
THE SENATE DEBATES

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

SECOND SESSION 2008 – 2013

THE SENATE

Thursday, March 26, 2009

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Sitting is resumed.

SENATOR J. A. C. HUTSON: Mr. President, on a point of privilege. I was very disturbed at what I read on the back page of the Nation Newspaper. I am not guilty of any of what was said.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator, could you be a little more specific?

SENATOR J. A. C. HUTSON: Mr. President, as I said, I was very disturbed at how it was put in the newspaper, and I have not spoken yet.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Which newspaper?

SENATOR J. A. C. HUTSON: The Nation Newspaper on the back page. I spoke to Mrs. Anne Gittens about it this morning, and she said she would look into the matter. I gave her my telephone number and when I left home, I had not heard from her.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator, I will merely say that I was almost as upset as you must have been when I read the story in the newspaper this morning. It caused me to wonder if my age was beginning to interfere with my capacity because, according to my recollection, Senator Hutson did not speak yesterday at all.

When I read that Senator Hutson had some disparaging remarks to make about another Senator, you could imagine my shock. Then, I turned to myself and said, how can you be saying that Senator Hutson did not speak and here it is the newspaper said he spoke. Clearly, I was in difficulty and I could understand that you must have been in even more difficulty.

I take it that you rose to have this matter referred to the Committee of Privileges of this Honourable Senate and, I shall so direct. I have no difficulty whatsoever, in having this matter referred to the Senate Committee.

SENATOR J. A. C. HUTSON: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. President, as I am on my feet, if I may continue, I would be happy to do so.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Hutson, you have the Floor.

SENATOR J. A. C. HUTSON: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. President, as you are aware, I plan to speak on agriculture. This industry brings in foreign exchange and thousands of employees in the industry and, therefore, needs the support of Government at all times, like most countries provide, for their agricultural farmers.

Mr. President, only this morning, I was told that money owing to the sugar industry for over two and a half years, has been paid to the BAMC. We all wait patiently for our share, and would like to thank the present Government, as the sum of money was over \$3 million.

Asides.

SENATOR J. A. C. HUTSON: Mr. President, it is essential for any business organisation to have targets, both the long-term and the short-term. Because of the fluctuations of the sugar price set that, of necessity, has to be adjusted.

Over the years, the availability of cane lands have been considerably reduced and, hence, the amount of sugar produced has reduced as well. Sir, to further aggravate the situation, sugar prices have fallen, labour rates have increased, and the sugar industry in Barbados cannot exist without Government subsidy, for which they are very grateful.

2.00 p.m.

There are two sugar factories in Barbados which produced approximately 34 000 tonnes of sugar as well as a quantity of molasses from which rum is distilled. Over the years, only limited financial improvements have been allowed. As a consequence, the two factories, must of necessity, have become less and less efficient, and in the process, sugar losses have continued to increase.

As a result of the uncertainty of the future of the sugar industry by virtue of a lack of plan, one of the consequences is this universal absence of confidence by the cane farmers through whom a cane supply is essential. Figures for June indicate that there is no other product that can be produced at this stage that will generate more revenue, not profits, than sugar and rum.

In order to achieve a maximum financial return in the industry, it is currently taking advantage of higher prices offered by special sugars. Mr. President, the people in London, in the hotels and so on, who use our sugar, tell me that it is the best sugar in the world, so I do not think we have any problems competing against other countries who are packaging it.

In view of the above, it is recommended that the cane variety of high sucrose content be adopted, as was the custom, and that a decision be made, without delay, regarding the future of the two factories to avoid a total collapse.

Mr. President, Barbados can produce more food if we get the protection from Government as regard giving licences for the importation of food. Trinidad did this many years ago to protect its farmers and the public learnt to eat sweet potatoes instead of English potatoes. I think the Trinidadians all look healthy, especially the girls at cricket.

