening crisis together. We can and will overcome it, but we must put Barbados ahead of loyalty to political parties and to professions, civic and other associations and groups. This is not a time for playing partisan or personal politics. This is a time to be serious and a time to be patriotic.

I thank you very much.

Senator the Hon. H. L. BENN: Mr. President, I rise to give my support to this Bill entitled "An Act to grant a sum of money out of the Consolidated Fund and to appropriate the same for the services of Barbados for the year April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2010".

Mr. President, that sum of money as you heard earlier by the Honourable Leader of Government Business is \$1 920 772 158 and is allocated to various Departments and Ministries of Government. Mr. President, there are 27 different Heads and Ministries. The largest amount, \$300 188 188, has been allocated to the Ministry of Health. That is followed by the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development with \$297 883 699.

The other Ministries that would benefit in the large spends are the Ministry of Finance, Telecommunications and Energy with \$209 million, the Ministry of the Environment, Water Resources and Drainage with \$131 million and the Ministry of Tourism with \$109 million. Mr. President, there are other allocations but I would not go through all of them today.

Mr. President, it is evident that Government in its attempt to allocate the resources at its disposal has taken into account a number of things which I am sure we will explain to the benefit not only of ourselves in this Honourable Senate, but for the benefit of the listening public as well.

Mr. President, oftentimes we listen to the debates in the Other Place, and even in here and we read the newspapers, but then the average citizen out there still asks us a lot of questions about what went on in the debate. As a matter of fact, up to last night I was in the supermarket and one lady came and asked me to explain to her about the Constituency Councils.

Mr. President, I asked her if she has not been reading and listening. I therefore urge us as we seek to support these Bills and these Acts that we recognise that we have the average Barbadian listening to us. Mr. President, they do listen because a lot of people have become very politically aware. They tune in to the debates, thanks to the radio station Quality 100.7 FM. Mr. President, in the final analysis, we will be held responsible.

Mr. President, as mentioned before, this is our second Estimates Debate since coming to office in January 2008. Last year we made our input into what, I am sure was prepared before because anyone who is connected with Estimates would recognise that the Government workers would sit down with the Ministry of Finance from as early as October, November and December and put things together.

Mr. President, we came to office in January 2008 and we are not making any excuse that we did not have any input. We did have an input into last year's Estimates, but this year these Estimates being discussed are now our very own, just like these fields and hills beyond recall. Mr. President, very careful attention would have been given by the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and the Minister of State within the Ministry of Finance to ensure that what we see here is what we expect, what we forecast and what we anticipate and how we plan to manage these finances.

Mr. President, I heard the criticisms from the Opposition in the Other Place that the figures are down. They looked at the Estimates and they criticised the figures. Mr. President, I wonder if the figures were up what they would have said. I believe that they would have asked us where we plan to get the money from in this whole economic meltdown. Mr. President, because of very careful scrutiny, we have gone through...

Mr. President, I sat with the officers in my Ministry. I am going to discuss my Ministry at some point in time. I hope that when I am discussing the Ministry of Agriculture

that the Honourable Kerrie D. Symmonds will be in his seat. He is not here right now. He has adopted the habit of another Senator who goes in and out, but I hope that he is here when I am going through agriculture. Mr. President, I am going to hold off discussing agriculture until the Honourable Senator comes back.

Mr. President, a lot of times when we went through our own Estimates, we found ways of being more prudent. We found ways in which we could take the loaf of bread given to us and knead it and have it distributed. We did not have the two fishes with it, but we will still, at the end of the day, have the few basketfuls left, maybe not as much as 12.

Mr. President, with very careful management of our resources... Somebody in this Chamber is going to speak to the management of Government resources at some point in time, but I would want to touch on it as well. We discussed the figures. We usually formulate policy, but the funds are managed by public officers under the direction of the Permanent Secretaries in the various Ministries and Departments and under the guidance of the Director of Finance and Planning.

4.10 p.m.

Mr. President, I want to draw a specific reference, let us say you may have a figure of \$500 000 that you want to put into the 2009/2010 Estimates, and at that sitting down session the Minister of Finance would ask us what was last year's budgeted figure, which was \$380 000. The Minister wants to move that figure to \$500 000 and he would have asked the support team to tell him how much has been spent so far between April 2008 and January, 2009. The Minister would be told that figure is \$75 000.

Sir, the question would arise, if you had budgeted for \$380 000, you want \$500 000 for next year but that so far, with less than three months left in the financial year, you would have only spent \$75 000. Sir, as a matter of fact, since there could be no justification in asking for that increase, you leave it up to the Minister who is to formulate policies, in association with the Permanent Secretary and those persons who are Heads of Departments, to be prudent in the management of those funds.

Mr. President, if you go through the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development expenditure, we have suffered a cut, but when I examine some of the ways in which we have given up, or we are asked to give up, you would find five or six Departments that operate under a particular building and the way the Estimates are outlined in here, for example, you would see provisions made for salaries, wages, other personal emoluments, library books and publications, employee contributions, supply of material, operational expenses, professional fees, et cetera.

Therefore, for example, the five Departments in the same building would put money in the Estimates for the same things, where everybody would have had an amount for library, books, et cetera. Therefore, for example, if one Department puts \$30 000, another \$30 000, another \$30 000, the Minister of Finance, in his prudence and vigilance, would obviously performance some surgery.

Mr. President, it is the same thing in the maintenance of buildings. If you look through the Estimates in the various Departments, you would see almost every Department in the Ministry would have a substantial amount of money voted for the maintenance of buildings. Sir, there were a number of old buildings under which we operate but to give an example, I cannot see how my son in his bedroom, my other son in his bedroom, somebody else occupying the dining room, and my wife and I in the master bedroom, would want to put the same amount for repairs and maintenance on the roof, when all of us are under the same roof. We have, therefore, been able to sit down and examine that.

Sir, I want to take my hat off to Honourable Minister Boyce and the Honourable Prime Minister for going through the various Departments and wherever we could cut, we cut. Mr. President, we came to office and when we were canvassing nobody anticipated this whole economic downturn. As a matter of fact, one of the things that gave Senator Symmonds and others a lot of joy was talking about the increased cost of living.

They were so happy when the cost of living started to increase soon after the Democratic Labour Party came to office because when we were canvassing on the platform in an effort to capture the Government, we spoke about the cost of living and trying to bring it down - and thank God they would not have read about what goes up must come down. When the prices of oil started to rise, the supporters of the Barbados Labour Party and the politicians started to beat their chests with joy, in wonderment as to how the Democratic Labour Party would manage this situation because of the fact we had got on the platform and talked about decreasing the cost of living, yet it is rising. Sir, they got on as though they were living in Egypt. They were joyfully proclaiming that Barbadians were going to suffer hardship, but God is good and all the time.

Mr. President, with what is happening in Barbados and in the world today, Government has to be prudent in how we spend the limited resources at our disposal. Therefore, there must be very prudent management. There must be no wastage, no unnecessary and unwarranted spending of money. I heard the Leader of Government Business talking about the unemployment figures in the United States of America, which is 7 per cent; France is 8 per cent; Germany 8 per cent; Spain 14 per cent.

Sir, for those of you who follow the international news, the United States of America has been reporting job losses in the amount of more than 600 000 per month. Barbados' Prime Minister has been making every effort to ensure that there are no job losses. He has gone about seeking to ensure that Barbadians continue to work, that is why when the news broke about the Four Seasons Project, as a responsible Head of Government, the Prime Minister spoke to the Project Heads, who would have given him that assurance about getting back to work within a week but then they had other matters with which to deal.

Sir, it pleases Senator Symmonds to ask questions about why Barbadians were told it was going to be one week but now it is six weeks, yet the workers have not gone back to work. Mr. President, Government does not own the Four Seasons Project but whatever can be done and whatever we as a responsible Government could do to act as a catalyst to get people back to work, we will do so.

Senator Symmonds said today that there are no unemployment figures. The Opposition is waiting for unemployment figures. They had a way of keeping unemployment figures in single digits and they are now waiting to see if it has gone to double digits, so that they could beat their chests again and say when they were in office, they managed the unemployment in this country but look at where those figures are now. They would not even stand on their feet in the Other Place, or in here, and suggest ways in which we could keep people employed. I have not heard them joining with this Government in thinking or initiating ways in which we could maintain a balance and keep people employed.

Mr. President, as a matter of fact, having come to office in January last year and witnessing the increase in the inputs that helped to keep things going and now faced with this tremendous economic downturn since last September to December, this Government was still able to come to the table with the Trade Union Movement and provide Barbadians with a decent increase in wages and salaries, pay their arrears and keep people going.

Sir, you would have thought that because of what is happening, certain persons would have come out...I call them Noah's doves, who would go out of the ark and bring back information. Instead, they are prophets of doom and gloom. They talked about tightening belts.

The Prime Minister thought otherwise. We were able to sit down and provide our civil servants... Sir, things are not so terribly bad that we could not do it. I want to let Barbadians who listen to me know that Government charges everyone of us VAT, that taxes are paid by the business people of Barbados.

Sir, Ambassador Kellman, who was in Opposition a few years ago, was one of the first persons who alerted us that Government collects more VAT than it had anticipated, when VAT first came about in 1997. But do you know what happened? Sir, the former Administration had a way of wasting resources that were at their disposal. Sir, I can tell you that I know of projects, if you go back and read Reports of the Auditor-General from 2005, 2006, 2007, those Reports would tell you about the colossal wastage of funds. I remember one area where funds were allocated, where \$82 000 were allocated to repair 19 kiosks in the North.

4.20 p.m.

Sir, 6 were repaired out of 19 and out of the \$82 000 provided, \$91 000 was provided to the...

Asides.

Mr. President, only six were repaired. I know of cases where the roof to the Animal Nutrition Unit was given to a contractor who was supposed to repair it and he was paid double the amount of money that was given in the contract and the roof has still not been finished. Mr. President, that was under the Barbados Labour Party because they knew how to allocate funds. Mr. President, it is difficult to talk about a lot of things in here without mentioning people. Sir, the Senator is now back.

SENATOR K.D. SYMMONDS: Mr. President, on a point of privilege. Sir, I make it 4.30 p.m. and at 4.15 p.m. as I was getting into my car, I heard on the radio Senator Benn making a comment to the effect that I am in the habit of not being in my seat like a certain other Senator. Mr. President, I had indicated to the Leader of Government Business that I was going to the funeral. Indeed, I offered to take the Leader of Government Business. She went before me, because I was on my feet for the full two hours and the reality is that we both have a funeral to attend tomorrow because it is a death of a familiar relative.

Mr. President, I think we have come to a very unfortunate past, if a Senator cannot extend the courtesy of allowing the Leader of Government Business to know where he is going, and then the liberty of going there and making his way back immediately without having the most unfortunate aspersions cast.

Mr. President, I have sat in this Chamber by myself for an entire day and, therefore, Senator Benn, who would have known that is highly, in my judgment, out of place to make that kind of accusation and remark as soon as my back is turned. There have been times when I have not even condescended upon myself to visit the bathroom, purely out of a commitment to make sure I am present throughout the hearing.

Mr. PRESIDENT: It is very unhealthy.

SENATOR K.D. SYMMONDS: Mr. President, I have a difficulty if this is what we are coming to because I cannot say to you that I would take it lightly that every time one has to heed a call of nature, or do some other business that arises. Sir, all Senators in here can leave their seats from time to time and if I have left the precinct of the Chamber and have done that which is necessary by indicating to the Leader of Government Business then, Sir, I believe that, at some stage, someone should have restrained Senator Benn from himself and his unfortunate tendencies in that regard.

Mr. President, I take a dim view of it because it is not the first time it has happened in this Chamber, that a Senator on That Side has got up and had things to say about the presence or absence of another Senator. Sir, I think that we have to conduct this Chamber and its business with a certain decorum.

Mr. President, there will come a time when other Senators are not in their seats as well. When we began today, Senator Benn was not in his seat. When he got in here, the Leader of Government Business was well on her way. I know he wants to talk about agriculture and he said he was waiting until I come back, but I also want to make this point. I have a privilege. I claim that privilege and I am asking that you defend that privilege.

Mr. President, I am obliged.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The point of privilege is well-made. Included in the composition of your point of privilege, you inadvertently, I am sure, cast aspersions on the President. I know it was inadvertent and, therefore, I take no offence. I merely say to you that Senator Benn's presentation relied more on the absence of other Senators than it did on your own absence and I did not consider that he had spoken out of turn when he alluded to the fact that you were absent and he indicated that he would like to speak on agriculture when you were here because he had apparently heard your own presentation on agriculture earlier.

It, therefore, struck me at the time that Senator Benn was being more complimentary than he was defamatory. I, nonetheless, take your point and would suggest to Senator Benn that to the extent that he has caused you personal pain, he might wish to make amends. Senator Benn, you have the Floor.

SENATOR K.D. SYMMONDS: Sir, on a point of privilege again. I have heard what you had to say but I wish to make it abundantly clear, without appearing to be unduly confrontational or adversarial on the point. Sir, Senator Benn's words "that I am in the practice" and I take

umbrage at the choice of words. They do not admit, Mr. President, in my respectful submission of any other interpretation other than that which is straightforward. Sir, a practice is something that happens over a period of time. There has been occasion when I have been in this Chamber and have left the Chamber during a speech of another Member. Sir, I have not, and I have been in here in this session since February of last year. Sir, as I have said before, I have not even condescended on myself to heed a call of nature. Therefore, I must deprecate in the strongest possible terms and I will not be silenced on it. I stand on the four corners of it.

It is a deeply disturbing and worrisome thing that Senator Benn could seek to inveigh on me a practice when nothing of the sort ever took place. Sir, on one solitary occasion and on that occasion just now, I had taken the liberty of discussing the matter with the Leader of Government Business.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The point is made. Senator Benn, you have the Floor.

Hon. H.LaV. BENN: Mr. President, I most humbly apologise to the Senator Kerri D. Symmonds. I did not say you had a habit of leaving. I said that I recognise he is out of his Chair and I hope he is not adopting the habit of another Senator, I did not say him. Sir, if the cat fits him, please draw the string but I do not think so at this time.

I did not say that the Senator was in the habit. I suspect he should go back to his car, rewind the tape and listen to what I said. The Senator seemed so deeply hurt. My humblest apology to you and my deepest condolences to you on the passing of somebody who is a familiar person.

Asides.

Hon. H.LaV. BENN: We say family in Bajan but he says it in a different language. He should have read the part of the Scripture which said to let the dead bury the dead.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The point has been made Senator. My understanding of what transpired, as they say in the newspapers, corresponds with your understanding of what you said. I wish to assure Senator Kerri Symmonds that if, indeed, Senator Benn had ventured to say the words to which you have taken objection, I would not have permitted him to make the statement. My recollection is not as it used to be, but he did intimate that you had adopted or appeared to have adopted a stance that had been that of another Senator. Under the circumstances, I consider the matter to have been properly dealt with. You may proceed.

4.30 p.m.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Under the circumstances, I consider the matter to have been properly dealt with. You may proceed.

SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN: Mr. President, thank you very much. I shall desist from any comments in reference to the Senator who makes a lot of comments about people's facial contortion. Even when he speaks they are imaginary and nobody challenges him. Nobody says anything.

He reads from his speeches and if anybody has to look at a note, he sits down and says that people are reading because he knows that according to Section 31 (6) of the Standing Orders, it should not happen, but he reads and that is okay. So the things that he does nobody else should do, but I shall from hereon desist from even looking in his direction. I shall continue, Mr. President.

Sir, projects in each ministry have to be carefully scrutinised. Contractors under our watch will be carefully chosen. Consultants will be properly selected and their work audited. Time lines will be observed and the quality of work must be the hallmark of their programme. That is why when we put these things in place, we could sit down and project a reduction in some of the things that we believe we can cut out. So when the Opposition in the Other Place and in here, address a matter about we cut this and we reduce that, it is prudence. It is a plan for good management.

Sir, a contractor came to me a few months ago. He told me that under the last Administration he was awarded a contract. The contract was estimated at \$500 000. He tendered for \$750 000, got the contract which ended up at \$1.5 million, and he was paid. Sir, I would not tell you everything he told me, but who has to pay back that money, the ordinary taxpayers. The same small people that I am talking about.

Sir, the Democratic Labour Party, through its efforts, vigilance and attempts to cut out wastage, decided that certain Heads would be cut. I lost a few million dollars in my estimates in the Ministry of Agriculture. When I said a few million dollars somebody looked up at me. I do not have that kind of money. I am talking about my estimates. When I first recognised it my eyebrows were raised, but I went through it and understood.

Sir, do you know what we are going to do? We are going to earn our keep in the Ministry of Agriculture. We are going to earn our keep and you can mark my word for that, because I have told the staff that I have measured my own honeymoon in there and it is over ever since, and the nonsense that I put up with in 2000 - I went to the Ministry of Agriculture, the same funeral home the Honourable

Senator went to, I went too, when I went to the Ministry of Agriculture.

I thought I was there when I first went to the Ministry, but I have seen a renewal of the minds of the Ministry of Agriculture. I have seen some young professionals with a desire to work come alive and are prepared to put their training and experience to the benefit of the farmers in this country.

If you were to examine the notes of the Ministry of Agriculture and you were to see what happened under Services, I can tell you this past year, the Services Department of the Ministry of Agriculture paid out over \$900 000 through their incentive programme to farmers. That programme was in place for years, but farmers either did not know they could access it, or they were not allowed to access it. There are other things in the Ministry of Agriculture that are of a positive nature, and I will ensure that we put things in place.

The Honourable Senator made some good points in respect to the Scotland District and I took notes, because we can all take advice from each other. Those things that the Honourable Senator put on the table for the Scotland District I have taken my notes, as I said, and we will seek to incorporate them during the period of our time.

I want to say to Honourable Senators in this Chamber that what you see from the Democratic Labour Party Government will not be what you saw under the Barbados Labour Party Government. We will not engage in any wastage and we will make sure that we manage the resources of the taxpayers of this country in a manner that will bring joy to this country, in these very trying times. Sir, Ministries must work hand in hand to complete the task before us.

A few weeks ago the people in Oistins Fish Market were complaining about some work that was to be done and had not been done. We heard about the car park that was to be fixed and my Ministry placed in the Estimates an amount of money for the repairs of the car park. I spoke with the Minister of Transport and the Representative of the area, the Honourable John Boyce, and together we worked. Today the car park is being fixed, even as we speak.

The Ministry that John Boyce manages, the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, is providing the equipment, and the Minister of Agriculture is providing the asphalt to put in the road. We are paying for that and it has resulted in the cost of the car park, if we had given it to a private tender, but working with the Ministry of Public Works and Transport we have been able to effect savings on both sides.

His people in the Ministry continue to work rather than twiddle their fingers. I am not saying that they do it all the time, and our Ministry has been able to fulfil a promise to the people in the Oistins Fish Market at a lower cost and nobody has lost his or her life. That is why I say we need to work together.

Sir, I am urging therefore that there be greater linkages between and among the various Ministries. I called for it before. Agriculture could be an asset to the Ministry of the Environment, Water Resources and Drainage. Under the Ministry of Agriculture we also have a drainage programme. Rather than duplicate things, we will be working closely with them, wherever possible in an effort to manage the resources that are placed at our disposal.

I want to see greater linkages between the Barbados Water Authority, the Barbados Petroleum Corporation and the Barbados Light and Power Company, so that when the Ministry of Public Works and Transport repairs a road and we are driving smoothly on it, then the next week the Barbados Water Authority digs up part of it to lay pipes, then the next week the Natural Gas does the same thing, then next week the Barbados Light and Power does the same thing, and the Telephone Company behind them, whereas there could be greater coordination, where the utility companies can work together.

It would cause greater synergies and create for all the Ministries an opportunity to be gainfully employed and, of course, result in tremendous savings to the country.

Sir, when you see the Estimates, I am happy that we were able to go about it in a manner that we can come and lay the Estimates and talk about less money for the various Ministries. If we had said that tourism was \$108 and \$140, the Opposition in the Other Place would be asking how are they going to raise the extra money at a time of depression. So you cannot do anything right.

4.40 p.m.

The point is that the Democratic Labour Party is not doing things to please the Barbados Labour Party. We are here to please the general public and to ensure that the work is delivered, Mr. President, in a timely manner, with the cost savings thereto attached.

The economic situation in Barbados is not isolated to us here. It is so throughout the world. Read your papers. Watch CNN and Fox and see that nearly every week the President of the United States of America is talking about ways in which he would want to do things. He actually had to reverse some of the things that he represented on the platform, and we have not done any major reverses.

We came in here a few weeks ago in December and had to come to this Table to vote to increase the lending capacity of the Government because a lot of the things that were done in the previous Administration were done under the radar, called off-budget expenditure. It was off-budget and it was good then but we had to come to the Table and put things right.

We talk about the housing situations and how we are going to remove VAT off housing \$400 000 and up and we had to come back here, without any shame, and say to the public, look, this is still within our reach, but we had to go back to lines - you know when you are pitching, you have to go back to lines - and come back and start at \$150 000 and move up.

Sir, we are confident. As I said before if the Manifesto Pledge had said, or the Budget Statement by the Prime Minister had said \$400 000, and things were so good, as the Barbados Labour Party has been saying when they were in office, we would have been able to carry it to \$500 000 or more.

I heard people making noise in the Other Place about the levels of foreign reserves, how they left it at this amount, and now it is down. One person, the rightful Leader of the Opposition, Her Majesty's Leader of the Opposition said, \$472 million, when the other Leader, who is the Opposition Leader to the Opposition Leader, said it was more like \$800 million.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Of course, there are other people who are potential leaders. An Honourable Senator who sits in here is about ninth in the pecking order, but his time will come.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Sir, they talk about the reduction in the foreign reserves. Imagine that you come to Government and you see \$2.1 billion in reserves and then things started to happen, which you have to dip into it. Can you imagine you are the manager of your household and you have money in the bank, the house wants repairing, or somebody got sick, and things were not as you thought, so you had to dip in the reserves. Do you expect that under these economic situations to still have the same levels of reserves?

Sir, we would have been an irresponsible Government, if because of how we want the international agencies to measure us...

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Standard & Poors measures us by that kind of activity. I would feel very bad, as part of a Government if we continue to allow the social services in this country to falter, and we boast about high reserves in the banks or in the coffers of Government. Mr. President, I am not worried about these things.

As I mentioned just now that when we canvassed, nobody knew or predicted the downturn in the world economy. Sir, as the oil prices rose, they impacted on the price of various goods and services. There were negative comments.

Mr. President, poultry in Barbados is a staple food. Sir, more than 10 million kilograms of chicken are provided every year. The poultry industry is worth more than \$180 million. Sir, as we came to office, we had no control over the price of feed, because of the way that the World Trade Organisation, Trade Liberalisation, the Pinnacle Feeds Limited and local manufacturers of feed were able to carry up the cost of their feed.

Mr. President, we came to office in January, and as early as February, bam. We said to them, hey, hold on here. We sat down with the poultry producers, the Barbados Agricultural Society, all the livestock producers and Pinnacle Feeds Limited and came up with a mechanism. The Prime Minister was very pleased. We decided that we could not call it a subsidy, because we would be colliding with the rules, so we put a price support mechanism in place.

Mr. President, we thought about letting the farmers handle it themselves by providing the bills and this and that, but there were about six different Farmers' organisations that we would have to go through. Therefore, we decided that the best thing to do, is that when Pinnacle Feeds Limited was selling a bag of poultry ration for \$20, and the price had to go to \$24, that we would allow them to sell it at the same price as before.

They would have the record, so we would not have to rely on the thousands of farmers to bring in receipts, but just one entity, as they sell the feed. Even the feed companies agreed that those distributors of feed, would continue to sell at the old price, so that there would be no increase in the feed and, hence, no increase in the finished product of chicken, pork or beef.

Mr. President, the Barbados Labour Party hollered for murder, and objected to that. They are always objecting to things that will redound to the benefit of the ordinary citizens. The Honourable Senator comes in this place and he tries to give the impression - he said it three times already - that I was an employee of BS&T. He tried to cast aspersions on my integrity by trying to indicate that as a

former employer of BS&T, I am the person that engineered the funds for BS&T, by innuendo.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Sir, nobody got up and talked about the misfortune, but he was in the House. He is in the Senate and he can say these things. Sir, I am not afraid of the colourful words that the Senator used.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. President, on a point of elucidation. I have said in this place before and, indeed, I said today that Senator Benn would have been the Minister of Agriculture, and the first order of business of this Government, when it came to office, the very first day that it appeared in Parliament to do business, a subsidy was granted to Pinnacle Feeds Limited.

Mr. President, I have also said that it is a fact that Senator Benn was an employee of Barbados Shipping and Trading in the month of December in 2007, and that he became a Minister in January 2008, and that the transfer of funds, through the Ministry over which he presides, took place in February. Mr. President, I do not understand then why he imputes to me, an improper motive because all that I have said is historically accurate.

I have also said in this place that in other jurisdictions, it would have been deemed exceptionally improper, Sir, and that is why the former Vice President of the United States of America, Dick Cheney, would have been brought under public disapproval for his involvement in issuing contracts to companies that were doing work in Iraq, when he was the former Chairman of the same company.

There is something called transparency. You cannot just talk about it on a public platform. If Senator Benn becomes agitated because it is pointed out that his behaviour does not stand the smell test or the scrutiny test for transparency, then, Sir, so be it.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Benn, before you respond or speak again, I wish to draw to the attention of Senators, Rule 34 of the Standing Orders of this Senate. Rule 34 says and I will be sufficiently pedantic as to read it:

“34. Contents of speeches

1. Reference shall not be made to any matter which is sub judice in such a way as might, in the opinion of the Chair, prejudice the interests of parties thereto.

4.50 p.m.

2. It shall be out of order to attempt to reconsider any specific question upon which the Senate has

come to a conclusion during the current session except upon a substantive motion for rescission”.

These two I consider to be of grave importance.

3. It shall be out of order to use offensive and insulting language about Members of either House; and

5. No Senator shall impute improper motives to any Member of either House.”

I take the liberty of reading these excerpts from the Standing Orders of the Senate in the hope that they will assist in our proceedings in the future without any acrimony on either side.

The Senate has a tradition of being accommodating to diverse opinions, and the Senate will continue to have that tradition, if I have anything to do with it. I wish to appeal to Senators that the vision of opinion must not lead to acrimony and bad blood. I will not preside over a distemperate organisation. This Senate is not such an organisation and I will not allow it to degenerate into such an organisation. I ask Senators to bear in mind the Standing Orders which have been agreed upon by the Senate over many years and I ask them to please abide by those Standing Orders.

Senator Benn.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Thank you, Sir, I shall observe what you have just read.

Sir, the point that I want to make is that this Government has been spending its money in goods and services for the benefit of the country’s citizens and we could assure one and all that it has not been wasted. No one has purchased a yacht with it, boxes for the Oval or plantations. No one has put millions of dollars in foreign banks. We do not own hotels or real estate in Miami or Other Places. Mr. President, we assure you that whatever moneies are collected and used by this Democratic Labour Party Government, will be done to the benefit of the citizens.

Mr. President, I should now like to assure all that the Ministries of Government... Mr. President, the Ministry of Housing and Lands has done a tremendous job. I do not want to get into the details about who built these housing solutions and how many we did because I believe that every Government that gets into office has to do something for its people.

Mr. President, one of the reasons that this Government responded very quickly to the housing needs of Barbadians is that was the clarion cry throughout this country. While the former Administration was building

land banks... When we came to office, there were no withdrawals from any land bank. The Democratic Labour Party came to office and identified some areas where we could build some houses, and we have done that.

Mr. President, I drove through French Village and Four Hill last weekend and I am pleased to report that what the Honourable Minister of Housing and Lands said in the Other Place earlier this week is correct. Those houses in Four Hill are going to be ready in a matter of weeks. Already persons are being interviewed. Barbadians are looking forward now under the Democratic Labour Party to occupy houses built by Government, not having to find out that a parcel of land in the countryside and the urban corridors have been sold to rich landowners from overseas. This is not going to be our style.

Mr. President, that is one of the things that worries the Barbados Labour Party supporters and people. When they see something happening for the benefit of the ordinary people, they get nervous. It is the same problem they had with the Constituency Councils. They recognised the value of them. Sir, whenever I hear the Barbados Labour Party people keeping a lot of noise, I say: “ah ha”, that is something that is going to benefit the people.

Mr. President, the same thing happened years ago. When the late Right Excellent Errol Barrow said he was going to do free school meals, somebody started to bore holes in the pot and pans. When he said free secondary education, they said: “Oh no, it cannot be done.

Mr. President, anything that is to be done for the benefit of our people, the Barbados Labour Party and their cohorts kick against it. They embrace the big people, the ones with the yachts, the ones that are living in the lanes that are not rocky but sandy. These are the people who they know are going to meet them under the sandbox tree. When it comes to the ordinary fellow wanting to get a piece of the rock and to own something, they criticise it.

Mr. President, I know that as long as we are here and the people in Other Places that are Ministers of the Democratic Labour Party... We have been the people’s Party and we will continue to work hard to bring the average... They criticised the free bus fare as well. The Honourable Senator said he applauded it, but at first they said it could not work too. We are doing it and we did not have to bring in any more buses. We repaired the buses and we got things going. Mr. President, I want to see the Minister of Housing and Lands continue pressing.

Mr. President, I turn now to health. We came in and we inherited some problems at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Mr. President, my mother is 88 years old now. A few times my mother had to be hospitalised. Mr. President, most of the time she was there, we had to carry toilet paper

and things up there for her, while people drove around in Mercedes Benzs and BMWs and Ministers sat down pretty in jacket and tie and pontificate in these places. Mr. President, poor people were drinking cold soup on evenings at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. I cook many Saturdays and carried some good chicken foot soup for my mother and toilet paper in an institution that these people continue to criticise.