Mr. President, many years ago, plantations planted 13 per cent of the arable land in food crops. Two and a half per cent was thrown out in land and the 11.5 per cent was spring planted. This was all checked. In those days, they did not have photos of the whole island. One man used to come around and check to see if you were planting the acres, et cetera, because so many acres had to be planted in potatoes and so many in yams, et cetera. Sir, I must confess to you that once or twice farmers will take the same gentleman around in the cart roads in various directions

and show him their neighbour's corns, potatoes or whatever.

Mr. President, generally speaking, that was not done. We obeyed by the rules of 13 per cent. Mr. President, I do not see why that cannot be instituted again particularly if we could get protection and then we can sell our food crops.

Mr. President, I personally, and the estates I look after, plant more than that and are definitely getting sales because of imposts.

Mr. President, the Ministry of Agriculture at Graeme Hall and the farmers seem to be at loggerheads more often than not. Sometimes it takes over a month to get a response from or to make contact with a person there. We reported to Graeme Hall about the outbreak of the moth worm, which I think I mentioned in this Honourable Senate some time back in September or October last year, and to date, no one has visited the two estates I mentioned. They certainly have not made contact with the managers. The result of that is that we harvested those fields that were very badly attacked and you could see the rotten cane going into the bins. The result is that the tests that were done on those fields give 12 tonnes of cane to make a tonne of sugar. The average at that time was 10 tonnes, so we are two tonnes above average. Those estates at this time of the year are usually 9.5 tonnes, so it just goes to show how we have lost because of not being able to drop or put out parasites to control the moth worm.

Mr. President, some time ago I learnt that money had been set aside for plantations for the cleaning of wells. One had to send in statements, bills, et cetera. This was done back in December of last year. To date again, no one from Graeme Hall has visited the farms to check the depth of the wells or anything. Sir, those wells are surrounded by tall canes. They are not going to go in there now. Sir, these things are a little worrying.

Mr. President, I am not sure if the Pest Control Board still operates because in April 2005 a farmer in Bridgetown sent chemicals there to be approved or not approve, and to date, they have heard nothing. Some of these things are killing the industry.

Mr. President, the VAT Office is months behind in payment of VAT refunds to many farms.

Mr. President, I would like to suggest again that Government could use the Barbados Defence Force to patrol the highways at night from the end of January to the end of May so that they can spot cane fires quickly and report to management and management can then get on the tractor and the fire cart and go to the fire.

On one or two of my places, the fires started at 2 o'clock in the morning, and the manager never knew a thing about it until 5.30 a.m. when he got up. Consequently, acres and acres more were burnt that should not have been burnt. Therefore, Mr. President, I recommend that they consider doing that. It would be a good exercise for the youngsters.

Mr. President, I would just like to bring to your attention additional costs that we have had to incur. Inspection of trailers and tractors have gone from \$45 to \$100. Licensing has gone for trailers from \$200 to \$400 and tractors have also gone up over 100 per cent. Mr. President, these vehicles are only on the highway four or five months of the year and I think that rise is really very steep.

Mr. President, weedicide, pesticide and fertiliser prices have also increased. I am made to understand that it is costing the Barbados Agricultural Management Company Limited approximately \$140 to produce a tonne of cane. I am suggesting that maybe the Government could give us \$150.

Mr. President, the cost of insuring just one harvester is nearly \$12 000 a year, again, only working for four and a half or five months a year. Mr. President, I suppose we cannot risk not to insure it because if welding is being done around it during the off season, it could catch afire or some malicious person could do it, as they tried to do at Todds this year, as they did last year.

Mr. President, maybe agriculture could be made a subject at all schools for the betterment of the island and again more food could be produced with younger minds. Mr. President, we really appreciate and thank Dr. Chandler for what she does with the young people at the agriculture camp in the summer. Why not at Easter and Christmas too?