Mr. President, there is also the St. Joseph Hospital that can be and should be used for the benefit of the people, not only in the North, but throughout the whole of Barbados. Mr. President, I do not want to use that word "spite" because that is unparliamentary in this place. Mr. President, the thing about it is that they wanted to hang, by his shirt and curlie, an honourable gentleman who did well for the Democratic Labour Party.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Mr. President, I remember that in the 2003 General Election they sought to bring back up the hospital again. Mr. President, I said to one fellow, you beat that up in 1999 and you beat up on it in the bi-election in 2001 in St. Thomas, why you want to beat up on it now? He said, Benn, we know the psyche of the Barbadian public and we know that if we put that on the table they are going to go against the Democratic Labour Party.

A report that was ready from 2005 has now come to the table in 2009 exonerating from blame the people that they pointed fingers at. They held up people to public ridicule wilfully, willingly and with malice and forethought knowing that they were doing it.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: "Willingly" is a small word. "Wilfully" is a small word. "Malice" is a small word, and "forethought" is a small word. The same way that a Senator could get up today and say that half of the money is spent, and when corrected, did a turnabout, which means that we could not believe anything that he said before. These are the people who were guiding the fortunes of this country for 14 years.

5.00 p.m.

Mr. President, I came to the Government in January 2008 and had the task of getting many of my officers back to work. I do not know if I had shared this with you but I am sharing it for the public to hear. I met a bright, young girl in my Ministry, someone whom I used to meet while I was at the Barbados Agricultural Society and Other Places. I asked her how she was doing and she said: "Mr. Minister,

well..." I then asked another person about her and was told: "That girl does very little in the Ministry."

When I spoke to her and asked what she was doing, she told me she was studying Law. I told her that I was told that as bright as she is, she does very little, to which she replied: "Mr. Minister, whoever advised you, I do not know who advised you but whoever advised you was misleading you. Mr. Minister, I do nothing."

Mr. President, when she told me that, I asked her how long has she been doing nothing and she told me she has been doing nothing for 3-1/2 years. The Barbados Labour Party was leading at this time. I have to come here, 14 months after we got into office and correct the problems in the Scotland District. I had to correct all the problems that were happening in the Fish Markets, suddenly because an assessment was done and we had to be HACCP-approved.

Sir, only last week, I went to the Bridgetown Fish Market, after the Ministry of Health turned up and sought to rectify the problem. Sir, people had a field day in the Other Place. They talked about how Benn turned up in boots and all these things. If I had turned up in slippers, they would have said I did not know what I was doing. If I had gone in ordinary shoes and jacket, they would have said that I went in a suit. Sir, I knew where I was going and so I armed myself appropriately.

Mr. President, the point I am raising is that it appears as though everything that was non-existent or everything that was not happening over the past 14 years, we must now correct and put in place. I went over and sat as an observer in the Other Place and heard people on the Opposition Benches getting up and calling on the Minister to put things in place, things that were out there five years. Sir, I asked myself, how could somebody get up and say this thing was lacking five years ago. Where were they five years ago?

Mr. President, I am not here to cast aspersions or to criticise anybody. What I am saying is how is it that the Barbados Labour Party had the reins of Government for 14 years and did not put things in place. Why did they not correct some of these ills that existed, for example, the Scotland District?

Mr. President, we have an orchard in the Scotland District where we used to pick cherries, pomegranates, mangoes and everything else. Do you know I am now trying to clean that up? Sir, the bush has been strangling it for a number of years and the Barbados Labour Party Ministers and others have never been down there and looked at that project, neither has the Honourable Senator, in his driving around the country on his busy schedule, ever found the time to go there and to advise the former

Minister what to do. But he comes here and expects this Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to try to put everything in place in 14 months.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: You mentioned that Cherry Project. You could tell the Honourable Senator about that \$400 000 that was earmarked for it, but that it was never spent. Sir, I do not know what the Honourable Senator is saying. That money was spent, but not a leaf was taken off the trees under the Administration of the Honourable Senator.

Mr. President, I am so proud of my stewardship with the Rural Development Commission under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. We built 70 houses, all over the table. We built houses, we repaired... Mr. President, I have made it clear to the Prime Minister and to everybody else, when I came to office as Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, that I would wish to give somebody else the houses, the roads and everything else to do and that I concentrate on rural agriculture, which has always been my dream.

Sir, when we built houses, we repaired roads that were started under the Barbados Labour Party, in St. Joseph and in St. Andrew. Over \$200 000 was spent on them and very little work was done. Sir, the new Board had to go back up there but they said they were not going to spend \$700 000 to get that project completed.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Mr. President, I can talk about that. Those houses to which the Honourable Senator said were being built that used to cost \$50 000, because of the increase cost of raw materials, have now gone to \$80 000, according to him.

Mr. President, I heard in the Other Place and in here how they said that contracts for electricity used to cost \$3 900, under the Barbados Labour Party, and now under the Democratic Labour Party they now cost \$700 000 and \$800 000. That is true but when I did my due diligence and my audit, I found that every contract that was paid by the Rural Development Commission, under the Barbados Labour Party, was paid for \$3 900, but the contractors came back for overruns of \$18 000 and \$20 000 and so, in effect, it cost \$21 000. My \$700 00 or \$800 00 was straight payment, with no overruns.

Mr. President, I sat in the Other Place and heard the Leader of the Opposition talking about a car that was sold by the Rural Development Commission for \$3 000, while it was estimated at \$20 000. I want to put the records straight here. The car was valued by Simpson Motors at \$5 000. It

had no windshield, no suspension and the bottom was rusting. One Technical Officer on the Board of the Rural Development Commission even asked why did they not pay somebody to tow it away but it was sold for \$3 000. Sir, I want to put the record straight here, even if I have to say "So Help me God", that it was sold for \$3 000. It was valued at \$5 000 and when the person called me and said, "Mr. Benn, do we have your concurrence on this?" When I asked what was the position on the car, the car was a Mitsubishi, 16 years old, valued at \$5 000 and sold for \$3 000 because it was sitting down there rusting, and we could sit down and let the public hear a lot of things. You cannot believe a word they say.

Mr. President, I want to move on from there. I am done listening to him anymore. I have dealt with him enough. I am going to leave him in the hands of "Boulani". If you ever say anything to me, I will tell you chapter and verse about "Boulani". I am not going to expose you. I will protect you, I will not disturb you, I will go ahead.

Asides.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: On a point of order, Mr. President, the substantive allegation to which the Minister... I almost call him Minister of Housing and Lands because he was spending so much time on housing as opposed to agriculture. I do not think he has touched his Ministry yet, but one is not surprised.

Mr. President, the substantive allegation that was made against the Ministry of Agriculture, as it then was, was that contracts were being awarded for the repair or building of houses at the Rural Development Commission and that money was being paid out before the contracts were even signed.

The allegation was that persons were getting draw-downs under the contract, under the watch of the Minister. Sir, the allegation is that mobilisation money was paid out of the Rural Development Commission before a contract was even signed. Sir, it is that that was alleged and so, for the Honourable Senator to get here and talk about cars or anything, that has nothing to do with it. It is a simple allegation that he must speak to.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Mr. President, that was never touched in here but it was touched on in the Other Place in July last year. Sir, when we checked the record, because of the expediency in the transaction, I can tell you, when we checked the chronological order of the events, a contract was awarded on the 13th day of one month, the mobilisation fee was paid on the 15th and the draw-down was made on the week following the 20th. They came with information, trying to indicate that the mobilisation fees were paid but do you know what they could do? They could check the record.

5.10 p.m.

SENATOR K.D. SYMMONDS: Mr. President, on a point of order. This is the Parliament of Barbados and the Parliament of Barbados has records, and the Leader of the Opposition, speaking on the 8th day of July last year, not only make an allegation but laid before the Other Place and made a document of the House copies of all of the documentation which related to the matter. It does not bode well for the Minister to come and try to revise history. He should speak frontally to the issue. He should bare the issue. That is what caused him to be dismissed and Mr. Sinclair has his Ministry.

SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN: Mr. President, it was only part of a document that was flagged in the Other Place. Sir, I should not be even discussing this now, but I should be speaking frontal to the issue. Let me correct the issue and put it to rest. They brought information talking about repairs of a door and a lock that cost \$2 600 and the people from Rural Development Commission who provided the information to whoever received it, gave them information that could substantiate everything. All that happened is that the line on which the money of \$2 600 was rested was in the same line of another area about the lock, but the breakdown was removal of this, and removal of that, and the purchase of a door, but it suited the Leader on the Other Side to come in and...

SENATOR K.D. SYMMONDS: Mr. President, on a point of order. The documentation which was laid in the Other Place was a copy of the contract which had been issued to build houses, copies of the receipts for the draw-down of money which predated the date of the contract. Sir, that is what took place and the Honourable Senator cannot now come in here and appear to be completely innocent of knowledge because it is a matter of record. Sir, he held a Press Conference about it after and did not speak to the issue. He had sitting by his side the Chairman of the Rural Development Commission and did not himself speak to the issue. Sir, all of that is part of the record.

Mr. PRESIDENT: My information is that what was laid in the Other Place was not from the Opposition, but was a correction, and was laid by the Prime Minister. I wish we would get on with the debate so that we will not have this tic-for-tat which is taking us nowhere.

SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN: Mr. President, I will now finish off the Estimates because the Senator representing the Opposition knows - he was not there - but he knows that the Leader of the Opposition put a matter on the Floor of the House on the Other Side and what was laid in the House was a correction by the Prime Minister of Barbados that I provided...

Asides.

Mr. PRESIDENT: There is a rule against anticipation.

SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN: Mr. President, I will wind down because the guy is trying to agitate me...

MR. PRESIDENT: There is no guy in here.

Hon. H.LaV. BENN: I am very sorry. The Honourable Kerri D. Symmonds is trying to agitate me. Sir, I am happy to see that education has been given a good plug. I am happy that the environment...

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senators, order, order please.

Hon. H.LaV. BENN: I am happy that the environment has been given an opportunity to allow for proper drainage in Holetown and other places because when we have poor drainage, it not only resulted in flooding but people could get sick from stagnant waters, mosquitoes and all the rest of it. I am glad that this Government has put a lot of interest in the Ministry of the Environment.

Mr. President, under the Attorney-General and the Ministry of Home Affairs, provision has been provided for an upgrade to the police station. Sir, we believe that the police are people, but some people feel they are not people and that they are not special, but provision has been made for those places to be done.

Mr. President, the Defence Force: We are going to make them comfortable. They have provided good service to Barbados and last year, they have received their pensions, their gratuities and good salaries. Sir, I believe that every person from the law-abiding forces, from the Police and the Defence Force should be benefitting from extremely good salaries because they are the ones, when we sleep at night who are out there protecting this country.

Mr. President, Public Transport and Works: I am happy that things have been done on their behalf. Sir, they continue to attack the Ministry of Youth and Family about the camps. Sir, last year August, the Honourable Prime Minister said to us in Cabinet that he did not want to see the children of Barbados going around during the August period, which is long, unattended. He told Senator, the Honourable Darcy Boyce to let them make provision for funds to be used by schools, youth groups, community groups and Churches to ensure that parents could go to work.

Mr. President, when children are at school during the week, parents are comfortable. You drop them off at 8.00 a.m. go to work, then you leave work at 3.00 p.m. and go for them and you know they are under the care of teachers

but, Sir, when they are on holiday, they get bored quickly, eat down the house and you have to keep them employed.

Mr. President, the Honourable Prime Minister made sure that was done. Sir, there was a camp that had a bit of an issue and the Barbados Labour Party took that and spread it over the entire landscape of all the camps. The Prime Minister came back in December, short as the period of vacation was, said that since the children were out in December that there should be Christmas Camp. Sir, we planned it properly and we had Christmas Camp. Mr. President, there is also going to be Easter camp again next week, then summer camp and, Sir, the camps are going to keep rolling. Sir, that is a caring Prime Minister and a caring government.

Mr. President, it is the same Prime Minister that went down to the Harbour a few weeks ago, visiting the Harbour Industrial Estates and saw those wonderful girls who have to catch the bus early on mornings to carry their children other places decided to put a day care centre at the harbour to accommodate those people who have to come for Heddings, St. Philip and Charnocks in Christ Church with their children on their shoulders and go down to the harbour. Sir, this is a caring government not one who would squander the resources of the same people who have to pay taxes. Mr. President, I fully support this.

Mr. President, as I close, the Ministry of Agriculture has put its resources to good use last year and it intends to do the same thing this year. The Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (BADMCO) has a land-for-the-landless programme. We have provided facilities for the markets and, as we speak, we are repairing the markets in Six Men's to allow for vendors there to do the things that are pleasing and wholesome to the public with the fish.

Mr. President, our incentive and rebate programme is working. Last year, 335 applicants received more than \$999 000 in rebate disbursement. This is something that has never happened under the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. President, the home greenhouse project will be put in place.

5.20 p.m.

The testometers we are putting in place to keep the wastage of water from happening all the time.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN: It is not a big word. It is a testometer.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H.L. BENN: He is a bright fellow. He went to Harrison College.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, please.

SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN: Our cotton industry...this year we planted 44 acres because of the storage of cotton at Groves, but we are going to be increasing that. We are going to be marketing in a proper way the amount we have there, and our National Agriculture Committee that will be set up, will meet next Monday, and I expect them to give me some good advice for the Ministry to carry the programme forward.

I want to encourage all citizens to get on board with us this coming Saturday with the Giant African Snail Programme. We are seeking to eliminate the snails. They are a pest in this country. They were sighted in Barbados on September 27, 2002, and absolutely nothing was done under the Barbados Labour Party Government to eradicate those snails. It took this Government for the first time to do something to eradicate those Giant African Snails. Sir, the people of St. James South were the people on the Eradication Programme as well.

Sir, as I close I want to thank you very much. I am sorry that so many distractions caused me to lose some of the time that to address properly things under the Ministry of Health and other Ministries.

I have all the confidence in the world in the Ministry of Health. I know that the Honourable Donville Inniss is going to do a fantastic job to bring the hospital and other institutions around - The Ministry of Tourism, as the life blood of the economy, and I trust that the same way the Opposition Members and Senators would want to criticise the down figures, are also aware of the problems in tourism. People in the United States are losing jobs. People in Europe are losing jobs, people all over the world are losing jobs. They are the same people, if they were working, who could come down here on holiday. They no longer have those resources available to them. The future does not look too bright for them, and the Opposition expect those same people to catch a plane and fly down here as accustomed.

Sir, when the Minister of Tourism, in his honesty, declares that there is a downturn in the arrivals, but he is still reporting progress in the amount of money that was received, somebody from the Opposition should have told the Minister of Tourism, these are some ideas that we have. You do not have to use them, but here they are. No, they come out and cast aspersions, criticise and hope for the worse to happen.

Again, I am thankful that the Minister of Tourism is a very bright and articulate person. He communicates well

with those persons around him. He is not puffed up. He is not two-faced and is able to sit down and discuss with other stakeholders and other partners in Government. We in agriculture are going to work closely to create linkages with the Ministry of Tourism. We are going to sit down with them and discuss the amount of bed nights in a season and out of season, so that we can have enough table eggs, enough milk from the local dairy farmers, enough chicken, enough heads of lettuce and those things that we are unable to produce in large amounts.

I want to raise a point. Last week I listened to the debate of the Other Place and I heard a responsible Member of that House, when the person was criticising me and my boots, said that I keep talking about being self-sufficient. Barbados would never be self-sufficient in everything. We do not produce nearly enough beef to satisfy our demands. We produce about 30 per cent of the beef that we consume in Barbados, and we import.

We do not produce as much lamb as we consume. As a matter of fact, I believe that Senator Chandler has the figures. It was indicated that it was about 10 to 12 per cent production in lamb. Barbados will have to kill about 15 000 lambs a week to satisfy the local demand. Our people use a lot of imported lamb.

We also know that we import a fair amount of things like English potatoes. We do not grow them. Sir, even if the potential was there, the Barbados Labour Party sold all the land. They took the land and sold it to their friends last year, the year before and the year before that, saying that they were looking for the most economic use of land, golf courses, et cetera. We are now taking what lands are left and putting them to good use.

I am prepared - I heard an aside from Senator Chandler earlier when I spoke about the Home Agricultural Station, Senator, once you feel strongly about it, I am happy that you can give us the advice and we will take your advice. Anybody who has good suggestions that we can use to the benefit of this country we will use. We will take the criticisms, whatever they are worth, but we will take the advice well. We are people who can step back a little bit and listen to people and use whatever advice we have. We are not pompous. We are not people who would go outside of anything and make mischief.

Sir, I also want to laud the efforts of the Ministry of Transport and Works, the Hon. John Boyce. He has a number of tenantry roads that he is going to be fixing, construction of the highways and maintenance, and I am happy to report progress in all of those areas.

Honourable Senators, I must indicate to you that I am in support. Those of you who got a little concerned about my outburst from time to time, I beg for your

forgiveness. The Honourable Senator, Kerry D. Symmonds, my condolences to you and your family.

Mr. President, I thank you very much.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Millington, I have noticed you, but before I do, I just want to draw attention to the Senate. I am reading from Mays Parliamentary Procedure. I draw to your attention this Section:

"Illusions to Debates of the Other House of the Current Session: The Rule that illusions of the current Session are out of order presents fruitless arguments between Members of two distinct bodies who are unable to reply to each other and guards against recrimination and offensive language in the absence of the party assailed. But it is mainly founded upon the understanding that the debates of the Other House are not known and that the House can take no notice of them."

For what it is worth, I draw that to your attention and I hope that we will be able to proceed in a manner to which we have become accustomed.

Senator Millington.

SENATOR P.A.V. MILLINGTON: Sir, I rise to support the Estimates before us, but I would like to start by letting this Barbados and this Honourable Chamber know that it is not by might neither is it by power, but it by my Spirit. I do not want to sound too much like a preacher but I am going to tie the word of God with these Estimates that are before us.

5.30 p.m.

SENATOR the Rev. P.A.V. MILLINGTON: Many people touched on many things this evening. I do not want to do that but I want to focus on my pet project. I have a very soft spot for the Royal Barbados Police Force and the Armed Forces of this country. When I was a young boy at Harrison College, I first met the late Commissioner, George Reid, and he sparked my interest in Law enforcement and that type of thing.

We recently had an unfortunate incident, where a visitor to our shores lost her life, in very sad circumstances. What I want to show at this point in time is how important Law enforcement and crime are, in relation to our tourism product, which is very important for our foreign exchange. A lot of damage control has been done, and is being done at this particular point in time.

I want to make the point that even though we spend millions of dollars on marketing in other countries, it can all be undone by one or two unfortunate, well-publicised incidences, hence the importance of the areas that the

Attorney-General has jurisdiction over, which are the Royal Barbados Police Force and the Armed Forces.

I also want to look at the decline in morals in our society, which affects criminality in young people. Today, we cannot really say too much about the young people, because we have the parents watching pornography and, therefore, the parents are not in a position to tell the children to come back.

Crime then, can have a very important negative impact upon what we are trying to do here this evening, which is to have a serious look at the Estimates set before us. I want to focus mainly on crime and the Royal Barbados Police Force. We sing the National Anthem which says that our great forefathers sow the seed, and that seed to me, is prayer and Godliness.

Every centenarian that goes before the Governor-General, when asked how they managed to get to 100 years old and, without exception they all say that it was with the help of God. Our country has been great, not because we had many great politicians, but I would like to suggest at this particular point in time that it was Godly influence on our society, which has made Barbados what it is. Unfortunately, we are turning away from God rapidly.

It was with great interest I noted that the Head of a Trade Union was commenting on the revelry, which goes on in Barbados almost weekly. I said that I did not think I heard any voices from the Church commenting on it, but God used an outspoken union representative to speak about the revelling and disrespect for what we traditionally call, the Day of the Lord, and some people would debate that day but what we traditionally know as the Day of the Lord. This is an indicator of where we are going as a society, where God is not important anymore.

Sir, even though this Government has great plans of instituting policies, which would take this country forward, and they are sincere and very good plans, we cannot eliminate the human element, and we cannot eliminate their fear of God. The Bible says that righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any nation.

Therefore, what I am trying to say here is that even though we are going to put our plans in place, and we have wicked people who are intent on taking the lives of innocent unsuspecting people, it will undo all the good work that we are trying to do, except something is done immediately. Hence, coming to the work that is being done in the Justice Department, and I want to focus a lot on the police stations.

I remember about six years ago, there was a domestic dispute and I went to a police station to ask them to accompany me to the house, because I did not want to

get physically involved in the situation. I was told there were no vehicles at the time. Well, to the credit of the police, I would not tell you the station, but it is nothing bad. They came two hours after. This is where a guy had a lady holding by her throat, and so on, but I understood the situation because, Mr. President, there was no transportation available for the police to do their work.

Therefore, many times the police are blamed for being late or lazy, when in truth and in fact, there is no transportation available for them to expedite the matter. I think that after he took a gun from a safe, I had to end up taking an officer in my vehicle.

I want to let the public know that many times the police, even though they are well-trained and well-intentioned, they are limited by their resources and their working conditions. Sir, that is just one case.

The facilities at the police stations throughout Barbados are deplorable. When the Attorney-General first came into office, I remember him touring Hastings Police Station, District C, and some other stations, and he was appalled at what he saw, and the fact is that we are expecting men to preserve lives and to watch over our families, under such working conditions.

Mr. President, I think the security personnel in Barbados play a very important role, because we would not have a good tourist product, if we do not have a good police force. If Barbados becomes known for a place where it is not safe to come, we will end up being blacklisted and our tourism product, despite our money, budgets and proposals will come to naught. Therefore, we cannot belittle the work being done by the Royal Barbados Police Force.

I would also like to point out that there are many people, who are not really aware of what is happening in our society. They read the newspapers, and I have been told by reliable sources, having many friends in the Royal Barbados Police Force, that many things which happen in Barbados do not always come to the light of the print media.

For example, there are many people who are raped and it never comes to the Press, because it may be somebody who holds a prominent position in society and she does not want her name all over the news. Therefore, rather than go and lay an official complaint, she will suffer in silence. I am saying that I have always believed that there is a lot more crime than what is reported and is a reality.

Mr. President, you only have to talk to the taximen in Barbados and they will tell you that there are two Barbadoses. There is one before 11.00 p.m. and then there

is the one after 11.00 p.m., where people come out to play, and you find that people, who are ordinary respectable citizens, turn into all types of things. I would just leave it at that.

Asides.

SENATOR Rev. P.A.V. MILLINGTON: I am a man who is on the road, and you know that very well.

Therefore, the Royal Barbados Police Force needs proper working conditions and equipment because recently, I have seen an increase in gun-related crimes. The reality is that if things get tight financially, some people are going to try to find a way to sustain themselves, come what may.

As a matter of fact, I have a son who works with Four Seasons, actually, and someone was overheard saying: "Well, if I do not have a job here, I have a child at home, and I am going to feed my child, so I am going to rob somebody if I have to." I want all in this Honourable Senate to understand that there are people like that, Sir.

Therefore, the Prime Minister's desire to keep jobs as a priority is very important. It has a long term connection to do with crime. There are some people who have money and still commit crime. I am saying that there are people who get desperate and do all sorts of evil because of lack of employment. Therefore, there is a big connection between crime and employment.

5.40 p.m.

We have to do everything that is in our power to assist people to maintain their jobs, come what may.

Mr. President, this is my personal opinion. There are unscrupulous people who use hard economic situations for their own benefit. We have situations where the price of oil went up and you were buying a piece of cheese for \$12 and the next day the price of the cheese was raised even though they had not imported a new shipment.

Mr. President, persons just used tough economic situations to take advantage of poor innocent people. These are the people that concern me in our society.

Mr. President, I do not expect Barbados to be above being touched by the economic tsunami, if you want to call it that, or the economic hurricane, but I do believe that there are people who are unscrupulous who are going to use this situation to fleece the poor people of this country.

I was speaking with a former Barbados Labour Party Parliamentarian who was telling me that he went into the supermarket with his daughter and was shocked to see the price of a tin of corned beef. Mr. President, every day the

prices are going up even though the price of oil has come down. The excuse they gave the first time was that they were raising their prices because the price of oil was going up and everything is driven by oil and energy, yet still even though the price of oil has dropped drastically from US\$140 a barrel to US\$40 barrel, the prices of goods have not come down in relation to the drop in oil prices. Mr. President, this tells me that something is drastically wrong.

Mr. President, we have to look at the moral fibre of our nation. Mr. President, even though we are going to do our best in this Honourable Senate to pass a Bill for the benefit of the nation of Barbados, from my observation, the people of this nation, from their character and lifestyle, have turned their backs on God.

Mr. President, I was made to understand that a Sunday School teacher asked a young boy about Sunday School and he said: "Excuse me Ma'am. They do not have school on Sunday". Sir, his take on Sunday School was that he was going to a primary school five days a week, and to him going to Sunday School was like he has on his khaki and he is going to school on Sunday. We have come to a place right now where there is little fear of God, and the big people who are supposed to know better are giving lip service. Isaiah the prophet said: "This people draw near me with their mouth but their heart is far from me".

Mr. President, I do not know where, but I believe that there are some politicians like that. They draw near with their mouths and every other word is about God, but when you look at their lifestyle, and the examples they are setting in our society, they leave nothing for anyone to follow, hence the lack of moral and spiritual guidance in our society.

Mr. President, we are seeing here that new police stations are supposed to be constructed. We always say that Barbados has a population of 266 000, but we know that is way short of what is the actual population now, so I want to commend the Attorney-General for overseeing a budget where there is a proposal for the construction of new police stations at Six Roads, which is becoming a fast booming small town, at Cane Garden, St. Thomas, at Wildey, which is now a thriving commercial centre, and at Belleplaine, St. Andrew.

Mr. President, they were modernising telecommunications, widening roads and doing everything but the Law and order which is going to make a safe society for us, they were not paying attention to at all. It does not make sense having a four-lane highway and satellite dishes if you cannot leave your home after 6:00 o'clock and you are terrified of going out at night. There are some people who are saying that they do not go anywhere at night right now, that they prefer to stay home because there are a lot more robberies and a lot more things

that are happening which are not necessarily reported to the media.

Mr. President, I basically wanted to stress the importance of the Royal Barbados Police Force. I also want to stress the importance of the sort of guidance that parents would give to children, and the outcome of a lot of criminals. I am not blowing my own trumpet. I go to visit Dodds from time to time. I was up there about a week ago visiting a young man who requested me to come and see him. Mr. President, the young man said he did nonsense and he is doing his time. Mr. President, he asked that I would come and see him every month.

Mr. President, at this point in time I would not mind a job in that area because I have a love for people. I like to work with the downtrodden in society, the man that is looked down on. I have a very soft spot for these people. As Mr. Alleyne knows, I am a very regular visitor to St. Michael North West. Deacons Farm is a favourite area of mine.

Mr. President, the parents are not in a situation where they can guide the young people. As I said before, the parents cannot tell the young children not to smoke marijuana because the parents are smoking it.

Mr. President, my grandson went to a primary school in the City and when I went to collect him one evening, he said, "Granddaddy, a boy was smoking weed today in the bathroom." He was nine years old at the time. We hear of sexual intercourse between underaged minors 7 and 8 years' old. This is becoming a regular occurrence. The teachers themselves are glad to get home when the evening comes because people expect the teachers to take up the role of parents. The teacher now is supposed to be the parent, the counsellor, everything all in one. I come from a family of teachers by the way. Many of the teachers are overwhelmed.

Mr. President, it would be good if they put people in place who actually care about people, who just do not want their salary. Many people are getting a salary for doing things, but they do not really care about what they are doing. You could tell the difference between a caring government and a not caring government, a loving politician and one that just want to get into Parliament because of the perks and so on that they receive, cell phone, travel allowance and so forth, but the people would be guided accordingly.

Mr. President, I do not have a lot more to say. I have been allotted a certain amount of time. I do not believe in talking just because I could talk. I am passionate about this area of Law and order and the lack of facilities. There are many policemen who are on sick leave. You do not see it in the newspapers.

Mr. President, because of the official Secret Act and so on, police officers are not allowed to come out and say anything. Mr. President, there are many policemen who have been shot at and who have been stabbed in going to domestic disputes and there is nobody out there with a voice to represent what they have gone through, and what they are going through.

Mr. President, many of them get threats. Somebody goes to prison for three years and while the guy is getting into the prison van, he says when I come out, you gine see me. That man has a wife and children. Sir, the lives of police officers are under threat. They have a very difficult job and I really think that they should be paid for the risk that they take, their personal lives in many instances.

We know of occasions where police officers have lost their lives in the execution of their duty, so it cannot be compared to any other job. Every time they respond to a domestic call or to an attempted burglary, their lives are at stake.

Mr. President, what this Government is doing in trying to upgrade the facilities and provide new police stations is very commendable. It would help to make their working conditions much more comfortable. Mr. President, I wonder why this was not done before. It is so obvious. The roof is dropping in at Hastings and there is the problem of rats and so on. It is horrible. How could anybody expect you to give a good day's work when you cannot even sit down in peace?

Mr. President, I think that we all have to become mature and get past the stage where we feel that the last Government did not do anything. I am not one of those people.

5.50 p.m.

Mr. President, throughout the history of Barbados, coming all the way up from the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, we have always had great Prime Ministers and so I think we have to be mature enough and do like the Honourable Senator Symmonds, who said that the bus fare was a good idea, that we will score political points on some issues but that we have to get past this partisan politics where we say the other Party has not done a good job.

Sir, if the other Party has done a good job, we can say that. We can say that they have done a good job but that we can do that job better. There is nothing wrong with that but we have to get past the situation where we are very myopic in our views, where we believe that the only people who could do anything would be us. Sir, the fact that we came and found a government that was running, would have meant that the other people would have had to be doing something.

Mr. President, this is a point I would like to make. I believe that we are doing an excellent job and a much better job in several areas, including housing. That is what I would say. I would also want to say that the fact that we are finishing off a new Judicial Complex ... It was not started by us, but we are finishing it off, and so we have to give credit where credit is due. Let us be mature and rise above these petty things.

Mr. President, I do not know if it is parliamentary to commend you for reminding us that a certain amount of decorum is necessary in this Honourable Chamber, and that we have to be very careful we do not say things that are unkind, or that cast aspersions on each other's character. I think that the cut and thrust is good at times, and I find it amusing at some times, but we have to be careful that we do not go overboard and impute things to each other which are not really true.

Mr. President, in closing, I would like to say I support these debates and I thank you for allowing me the time to articulate my views.

SENATOR P. GILKES: Mr. President, before we get into the heat of the matter, I would like to clarify something said by Senator Symmonds. I know that Senator Symmonds has not been past St. James Central for a long time.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Honourable Senator, before you get to Senator Symmonds, I would like to recommend that you deal with the Chair.

SENATOR P. GILKES: Mr. President, I just wanted to point out to Senator Symmonds - I know that he has not passed the St. James Central boundary - that the project Senator Symmonds is talking about at Rosewood is actually not at North Point but at Harrisons.

Mr. President, I waited with baited breath to see where the Leader of the Opposition in this Honourable Senate would go with the reply to these Estimates of Expenditure for the period 2009/2010. Sir, the Leader of the Opposition had probably three courses of action at his disposal to take:

1. Senator Symmonds could have followed the path of the Leader that went nowhere and said nothing. It was nothing more than a rambling representation and displayed a total lack of understanding, or the requirements of financial planning, or of his latest grasp with accounting;
2. Senator Symmonds could have followed the path of the "Leader-in-waiting", who was absolutely brutal and destroyed the whole foundation laid by the Leader, or;

3. Senator Symmonds could have created a path of his own thinking and his own direction.

Mr. President, I am glad that Senator Symmonds chose that route. Sir, since it seems to mirror the Other Place, in terms of its indecision and uncertainty in its leadership, who is actually the de facto Leader in the Other Place is more unclear to me now than at the start of the Sittings of the House of Parliament in 2008.

I said that we have witnessed Senator Symmonds taking the leadership role more often than the de facto Leader, Senator Thompson, and it begs the question who are the real leaders in both Houses. I am sure that the public would love to know who should be speaking on their behalf as Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. President, it must also be noted there has been the recent practice where the Opposition is represented by only one Member, as is the case today, with Senator Thompson nowhere to be seen. Once again, the task falls on the junior Member to represent the interest of his Party. Sir, as difficult as that may be, I too, as I am sure that Senator Symmonds is, am uncertain as to who is the Leader here and in the Other Place. My sympathies are extended to you, Sir.

Mr. President, it might do us well to learn from the lessons given by the "Leader-in-waiting", the Honourable Member for St. Peter and former Prime Minister, that sadly the present Leader of the Opposition is not worthy of our expectations, nor should we wait and hope for any improvement to this status in the coming months or years. Let us be very frank, rather than delivering product and meaningful service, the Barbadian population has been served a bunch of concoctions, served with honey on top of them, when really what was being administered was a bitter pill with insipid taste and meaningless purpose.

We started out hearing of her dream project called EduTech, which started in 2000, at a projected cost of \$213 million. That has dwindled away multi-millions of taxpayers' dollars and, to this day, we are yet to see any successful outcome to this project. That project has since been downgraded and reduced to a non star, even before the Democratic Labour Party came to office. I would like to hear a report on the status up to 2008, the true up-to-date cost of this project and the gains made from this failed programme up to when the Barbados Labour Party left office.

There is then the story of Invest Barbados, another Ministry that fell under her grasp. It was the same Ministry that was set up and did nothing more than employ friends and help provide them with healthy incomes, while not a single scrap of productive, useful work was ever produced or delivered from her charge, with millions of dollars being

spent and nothing to show for it. This has since been changed.

Mr. President, the Prime Minister has turned Invest Barbados into a serious arm of investment, one that can now be said to be functional and servicing the needs of Barbados in 2009 and forward. No longer is Invest Barbados an area of people spending time at “Idle Hall”, meanwhile collecting hefty salaries, with little or no returns. Invest Barbados has become an arm of the Barbados Government and it has to be seen in a very serious context.

This entity is of serious assistance to Barbados in these trying economic times. Mr. President, that entity is now charged with putting many areas of Government together and to serve as a conduit for businesses to interact with Government for the betterment of business and the good of this lovely island Barbados.

Mr. President, having been personally involved in assisting some of these investors who wanted to carry out business in Barbados, and having found systems or operations of Government to be cumbersome, Invest Barbados has been given the mandate to eliminate some of these burdens from investors, as those things that would stall and hope to regress such investments.

Sir, it is not only that assistance would be put in place, but under the new Invest Barbados package, we are seeing a new direction. We are seeing doors being opened in no small way and with an ease of doing business in Barbados. This has never been before under the Barbados Labour Party Administration.

Mr. President, Invest Barbados will, by design, link many departments and operations of Government together as one package, thereby providing easier and greater access to many decisions in an easier manner and in a much quicker time-frame. Already Invest Barbados is being active in the United Kingdom, in such cities as Birmingham, London.

During a recent tour, we saw living proof of a new and vibrant life and a new direction of this once wallowing entity. It stands ready to propel Barbados forward with its thrust for foreign investment and development, guided by enlightened leadership and a fully-supported Government Administration.

6.00 p.m.

Then, we have another aspect that I want to touch on and it deals with our recent debate in this Senate in the vesting of lands at Constant.

Sir, I well remember a heated debate in this Chamber a few months ago, when we debated the matter of the vesting of the lands at Constant Plantation. It generated heated debate in the Senate and revolved around the desire of the present Government to make these lands available to erect homes for good Barbadian families. Sir, the two Opposition Members made heavy weather of approving the Bill because they seem not to want the good people of the island to benefit from the measures being put in place to assist our Barbadian people with accessing low income homes.

Mr. President, we are made to understand why they would have resisted with such venom and such passion this obviously very positive uplifting exercise to assist our own. Only now, on reflection, it is clear to see that maybe for this reason, it fully explains why we have such a divide and why, on the one hand, we have a political Party in office for 14 years and has been invisible in its achievement in housing and why, on the other hand, we are seeing results in 14 months of the newly elected Democratic Labour Party Government, real and positive housing development. Sir, persons are actually seeing homes being built and persons are getting to access these properties for which they have paid rents in excess of 20 years.

Mr. President, these are no longer wishes or promises. These are real and tangible aspects of the Democratic Labour Party's housing programme that the Minister has driven with gusto. I fully support him with his hands-on approach for dealing with matters.

Mr. President, I also commend the method of operations attached to these projects. The Minister has insisted on one's proven track record being given contracts, so unlike the past when once you owned a wheelbarrow you qualified as a contractor for Government's work but Sir, there is no more of that type of nonsense, Sir, serious work is being directed towards serious builders.

Mr. President, on a personal note. We as Barbadians can, at times, be quick to apportion blame, but I feel it necessary to highlight an incident that happened to me not long ago. I was admitted to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, unconscious as a result of a car accident. On regaining consciousness, I was given the best care that anyone could have asked for or wanted. I was seen after, stitched up, X-rayed and cat-scanned in one smooth, flowing exercise. This was something that made me question why we are always hearing many complaints about the Accident and Emergency Department. My experience was one that I could not complain about in the slightest. It was good and professional as anywhere.

Mr. President, to further reinforce this point. I had a very good friend going through a series of medical checks and so too with them, they said to me that the experience

they went through at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital they found to be fantastic, and all the staff treated them with care. They were efficiently and excellently managed all the way through the process.

Mr. President, the Minister of Health is doing a wonderful job in his management of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. He is performing above the call of duty. It is not unheard of to hear the Minister making his rounds at the Hospital, visiting patients and visitors alike. Trust me, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital will always be a difficult place to reap success, but the new Minister is doing a wonderful job at making it all work. The staff morale has made a significant jump forward since the change of Government and I hope to see that it keeps pressing ahead and moving forward.

Mr. President, on a personal note, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the doctors and staff of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital for the fine effort they all displayed to Barbadians and visitors.

Mr. President, I recently had the pleasure of attending a board meeting of the Barbados Tourism Authority. I met with the entire staff of the Barbados Tourism Authority Association and I must say that it was a heart-warming exercise with plenty of smiling faces eager to assist us in our drive to make Barbados the number one tourist destination. I say to them to keep the positive work on the front burner and keep helping to drive our tourism product to new levels.

Mr. President, the only persons not blatantly aware of the stresses that any tourism-driven economy would be going through at this time are those in the Opposition, the members of the Barbados Labour Party. Having said that, Barbados continues to hold its own in a most amazing fashion with data recently supplied giving us provisional figures for February 2009, where we are seeing cruise ship arrivals doing extremely well with a healthy 19.5 climb over February 2008. We are also well ahead of last year's combined figures for cruise ship arrivals for January and February being stated at 5.4 per cent ahead of 2008.

Mr. President, there has been a marginal drop in long-stay arrivals, but this is to be expected with the uncertainty in the world markets. Even with the slight decline, it can be considered to be doing very well when compared to some of our very close neighbours. Also, very interesting to know is the fact that our earnings from tourism products earned us a record figure of \$1.2 million in 2008, yet another record year for money spent in tourism on the island with the largest contributor to this figure being the United Kingdom customers more than doubling any of the other customers with a massive \$566.1 million spent on holidays in Barbados. Mr. President, also worthy

to know is the average spend per day for British tourists which moved from US\$203.76 in 2007 to \$225.50 in 2008.

Sir, another very positive aspect of our tourism exercise in 2009 was the introduction of the West Jet Service out of Toronto. It has lent a real boost to the arrival figures coming out of the Canada market which is wonderful for all to see.

Sir, in my travels and speaking to some Canadian visitors to our shores the other day, I asked what had made them settled for Barbados on this trip this year. I was told that for many years they often came to Sunset Crest but it had become too expensive to get here and they opted to travel to Mexico and Cuba, but this year, for the first time in many years, the air fare and travel were very affordable. They said that they had always loved Barbados as their holiday destination of choice and they were happy to be back in Barbados.

Mr. President, it is hoped that the injection of the special funding would provide the sort of kick-start that may be needed to get more people to our shores. This is time to be positive and one for progressive thinking. Sir, added to that, each one of us can play our part and sell our island. It is a wonderful island for just about any wholesome activity.

Mr. President, I personally have been approached with regard to the island accommodating and hosting sailing events. With the keen support of the Ministry and President of the Barbados Tourism Authority, I am pleased to state that Barbados has been awarded the first event of the International One Metre World (IOM) to be held in Barbados from June 20 to June 27th. (Gregory Armstrong - 253-8609)

This event will see 76 competitors, plus families from 23 countries around the shores, descending on our shores for a week of international sailing. Following this, we have been successful in our bid to be host of Fireball Worlds to be held in Barbados in May next year. This event will see an inflow of between 400 persons to 500 persons for two weeks of world-class sailing in our beautiful, turquoise blue waters.

Mr. President, these may be trying times but we could also provide opportunities to those who are motivated, and they are other dynamic ideas that we have unfolded in tourism as the days tick by. I ask that we put our best foot forward, support our efforts and, more importantly, support our country.

Mr. President, with these comments, I would like to lend my support to the building of the knowledge and this is the best way forward in these very trying harsh economic times.

Mr. President, I thank you.

6.10 p.m.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

SENATOR the Hon. M.P.O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 7.00 p.m.

The question that the Sitting be now suspended until 7.00 p.m. was put to the Senate and agreed to, and Mr. PRESIDENT suspended the Sitting until 7.00 p.m.

RESUMPTION

7.00 p.m.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Alleyne.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Sir, as I stand to support the Estimates for 2009-2010, I am moved to look back on my days as a young public officer. Sir, I joined the Public Service of Barbados in 1971. As a young public officer, when discussions about the Estimates used to energise senior officers into busyness, Sir, and young officers like myself would have been worrying what are these Estimates all about, this seemed to be like high science, and you would be wondering what are these wise men getting together to do; what are they doing; and what are these things called Estimates.

Sir, as I grew in stature, moving from Z31 scale up to the S scales in the Public Service, I then noticed that the Estimates really were just provisions being made for the Government to run the affairs of State, how they would raise revenue, and how they would use that revenue to improve the lives of the people who elected it.

Sir, as I then became interested in politics, I would take time out to come to the House of Assembly to follow the debates. One thing that struck me is that there used to be something called Second Reading speeches, where the Prime Minister would speak and then usually the Leader of the Opposition, and then you get into the Heads, and there would be a little jostle to pick the Heads that you want, Sir, and it used to be good entertainment at that level.

Sir, I have noticed recently that there is a little break in tradition and these things are becoming testy, rather than explanations to the public of Barbados about what it is we want to do, why we are doing it, why we apportioning X amount to a particular Head, and Y to another Head.

Sir, as I stand, I am also thinking that out in the public, there is an audience and that audience is made up of people with different interests. They may not speak directly to the Estimates, but they are people who have an interest in a job next year and if there is going to be a job. They are people who have concerns, will I be able to meet my mortgage? They are people who would be wondering, will my medical insurance still have coverage? They are people who would be asking, will the Estimates provide special provisions for the group that I represent, whether they are the people who are challenged, or the retirees? Have they put provisions for the retirees, a little extra pension for them?

The point I am making, Sir, is that there are different stakeholders in this whole exercise. I believe that any Government, BLP, DLP, KLP, Sir, sits down and tries to use the resources of the public officers and the people that are elected or selected, to come up with a set of programmes to complement the givens. Sir, the givens are salaries, fixtures, equipment and rents. Those are the givens, 2 per cent, 4 per cent, depending on the inflation rate.

Then, there are the actual issues that we should spend our time here discussing, the programmes that complement the givens. Sir, that is where I think, the political divide should come. Mr. President, one Government can take \$50 and spend it to move a particular programme lesser, or the other Government can take that \$50 and move a programme right. I think that is where sometimes the divide should come, but often it comes in other areas.

Sir, what am I rambling about? What are these confusions in my head asking me to deal with? Sir, because sitting over the last week or so and following this debate, I got a sense that it is about politics only, and that the other concern is the financial rate of return and the economic rate of return. Sir, because you can put a formula for those desired outcomes, the issue of social interaction, social fall-in and social fall-out that those issues have no concern.

Sir, I heard a Senator say today that he is happy that the Government is focussing on social programmes, but we need also to take the financial and economic programmes seriously. Sir, we understand that on This Side. I want to say that this Government has taken a policy decision that its economic and financial management will have, at its front, the faces of the people that Government is supposed to serve.

Asides.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: Sir, I was making the point that I struggled to understand the confusion of the Opposition. I thought that there are not many Barbadians

who are not aware of the state of the international affairs. We repeat it, Sir, because they may say they do not know, but I do not think there is any among us, who are not aware that the challenges in front of Barbados are serious, and that they should engage a partisan opinion only to score the occasional point.

Sir, why this strikes me as important is that I went to Sherbourne Conference Center, now Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre in 2002, following the 9/11 attack on the bastion of capitalism in the United States of America. At that conference, Sir, it was a consultation called by the Government of the day, under the leadership of the former Prime Minister.

There was a call for all hands on deck. Barbados needs you more than ever. There was a sing song that we need to be Bajan first. We need to put all our differences aside. We need to hold hands, because there were uncertainties about the repercussions from the 9/11 debacle situation.

I remember all Barbadians took a position that we are going to buy Bajan first and we started slogans. We started messages about how important it is to come together at that time, and to deal with what we thought was an impending crisis.

Sir, the Democratic Labour Party Government did not interfere with Wall Street. The United States of America did not invite anybody, Sir, to misuse pension funds. We did not engage in any speculative borrowings and lendings. Sir, we did not have false mortgages. In short, we did not create the environment into which we must now operate.

I believe that the Government of the day, in recognising the environment in which it operates sat diligently with the public officers, its senior officials, its Ministers, and went through the annual exercise of coming up with a provisional set of Estimates that would guide its programmes.

Therefore, when I heard the attack today on the Programme of the Government, I was shocked. I was taken aback, Sir, because the truth is there are some times when we need to be political and some times where the politics must take No. 2. I believe that this time, whether you are B, D, or K, as I like to say, that this is a time when we must be positive, and that the messages we send to the rest of Barbados are positive.

I said earlier that there are audiences out there listening to us. Sir, if I had an insurance policy at Clico, British American Assurance Company or whoever, and I heard the negative statements being pushed from these Houses, I would begin to wonder if I should not have to

draw out my money. I would doubt the ability of those companies to honour any commitments that they had, based on my payments every month.

I want, even if there is doubt about where this country is going, or what the challenges may place us to respond to, the leadership, whether DLP, BLP, or Independent to push positive messages, so that all of us can say that if there is a sacrifice to be made, all of us are willing to make that sacrifice.

Therefore, I am saying, Sir, the cheap political points can be made. Those are part of the territory. Sir, you are in Government and you would expect people to criticise you. Sir, their intention is to get you out of Government, and we heard the first statements from the Other Side.

7.10 p.m.

Sir, the first statement from the Other Side when they walked into this Chamber in February last year was that they do not wish us well, and they want us to be a one-term Government. They said they want us to perform worse than the West Indies Cricket Team in its worst day, so there is no well-wishing for any Government. Mr. President, that is part of the political gamesmanship in this country and I accept that. However, when it comes to a crisis situation, I expect people to be responsible and to show their national strength of character and commitment to this country.

Sir, I am glad that I can make a few reminders. Sir, there was a statement that the basis for the Democratic Labour Party's argument was that the Barbados Labour Party was reckless and there was fiscal recklessness. Sir, it was not the Democratic Labour Party saying that. There is evidence, and we repeated the evidence. We did not construct the thesis. We pointed to the evidence that showed that in 2002/2003, money in Barbados was no problem. You used to get handclapping and chest thumping "bum bum", money for days. Money was no problem. Mr. President, when we showed where the money was spent, people in Barbados then got to understand what we were saying.

Sir, let me give you a few examples. I do not want to stay too much in that very distant bad past, so I will come a little closer to 2006 to the creation of Invest Barbados and some of the acts perpetrated on the taxpayers of Barbados. A few examples would make the point.

Sir, I heard Senator Symmonds in one of his expatiating "conglomersis" of words...

Aside.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: You could call any word. It does not have to have any meaning once it

sounds sweet. The sweeter it sounds sometimes, the less it means because if you do not connect to it, it means nothing.

Sir, Senator Symmonds made the point that the Democratic Labour Party policies on agriculture ignored the Scotland District. Sir, there is a shortage of memory by the Barbados Labour Party that astounds me. I do not think that any Member of the Barbados Labour Party should have the courage to see a Scotland District because within that Scotland District is some place called Greenland. Senator Symmonds was saying that the Minister of Agriculture neglected to deal with that issue. He said that the Scotland District Authority Act was passed in October or November 2007, just before the change of office, and he wants this Government, in 14 months, to unveil this basket of agricultural produce from plums to okras to fish, to cherries.

Senator Symmonds wants us in 14 months to make the Scotland District the garden of Eden when, in 14 years, they provided for us a pond at Greenland that has produced more mosquitoes. Sir, I told them to put some fish in the pond to eat the mosquitoes. They produced a pond in the Scotland District against every piece of advice.

Sir, the Scotland District Association got together and took their own money and objected to it and the Government took... Sir, the money is still counting. The number is still rising. One minute it was \$40 million, then it was \$100 million and now it is over \$100 million. Sir, I will soon hear that it is a trillion dollars because when I listen to the United States of America television now, I only hear about trillions of dollars. Sir, I believe that we might hear about a trillion dollars for the dump in the Scotland District of which Senator Symmonds spoke, that was supposed to become an agricultural belt.

Senator Symmonds wants the new Minister of Agriculture to turn Greenland into an agricultural belt. He had an opportunity to advise the former Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Minister before the former one, and the Minister of Health. Mr. President, no one told Senator Symmonds that to the west and east of Greenland there used to be an agricultural station producing black belly sheep, cows, cherries, mangoes and all the things that he wants Senator Benn to now put in the same Scotland District.

Mr. President, after 14 years, his legacy to the Scotland District is the dump. That is what Senator Symmonds' party has left for the Scotland District. Sir, not a piece of trash was put there after ten years and no accountability.

Sir, when the Democratic Labour Party speak about recklessness, it is not a creation of the wicked thinking of

the Democratic Labour Party. The evidence is there. Sir, if that were all, one would forgive them, but they now come to a few thousand dollars, and it is not how big or small the vote is...

Sir, I went to a school called Foundation, and one of the things...

Asides.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: It goes into the record because it is a fact and I am just as proud of Foundation as you are of Combermere. I do not brag about it as much as you do, but I am just as happy, Sir.

Sir, one of the early excursions I had was as a school boy at the Foundation School. We drove from the school to the Soil Conservation Unit to do a tour. Sir, that was a big thing. I was 13 years old and we got on a bus like an excursion and went to the Soil Conservation Unit. They told us to bring along soft shoes. They took us up through the hills and showed us how they put the rocks in this wire and stop the denigration of the soil. Sir, I will never forget that word. Sir, one of the other issues was the planting of trees to help bind the soil so that when the waters come rushing down the hills on that clay soil, it would not wash away.

Mr. President, Senator Symmonds' Government put less than \$500 000 in the Estimates in 2007 to do a cleaning up of the tree project, to remove the bush, clean off the fungus that was growing, plant new trees and develop another area.

7.20 p.m.

Mr. President, it was a small amount of money,

\$400 000, but it was an indication. It was not about how much money there was. There was the recognition that there was the need that project needed revitalising and that it would send a message to the rest of the agricultural community that the Government was serious about what it was doing.

The Barbados Labour Party would say that is not much money because if you count what was spent on the Greenland Landfill, that would just be chicken feed, or pocket change for some of those Honourable Senators. Sir, the point is that not a Guyanese cent, neither a Japanese yen was spent. All \$400 000 was left untouched.

Sir, now Senator Symmonds has the unmitigated gall to stand in this Honourable Chamber and castigate the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development who, from day one, by example and not by rhetoric, took to the fields, the hills and the valleys, leading a charge to put life back

into agriculture. Sir, despite the fact that the Honourable Senator has done all that, Senator Symmonds gets in this Honourable Chamber and makes him out to be ignorant of what he is doing.

Asides.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: Mr. President, I will not be uncharacterable to him because all the professionals are absent today, while all the non-professionals are here.

Asides.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: Mr. President, I want to make a point about agriculture. Sir, I have guava trees at my house. I saw that these trees had a black fungus and I wiped it off. I am not a farmer, therefore, here is a project with a large acreage of trees, yet for 14 years nothing has been done with the National Conservation Commission. They have not planted one fruit tree.

Asides.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: I am not saying that they did not plant any trees. Sir, I will come a little closer because I am not finished, but every tractor is not working.

Mr. President, they added the Botanical Gardens to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and then to the National Conservation Commission. Sir, for the last five years, that project has remained unfinanced, understaffed and struggling for focus, until this year. Last year the Government came in a hurry towards the Estimates and could not fully recognise the importance of that Botanical Gardens project.

Sir, I said to the former Prime Minister that it was a very good idea, but I would want to say that I have an idea every day, but if I do not understand how to work that idea, then it makes no sense having that idea. Sir, for five years that project was left to stall. That project was a connection between the Botanical Gardens and the National Conservation Commission because it had the same idea, that is the preservation of natural areas, including soil conservation.

Sir, fruit-bearing, produce, flowers, people going on picnics and recreation are all lovely concepts but not one cent was voted in the Estimates for these things, except for salaries. I have said that salaries, equipment, rent, et cetera, are what I call the givens but where parties of Government differ is on the programme and projects. Sir, you would hear that the Democratic Labour Party gave the Barbados Turf Club (BTC) only \$20 million. I will speak to that in a minute, I am not a horse-racing fan, I do not even know

what the horses name. If you were to ask me who won the race the last time, I cannot even tell you.

Senator Symmonds is saying that his Government moved the Corporation Tax from 40 per cent to 25 per cent. Sir, when Senator Symmonds speaks, sometimes you have to be certain if he means his Government before 2003 or after 2003. You have to be certain because sometimes when I hear Senator Symmonds speaking good things, I get confused about which Government he is talking about.

Mr. President, Senator Symmonds's argument is that if it moved from 40 per cent down to 25 per cent, it meant that there must have been a decline in revenue. Sir, there was no decline in revenue, neither was there a decline in companies. Sir, Senator Symmonds seems to be saying that when the Democratic Labour Party reduces its take of Corporation Tax, it committed hari-kari. It is okay for the Barbados Labour Party to reduce it, but when the Democratic Labour Party does it, it would be wrong, so says Senator Symmonds.

Mr. President, Senator Symmonds then went on to talk about zoning and about the Agricultural Protection Act. Sir, I want to remind Senator Symmonds that all land in Barbados is zoned. There is Zone 1, Zone 2, Zone 3, Zone 4 and Zone 5, and Senator Symmonds should know because Senator Symmonds is part of a Government who, with the stroke of a pen, changed land from Zone 1 to Zone 2. That change was done without any agricultural concern, no concerns about health and safety, no concerns about the future of Barbados. It was done just to satisfy...

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. President, on a point of elucidation. Sir, with much reluctance, I want to clarify that which I said because I simply sought to quote that which is in the Manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party at page 9. Sir, the zoning to which I referred was residential zoning. It says that the East Coast should be zoned for private residents and inland tourism, controlled by locals, with central parishes being zoned for farming. It also says that areas should be zoned for sale only to Barbadians. Sir, it had nothing to do with water zone.

Mr. President, I never said anything about Zone 1. That is a water table issue. That is completely different to economic zoning for ownership of land.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Symmonds, your point has been noted.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: Mr. President, I would like to thank him very much. Sir, like Senator Symmonds, he gave me a time to reflect. Sir, Senator Symmonds seems not to understand that if a piece of land is zoned because it is close to the water table, it then circumscribes the type of dwelling we could put on it.

Therefore, there is a connection between water zoning and housing. That is why there is an issue every now and then about the people in the Belle. Therefore, it breached the Zone 1 and Zone 2, which was for housing.

Asides.

7.30 p.m.

Mr. President, I remember the gentleman...

SENATOR K.D. SYMMONDS: Sir, on a point of elucidation. Senator Alleyne is raising a very ingenious argument, but the argument does not fall squarely with that which I was speaking to. I was speaking about the Manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party which says that areas should be zoned for sale only to Barbadians. Sir, that has nothing to do whatsoever with the relationship between the water table and where you could build a house. It is about who could own the land. Sir, it is an investment issue.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: I thank Senator Symmonds very much. Sir, Senator Symmonds can pretend that he does not know the point I am making and I am not going to call people's names in here. I remember that whole argument about jobs all about Barbados, and it was about investment. It was about who J was, who W was and who S was when the land was changed to Zone 2 and turned around in five months' time and people made \$5 million. Sir, it was about investment and I am glad the Honourable Senator reminded me.

Sir, I know the Senator wants me to go there but I was not planning to go there and I want to thank the Senator for the opportunity to remind Barbadians that, yes, there was a policy of zoning lands for Barbadians, but they had to be of a special kind. They had to be gambling friends. They had to be close to people to get a piece of the pie but, Sir, the Democratic Labour Party's policy is wider. Mr. President, we do not work so. It is about all Barbadians, particularly those living overseas who want to get an opportunity to come home, use their pensions and to make an investment into the rock, as we call it, Sir.

Mr. President, the issues raised by the Senator about counter-cyclical motions - Sir, I am not an economist so when I hear these terms, I have to write them down. Mr. President, one part of his mouth said that we did not understand it but that since 2008 early, the Leader of the Opposition was telling the Government it should put in place counter-cyclical motions. He then turned around and said we were not even aware that is what we were doing. Sir, you mean we are so brilliant that we did the right thing, even when we did not know. Is the Senator suggesting...

SENATOR K.D. SYMMONDS: Mr. President, on a point of elucidation. Clearly, Senator Alleyne provokes me to say it again for the record. It is apparent that the model thinking of the Prime Minister did not grapple and grasp the policy, but the more fuzzy vision of the Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance was able to implement the policy. Sir, there was a disconnection and a misunderstanding between the two entities. Sir, that is what I am saying and if Senator Alleyne wants to hear that again because it gives him some special pleasure, that is fine.

MR. PRESIDENT: The point of elucidation is made.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: Mr. President, I am very clear what I am saying. I am saying that we on This Side are brilliant. The Senator was telling us that we on This Side are brilliant. Sir, I want to shift now to the point he made about page 9 of the Manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. President, the Opposition seems to have some fear with the provision of housing for working-class people. I do not understand what is the fear and Sir, it alludes me. I do not know if they believe that if you come from the Farm, Haynesville or Silver Hill that you should rent all the time. There seems to be feeling that because you do not come from a particular part that you are supposed, all of your life to rent, and that you should not be free to walk into any bank and say that this is your title deed, and on that basis that you want \$50 000 or 20 cents.

Mr. President, there is the feeling amongst the Opposition that something is wrong with that. Sir, it is repeated too often by them. Every time the Democratic Labour Party tries to move forward with a commitment, the Opposition finds some issue with it.

Mr. President, they started in 2003 to pass ownership to the tenants. Sir, five years later, a mess, a puddle or a maze was left. The argument of the Democratic Labour Party is very clear. In addition to providing the people with property, it also relieves the Corporation of the responsibility of doing repairs. Sir, the biggest bill of the National Housing Corporation was repairs and maintenance for old plant. The position is that we will make it comfortable and pass it on. People will take more pride in looking after their properties. Sir, a person will not have to wait on the National Housing Corporation to paint their unit because it is their unit and they will paint it.

Mr. President, my position has always been to give it to them. If there is an issue, it will be corrected. I know it will not be corrected by the Barbados Labour Party because they will not give it to them, and this is why they keep saying it cannot be done.

Sir, if we get the title corrected, they will talk about the septic tanks and the common walls. You do not know if it belongs to the grand father or the uncle. That will be the next argument and I can hear them because it is a philosophical drive in their stomachs that poor people are supposed to rent, and to rent all their lives. Mr. President, I knock that for what it is worth.

Mr. President, then Senator Symmonds went to the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. Sir, I really do not want to say a lot about this except I want to go a little bit to Invest Barbados because Senator Symmonds had some responsibility for that.

Asides.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: If the Senator did not have responsibility for it, he was part of the Cabinet. The Minister that created that monster did so as if it were her Ministry; as if it were hers to do as she pleases; to pick whom she liked; to move whom she liked; to spend money how she liked and Senator Symmonds sat in a Cabinet and said nothing. Sir, he said not a word.

SENATOR K.D. SYMMONDS: Mr. President, on a point of order. I am appealing to the Chair because Senator Alleyne must know that he cannot say that. What was said in the Cabinet is part of official secrecy. Sir, those who sat there took an oath. I cannot say here or anywhere else properly what has been said in Cabinet. Sir, Senator Alleyne is placing me in a most invidious position. He cannot do that, Sir, and he knows he cannot do that. Mr. President, I am asking you to rescue him and guide him.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Alleyne, as a member of a Cabinet, I am forced to tell you that you must not make comments about what members of Cabinet refuse to say.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: Sir, I am guided by you. I would be grateful if the Honourable Senator Symmonds would have told that to his colleague, the Honourable Elizabeth Thompson for no sooner than she was dropped from the Cabinet, she told the entire Barbados that she did not agree with the dump going to Greenland. She told the whole of Barbados but, Sir, all of a sudden now, that is a law, but when she was dumped from the Cabinet, she told the entire Barbados that she never agreed with the dump going to Greenland.

7.40 p.m.

Asides.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: I leave Senator Symmonds to deal with that.

Sir, I sat with amazement to hear Senator Symmonds speak that the Democratic Labour Party after 14 months did nothing with the Agricultural Authority, but God is good and God is great. I happened to have looked at this document, Invest Barbados International Promotion Business Corporation, formed in 2005. The first work was in 2007, that is nearly two years.

The Democratic Labour Party, after 14 months, had to read through the mess to understand where you were going with Invest Barbados. You moved somebody from London because she is somebody's friend, place her on top, figuratively, of another officer who has been in the Service for 12 years, and qualified, destroyed the careers of senior public officers and, at the end of 2007 can report, quoting from Invest Barbados's "Engage the World", Annual Report 2007.

Asides.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: "Selection of high companies comparable with Barbados' valid proposition". I do not know what that means. A lot of airy fairy words.

Mr. PRESIDENT: From what is the Senator reading?

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: Sir, I said Invest Barbados Engage the World, Barbados International Business Promotion Corporation, Annual Report 2007. If it is not a document of the House...

Aside.

Mr. PRESIDENT: It is a publication and, therefore, does not have to be a document of the House. It is published by an agency of the Government, one that everyone has access to.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: This is the two-year programme. It started out as six companies.

Sir, a grant of \$10 million from the Government of Barbados. What struck me in this Report is, here is an agency pushing businesses at a time when the world is in a mode to invest and to start businesses.

Excess of revenue over expenditure for projects, \$3 312 801, unspent at a time when international business is booming.

Sir, the Honourable Member, Senator Symmonds castigates this Government when money is left in its Vote, and when I can show that \$3 million was left in a vote to develop businesses for Barbados, it is no problem. How can this Government win with the Opposition? If we go left

it is wrong. If we do not move it is wrong, and if we move right, it is still wrong.

Asides.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: I know that when Senator Thompson comes you will welcome her.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I was not quite sure about you leaving me to Senator Thompson.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: Sir, the Senator throws up things about markets and that Senator Benn did not speak about markets. I just want to remind the Senator about some things.

Sir, a friend of mine came through Eagle Hall and drove right through the traffic lights. The police stopped him and said: "Young man, you just broke the traffic light." He said, "Sir, forgive me, I was sitting in wonderment about that structure." He could not work out what it was and so caught up in wonderment at that monument in Eagle Hall, that the man went right through the red lights, and Senator Symmonds wants us to build markets.

Sir, I urge this Government, that I support, to take its time. Examine the functions of the market, the people who are going to go to the market, what produce would be sold in that market, before it allows some architectural person with some brain wave about some futuristic missile to encourage it.

Sir, I am advising this Government to create a market that is friendly to the people who have to use it. More people ply their ware, stock, goods and provision outside the market than inside. This is Eagle Hall Market that is a futuristic thought in somebody's brain. When you go on the inside and it rains you get wet, and not from leaky roofs, from the absence of the protection of the roof, although there is a roof. Sir, that was the Constituency you used to represent and they treated your people that way.

Sir, that is not the worse. Then the former Government built some kiosks, 1 by 1 kiosks, in Oistins and Speightstown, wasted money, \$14 000 and \$20 000 a piece, and you could not sit down in them. They were left in Oistins to rot, and he had the gall to speak to Senator Benn about markets, who puts on his boots. He did not borrow the boots. They were his boots. He went straight to the market and discussed what he was doing, but that last Government wasted money on top of money.

Sir, do you remember those little dog houses that I am talking about?

Mr. PRESIDENT: I know nothing about dog houses.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: He wants to criticise Senator Benn. A lot of empty vessels and words but you cannot walk in the shoes of a man who can put on his boots and go into the market and rub shoulders with the fishermen; or go into Pie Corner with a man with a lime tree and advise him. He is a 4H man. He was in the 4H and understands the needs of 4H people. He understands how to plant. Some people only know how to reap. I was really surprised with the information I got about the damage the monkeys were doing.

I think that Senator Goddard told us that monkeys were creating more destruction of produce that praedial larceny.

Asides.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: Sorry, Sir. Then you should lock up the monkeys, Sir? Then you should lock up Senator Symmonds, Sir? Sir, I am making my point. You can correct it when I am finished. I am saying he castigated...

7.50 p.m.

Asides.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: You should lock up the monkey, Sir, then, you should lock up Senator Symmonds.

Asides.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: I am making my point. Sir, you can correct me, when I am finished.

I am saying that he castigated Senator Benn for trying to rid this country of snails. He said that all he was doing, as the Minister of Agriculture, was getting rid of snails.

The damage that those snails are wreaking on this country, is as much as the monkeys or more. So you cannot want it one way, Senator Symmonds. You cannot want the Minister to sit in his office, like most Barbados Labour Party Senators.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. President, on a point of elucidation. I was hoping that the Honourable Senator would come to the point that he was actually trying to make. At no stage did I ever criticise Senator Benn for ridding the country of snails, as Senator Alleyne puts it. Quite the contrary, Sir.

I distinctly remember congratulating Senator Benn, not only on the efforts in terms of snails, but also in the

context of his efforts with the 4-H Movement. I saw a text message which was sent by a person at this Table.

Asides.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Sir, that is what was said. If you were to pause to check the record, as it is your prerogative, you would see that is a fact. However, what I also said, is that beyond my extreme satisfaction with Senator Benn, as a “4-H’er” and as a person who has championed the cause of exterminating the giant African snail, that there is a larger calling in the Ministry of Agriculture. I had pointed out the issue with respect to the need to refurbish, not build, our fish markets and many other things.

I do not know why Senator Alleyne is hellbent on this historical revisionism.

Mr. PRESIDENT: A point of elucidation.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: Sir, I make it a point that he accused this Government of fiscal recklessness, and that we came into office by accusing them of fiscal recklessness. I am saying that the evidence supports my view that the Barbados Labour Party Government was reckless, fiscally, politically, socially, financially and in the selection of candidates, reckless all the time, Sir.

Sir, those were the responses to some of the comments he made. I would like to turn to a few of these Heads.

Sir, I have been associated with labour for some time and I want to say a few things about labour. The Government has been involved for probably about eight or nine years - it could have been longer - with these overseas programmes, the Canadian Farm Labour Programme for a very long time, and the Hotel Workers Programme. There used to be a Jockey and Grooms Programme, as well. We have a wealth of experience dealing with these programmes.

I am urging the Government, Sir, to sit with us again - they started last year - and let us get back to a policy that looks at how we treat people coming to Barbados to work. I think the Minister has made a commitment, and I would not be doing my responsibility, if I did not encourage him to let us make it, post haste. I think it is something we need to get onto.

Sir, there is a deeper point, which is that there is a view in Barbados that the workers of this country are the third tier in the social partnership. Sir, the prima donnas in the private sector, the star boys in the Government, and labour are the Cinderellas of the social partnership.

I want to urge this Government that I am part of, if not to turn around that order, to treat the partners as equal, because I am warming into a point I am going to make. Sir, if the Government does not recognise that the private sector uses the social partnership when it likes, and then abandons it when it does not like, then the Government will find itself having to employ greater numbers of people to keep this country away from social disorder.

I saw this week, a big surprise, where people have gone home from the Nation Corporation, with a social partnership in place that it is supposed to bring those issues to, and to discuss how you can ease it, and if there is room for transfers. Sir, that does not surprise me because two weeks earlier, one of the CEOs from Employers Confederation was dismissed, as though his service had no value.

Sir, I like to make this point that every time there is the Budget and the Estimates, the employers of Barbados come to the Prime Minister, or the Minister of Finance, and they ask for concessions. Concession on this, easement on that, and all Governments have listened and have responded. At the first sign of pressure, the private sector’s position is, let the Government handle it.

I do not want to say anything about who supports who, because I do not know. It strikes me as in bad taste and in bad faith that we can have instruments that we sit down and collectively put together, that the Government is bound by them, that the workers are bound by them, but the private sector does not feel it is bound by the same protocols. We are sending some signals that are going to make the other partners feel lesser, and it worries me, Sir.

Sir, I heard comments about social policy and all of those things, but the only money that you make without labour...

Asides.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: Sir, except for the coal mines and you extract gold, silver, those metals, where you have to use the labour to extract it, the owners of the gold can make millions and exploit the labour.

The point I am trying to make, Sir, is that for every cent that is made anywhere, labour is required.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Honourable Member has two minutes more.

SENATOR D. McD. ALLEYNE: Thank you, Sir.

Sir, all this thing about financial and economic, the baseline is labour. From the maid to the professor, the

value of each worker is fundamental, if this country is to solve the issues that now confront it.

I say this in closing that if the Barbados Labour Party led in this Chamber, Sir, by Senator Symmonds, wants to criticise for criticising sake, they are free. I have said to Senator Symmonds in this Chamber already that the people made up their minds, and the faster they understand that the Government has changed, the better for them.

We have assembled some Estimates with the best intentions, using all the resources that the former Government used, and the public officers. We have fashioned them through our eyes, Sir, because, as I said, the programmes divide us. The programmes that we put first, are those that put the people at the front, and the money and the structures push them.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

8.00 p.m.

SENATOR D. K. A. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, I take this opportunity to speak to some of the issues that I find necessary to draw our attention back to in this process. In last year's exercise, we spoke to the fact that this was more than just looking at a bunch of numbers, that the purpose of the Estimates is putting the people back into the work of the Government.

Mr. President, after a year of a Democratic Labour Party Government, we can now see the benefits of those policies and of what we have started to do in this country where there is now a sense of hope coming again because of this change, and where we can see programmes being outlined to tackle a number of social and financial issues. Sir, no one here can deny the fact that we face a very difficult financial outlook, or can say that the Government has not tried its best to put forward the best Administration given the context of the world financial situation.

Mr. President, in the current context, it is important that we recognise that what the Government has chosen to do is to identify those areas where investment can be put to its maximum.

Sir, in going back to the old policies of the Democratic Labour Party, it has invested in developing people. Mr. President, when we continue to develop the human resources of this country, we would be able to recognise growth in the future and in the social and financial circumstances.

Mr. President, it is important that we understand clearly that the policies over the last year and the policies in the year going forward are aimed at stabilising our country by addressing a lot of the core problems. I know

that many people on the Opposite Side do not understand the value of programmes like the free bus service, or the summer camp programme, because the interaction with the people on the street is missing. Mr. President, until we can put the needs of the people into what the policy of the Government is going to be, we would not be achieving any benefit for the country. We have to therefore develop programming which can target the problems that we have.

Mr. President, specifically of interest for me is the development of young people. I spent part of last week attending interschool sports. I was very glad to be there to receive the warm welcome that I did. No, Sir, I did not beat a drum. I was very saddened by the lack of musical instruments there, because through my parents, my mother especially, I heard stories about the activities of the past when schools, like the Lodge School in St. John, would march down to town with a coffin with the effigy of whoever they had defeated in that coffin.

Mr. President, it goes back to the effort that society is changing, so we need to put structures in place to keep activities like these at the wholesome level that they should be. Nobody can fault the Principals of the schools for taking the action they took. However, my one concern in the situation is that we seem to be too reactive and not proactive enough because under no circumstances can I accept that drums cause bad behaviour, the same way that I cannot accept that cell phones cause bad behaviour. What we need to identify is the change in the value structure of young people in our country and target it.

Mr. President, as a part of the generation that would soon have to lead this country in the future, we cannot sit back and allow the standards to degenerate to the fact where our country becomes one that we are not familiar with. We have seen what happens throughout the world when you do not stick to your values. Mr. President, those people who stand for nothing, would fall for anything.

Sir, unless we get back to the values of caring for your neighbour, understanding what other people in society have to do, and being tolerant of others, the values that have come down in families in Barbados for a very long time, there is no way we are going to be able to realise a future that is positive. Mr. President, it would come out in different events and activities, but the problem would continue to be the lack of values.

For that reason, one of the areas I would like to look at today is the role of the Ministry of Family and Youth. I will leave off the Sports for now, in developing the type of society that we would all endeavour to be a part of in Barbados.

Mr. President, there are a number of components in this Ministry that address the issues that we are seeking to

address. The first of which I would like to look at is the Barbados Youth Service. Sir, for far too long the Barbados Youth Service has been isolated as something to send people to who have problems to get a little bit of discipline.

Mr. President, if you look at the benefits that people who participated in this programme are reaping, it has far more to do than discipline. It is a structured environment that allows young people who have skills, who want to develop themselves, and who want to change, to start to implement those changes regardless of their home, school or other situations.

It takes them out of the negativity long enough so that they can focus on self-development to the point where they can then turn around and contribute to the community. I think it is a service that has been overlooked for too long and I am pleased to see that there are plans to encourage new recruits coming in and to make sure that more Barbadian youths benefit from the Barbados Youth Service.

Mr. President, I will look now at the Youth Development Programme which has a number of areas underneath it that are important towards the development of youth. Mr. President, when you speak to teachers, counsellors and people who work with young people on a daily basis, you find it hard not to come away with the indication that one of the biggest factors holding back young people in Barbados is their lack of confidence in themselves and in their abilities.

Mr. President, we need programming that actually assists in getting young people to a point where they can do whatever it is that motivates them, whether it be the arts, or developing a skill that they have. Some people are good at industrial arts, the carpentry and the metal work. They actually get enjoyment out of doing it.

8.10 p.m.

Mr. President, there are so many young people who are entrepreneurial-incline, who need that extra push to get there. Therefore, when we look at programmes like the Youth Development Programme, we can look at their actions in sponsoring youth groups in Barbados. One of my concerns or one of the general concerns in society as it was, was the lack of community level organisation that is going on, and this is why you are seeing the need for things like Constituency Councils. We are going to see the need to build on the youth groups that are available in communities throughout Barbados, whether they be sporting groups, artistic groups or national groups like the Barbados Youth Development Council.

Sir, we can see, over the last year, where there are groupings that have taken the Barbados Youth

Development Council, which had languished under the last Administration, and has now started to revive that Council, where it has now started to contribute meaningfully to Barbadian society. For example, this coming Saturday, they are putting on an event which fosters youth groups from across this country, where these groups would be coming out and marketing themselves, putting forward what they have to offer and then connecting themselves with young people who are interested.

Sir, one of the problems that has always existed with the Division of Youth Affairs was that it was not always connecting with the people who needed to be identifying with its services. We saw that with Project OASIS and a number of other projects and, therefore, that connection needs to be made, to ensure that young people could identify what services are there, and then understand how they could access them, which always becomes one of the problems with Government projects - what do you offer and how do I get to use it?

We have a number of community centres well-equipped with computers and what's-not that are sitting idle. Sir, coming from the Bush Hall area, it has always been a problem for us to get access to that Community Centre. The Community Centre is locked during the day, at the time when people want to use it. Therefore, there is the problem of having computers supposedly available to people in the community but not having them accessible at any time.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Honourable Member has five minutes in which to conclude.

SENATOR D.K.A. GRIFFITH: The problem is also having the centre opened during the day when school children are at school, people are working, and as soon as it is time for them to come home, the centre is closed. There is no access for persons in the community. I think communities like Bush Hall, Haynesville and across Barbados are going to need access to resources to start rebuilding. If we are going to have this development, it has to be from the community level up.

The Youth Development Programme, therefore, has a very large responsibility in identifying programming that can get down to the community level, where you can see camps, not just in the summer anymore, but at Easter and Christmas, providing just avenues of occupation for young people. Sir, again coming from the Bush Hall area, when summer or Christmas comes and people have nothing else to do but to run up and down the road and get into mischief, or to get into activities other than what would be desirable for them, therefore, providing a structure where there is an alternative would be in the interest of persons. If you are a young person who likes dancing, you can come to a Summer Camp or Easter Camp for a couple of weeks and

learn to dance. A young professional could be brought in to help with that process, to groom them and enable them and, at the end, to possibly put on a show, so that those persons could showcase their talents.

Mr. President, not only does the Youth Development Programme have a very large responsibility in identifying programming that can get down to the community level, but also in looking at developing just social organisations in communities again.

Sir, instead of speaking about peer pressure or about “block” culture in the negative all the time, it must look at how it could infiltrate that culture with positive elements, where it can create social groupings at the community level which offer positive peer pressure instead of the constant negative peer pressure. If we could identify these areas and put activities in place, then we could see a clear path for how we start to improve the lives of young people in Barbados.

Sir, it goes beyond the Division of Youth Affairs. The family in the Ministry of Family is going to be very important. The outline of offering resources to young parents, to parents who do not understand, who need guidance along the way to understand how best to deal with the scenarios they are facing on a daily basis.

Sir, having these components set up through the family unit, so that we can see where many young parents do not have the knowledge coming down from other older parents to draw on, where they do not have the family structures that existed before, where there is a mother or grandmother to help in the raising of the children, then you could also understand why there is a need for this revamping of parenting.

Mr. President, we are seeing a difference in parenting across Barbados. Once upon a time, you did not see fathers with children, but more and more we are seeing single-parent households, with the fathers being the single parent. We need support for that. Sir, even in the case where a lot of fathers are coming to the understanding that if they are in a relationship and they do not necessarily see eye-to-eye with the mother in the relationship, that should not be taken out on the child.

Additionally, under the ambit of the Ministry of Family is also the HIV/AIDS Commission. Sir, to a certain extent, many people believe we have had a lot of AIDS fatigue. They have heard a lot about it and maybe they are now desensitised about it. Sir, the thrust of the HIV/AIDS Commission is going to be even more important, because the focus on behavioral change that must come over the next five to ten years, is vitally important to the development of this country.

When we look at HIV/AIDS and we try to comprehend how we go forward, a lot of the messages that have seen in the past have failed to get people to change their habits. Sir, as disastrous as it is, the scourge of HIV/AIDS still has to come in the context of life. We must go on living. We must go on developing and, therefore, we need to adopt behaviours that make it possible for us to carry out, in our normal lives, a very reasoned approach to how we deal with the threat of HIV/AIDS.

Mr. President, we need to have young people thinking about the numbers of sexual partners they have. We need to get them thinking about the levels of promiscuity, about the idea of not being so casual in their encounters. This is going to take time. It is going to take building and development to get to a stage where it is ingrained, where it is not just a bother but that we understand firmly that for our lifestyles to continue, we have to address these issues.

8.20 p.m.

Mr. President, I quite inadvertently skipped over the Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme (YES), which I do believe has a significant role to play. In looking at YES, I believe that YES has a bigger responsibility than has been acknowledged in the past. Sir, going forward, we are going to have to look at new ways of identifying people who have innate entrepreneurial abilities and expanding the scope of people who we could train to be entrepreneurs. Sir, those are the two streams.

Mr. President, some people are just born entrepreneurs and they want to do it but those people do not exist in the numbers we are going to need for the development of this country. Therefore, the programming must also inculcate training people to be entrepreneurs. YES is, therefore, going to have to become more invasive in the society. Their approach to dealing with young people from the school level is going to have to be continuously ramped up so that it is not just a push to start thinking about entrepreneurship when you are 20 years old, or even 30 years old, but when you set foot into a secondary school and you are learning Mathematics, you are not learning to count to be a teller anymore but you are learning to count to own the bank.

Mr. President, that is the point. We need to have it ingrained in the curriculum of schools to the point where, when we are doing Principles of Business, it is, if I had a business, this is how I would need to run it. Therefore, we have to start earlier. We have to become creative and, of course, all of this requires more resources.

Mr. President, I believe that the Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme (YES) will actually be able to show the benefit it could add to society by its very

existence. I believe given time, they will start to show that they can turn out high-grade citizens of Barbados who are fully prepared to start businesses in areas that we might not have necessarily thought about before.

Mr. President, with the advent of the Internet, a lot of the businesses we start in the future will be virtual; will not apply to Barbadian customers and, therefore, will have to have high standards to attract international business.

Finally, Mr. President, I want to look at a couple of the programmes under the Ministry of Education. I know this is where some of my pet projects fall. The Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development now has a very important role because everything comes back to training. We often hear complaints about the level of service in the country and it comes back to training. We hear complaints about the skills that students at the University of the West Indies leave with and, it comes back to training. The Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development has a vital role to play in setting the agenda for what we are going to be training people to do, and where it will become effective.

Sir, I know it is not in this year's Estimates debate and it is not in this presentation but I will continue to encourage the development of a National Secondary School Debating Programme that is consistent, and that is integrated into classrooms, because debating is an activity that engenders confidence. Therefore, if we want to give young people the voice they need, because it is very clear that Barbados has excelled over the years at giving young people access to knowledge. I do not think, when we compare them against their European and American counterparts that there is even a shadow of comparison between them. What we have failed to do is to get them to understand the power they have within themselves, having been given that knowledge and to use that knowledge to develop themselves. Sir this is where our thrust must continue to look in the future.

Mr. President, we have to say, not only have we educated you in academics, but we are educating you for life, and that these are the life skills that you are going to need. Sir, as a past student of the University of the West Indies, and someone who works very closely with the Campus, we see far too often people going into degree programmes thinking about how much money they could make if they do a particular degree, but they never look at how marketable they are. They do not volunteer, which is one of the major problems in their development.

Sir, I often smile when I hear people say that they wanted to apply for a particular job but that it needed five years' experience. Sir, you wanted to be an office manager but did you apply yourself to volunteer to a non-profit group and did some office work for two years or three

years while you were in University because, Sir, that counts as experience.

Mr. President, it is the failure to understand concepts like this because I can admit that I was too heavily involved in my university career in extracurricular activities, spending time on the Guild Council and different societies on the Campus and always being very active. Sir, in doing so, it gave me a base for expanding my knowledge. I was able to learn about structures of the board room, debating and the concepts relating to budgeting and financial processes.

Sir, all of these things come into real usage when you step out into the world. How is it that we have so many young people who want to go to the board room but can say nothing when they get there. They have to be mice in the corner because they do not know how to put across the brilliant ideas and concepts they have in their heads and, therefore, it impacts our productivity because we hire people with First Class Honours at university level and then that person has First Class Honours only due to the fact that they spent all their time in the library and never interacted. They did not pick up a language but being able to speak a second language would have enabled that person to represent their business in Latin America, Europe or somewhere. They did not do anything except study the plain course set out before them.

Mr. President, we have to get students beyond that point and have it inculcated into the university structure so that we are turning out the best class of graduates instead of just people with First Class Honours, who are not capable of understanding or rather, of coping with the structures of the business world.

Mr. President, our look at education has to look at tertiary level education and, in that, look at the University of the West Indies, the Barbados Community College and the value for money that we are receiving in funding these institutions. I think this Government is well within its right to start demanding more from the University of the West Indies.

Mr. President, I must commend Professor Sir Hilary Beckles on the great work he has done in improving the campus. The infrastructural development, especially, has undergone at an astounding rate and, also, the development of new programming.

There is an entire new facility at the Errol Barrow Centre for Creative Imagination, which hosts fine art classes, dancing, drama and film and is bringing a whole new dimension to what a university education means in Barbados but, Sir, we still need to start down at the grass-roots level, the interest in development of the individual so

that they can, in turn, add to the development of the country.

8.30 p.m.

SENATOR D.K.A. GRIFFITH: Sir, with those few words I thank you for your accommodation and I am very much in support of this year's Estimates.

SUSPENSION

SENATOR the Hon. M.P.O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until tomorrow, Thursday, March 26, 2009, at 2.00 p.m.

The question that the Senate be suspended until Thursday, March 26, 2009, at 2.00 p.m. was put to the Senate and agreed to and Mr. PRESIDENT suspended the Senate accordingly.

8.30 p.m.

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

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

EDITORIAL QUERIES

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

Q1. Order No. 1, speech of Senator Sir John Stanley Goddard. Senator Goddard's speech (about 1,490 words) runs on in the source under the label 'MR. PRESIDENT' after the President's words 'Senator Goddard.', beginning with the line 'SIR JOHN STANLEY GODDARD: Thank you.'. Printed as in the source.

Q2. Order No. 1, speech of Senator D. K. A. Griffith. The first part of Senator Griffith's speech (about 1,000 words, from 'SENATOR D. K. A. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, I take this opportunity...' to the President's five-minute warning) runs on in the source under Senator D. McD. Alleyne's label. Printed as in the source. Please confirm.

Q3. Announcements and Order No. 1. The President announces that Senator Griffith had asked to be excused as 'somewhat under the weather', but Senator Griffith speaks at the end of the day's debate. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Speaker labels. Senator Benn appears as 'Senator the Hon. H. L. BENN', 'SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN' and 'Hon. H.LaV. BENN', and Senator Millington with and without 'Rev.'; Senator Benn refers to 'Senator Kerrie Symmonds' and 'Senator Kerri D. Symmonds'. Printed as in the source.

Q5. End of record. The record ends with the suspension of the Sitting until Thursday, 26th March, 2009 at 2.00 p.m., with the debate on the Appropriation Bill, 2009 unfinished.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The Senate met on Wednesday, 25th March, 2009 at 11.10 a.m., with the President, His Honour Senator Dr. B. M. Tait, in the Chair; prayers were led by Rev. Father Errington Massiah. The President read a letter from Senator Sir Roy Trotman seeking leave of absence from 2nd to 27th March to serve as Workers Group Chairman of the Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation, and excused Senators Griffith and Thompson. Senator the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McClean, Leader of Government Business, laid thirteen papers, among them audit reports on the Catastrophe Fund, the Severance Fund and the Unemployment Fund and the 2007 Annual Reports of the

Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. and Invest Barbados. Standing Orders 22(1) and 45(2) were suspended, and the Appropriation Bill, 2009, the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2009, the Property Transfer Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2009 and the Land Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2009 were read a first time.

Senator McClean opened the second reading of the Appropriation Bill, 2009, which provides \$1 920 772 158 from the Consolidated Fund for 2009-2010. She spent much of her speech on the international financial crisis and its effect on a small open economy, defended the Government's priorities, including free bus transport for schoolchildren, and remarked that water was the cheapest of the utilities.

After the luncheon suspension, Senator K. D. Symmonds, for the Opposition, reviewed the Estimates against the previous year's projections, drawing points of order from Senator the Hon. D. W. Boyce on how the deficit target had been expressed and on assistance to CLICO, and from Senator the Hon. H. LaV. Benn on financing for Pinnacle Feeds. He said the national debt had stood at \$5.36 billion in December 2007, questioned a commitment to the International Monetary Fund to remove the cap on Land Tax and the legal basis for disposing of National Housing Corporation land, and spent much time on the Ministry of Agriculture's objectives, the Scotland District and the European assessment of fisheries. Senator Benn withdrew an accusation that Senator Symmonds was lying.

Senator Sir John Stanley Goddard set the Estimates against a severe international crisis, urged a balance between social and economic programmes, and spoke on traffic congestion and the condition of Government buildings. Senator Benn, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, said the largest allocation, \$300 188 188, went to the Ministry of Health. Senator Symmonds rose on a point of privilege over a radio report of Senator Benn's remarks about his absence; the President held the point well made and Senator Benn apologised. The President later read Rule 34 of the Standing Orders to Senators. Senator Benn spoke of the \$2.1 billion in reserves the Government had found, a cherry project for which \$400 000 was earmarked but not spent, and 44 acres planted in cotton.

Senator Rev. P. A. V. Millington spoke in support with a focus on the Royal Barbados Police Force and the armed forces, and Senator P. Gilkes corrected Senator Symmonds on the site of a project at Rosewood. After a suspension until 7.00 p.m., Senator D. McD. Alleyne argued that the Opposition was confused about the

international situation and that labour was the basis of all value, exchanging points of elucidation with Senator Symmonds; the President told him not to comment on what Cabinet members refused to say. Senator D. K. A. Griffith spoke on the Barbados Youth Service, the Youth

Development Programme and community centres left closed when people could use them.

The Sitting was then suspended until Thursday, 26th March, 2009 at 2.00 p.m., with the debate on the Appropriation Bill, 2009 still in progress.