Mr. President, the making of ethanol was mentioned by one of the Honourable Senators. Mr. President, you could buy it cheaper from Brazil. An American farmer who stayed with me when I was a 4'Her now farms 1 300 acres in Iowa. He grows corn for ethanol production. A few weeks ago, he told me that if the American Government did not heavily subsidise the ethanol farmers, they would be out of business. Mr. President, whatever you do, you seem to need help from Government.

2.10 p.m.

Mr. President, I think Senator Benn spoke on the issue of water, as did Senator Keith Laurie when he was an Honourable Senator. Water can definitely be collected in our many gullies through catchments being made after cleaning and clearing. In doing so, this would also help with the problems of flooding.

Mr. President, a campaign must also be put in place for the education of waste matter. Waste matter should be separated into various groups, as is done in countries abroad, but it is coming to Barbados too slowly.

Senator Benn also mentioned that lamb and beef are under-produced. Sir, I agree with him but you cannot rear much beef or sheep on valuable agriculture land. You could do better by growing agricultural crops there. Sheep and cattle can go maybe on the hillsides of the Scotland District and other lots.

Mr. President, I can assure you that at Kendal where we have 550 ewes and average three lambs a year, we lose hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. I cannot get the lambs up to the required weight in nine or ten months. It takes me up to a year to get them to weigh 100 pounds. I try to graze them for 24 hours instead of 12 hours, I did a little experiment and it did pay off but then they were stolen at nights and so I had to stop that experiment.

Mr. President, I would like to congratulate the Police Force on the fine job they are doing, particularly in this latest arrest of an alleged criminal, the one for killing that poor lady in Barbados. I would also like to suggest to them that when they see a person with a bundle of canes anywhere, to stop and inquire from that person which plantation he manages or owns.

Mr. President, we are still waiting on oil royalties. They are 16 months behind schedule, but in speaking to Senator Boyce recently, he assured me that it is around the corner coming and so I await those royalties.

The cotton industry is a vital industry to Barbados and I hope that we could sell the cotton in the gin soon and that we could get cracking again. I know that the Barbados Tourist Board would like to get things made from our Sea Island Cotton so that they could market it as souvenirs. Sir, that would be great, rather than giving away things that are made in other countries.

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

SENATOR R. O. MARVILLE: Mr. President, a few years ago, we used to be talking about Barbados becoming a developed country by 2010 or soon thereafter. I think that was a hue and cry then and, of course, it is even likely to be more so within the context of a global recession.

We also boasted of being the No. 1 Developing Country but then we are 9th on the list of Highly Placed Developing Countries on the United Nations Development list for December 2008 and 38th overall. Singapore was way below us in 1993; then we were at No. 21 just below Luxemburg and above Italy, now Singapore has taken over our place. We can, however, boast as being the highest-

placed developing country in the Americas, here we come after Canada and the United States of America. I mentioned Singapore because I propose to get back to that country a little later.

Asides.

SENATOR R. O. MARVILLE: What airline am I going by? Mr. President, with due respect, you are interrupting me. Was it you who interrupted me, Sir?

Mr. PRESIDENT: If I wanted to interrupt you, I would do so properly.

SENATOR R. O. MARVILLE: Mr. President, the question is what happened between now and then. Sir, the answer is not entirely political. Although we continue to spend a vast segment on our national budget on education and health, there have been other areas in which we have lagged behind. We have failed to keep up with the new technologies and we have failed miserably to innovate. Sadly, if we wait, as we always seem to do in our state of dependency on Government to do everything, we can expect no better of an overburdened Government.

We need our citizens to do their part and to stop relying on Government for everything. Our health plant has become worn during this period. The staff has become disillusioned, and our education system cries out for reform, but Government has not done anything in the absence of any serious complaints from the users.

Mr. President, we have not even listened too carefully to the gentleman responsible for the highest level of education. I refer, of course, to Sir Hillary Beckles, Principal of the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, who cries out for an increase in our research capacity and product. Singapore has long since decided that the most salable product of a coming era would be research-driven and they started sending their best graduates back to school.

I know we think of Singapore as some grand, different, totalitarian country, but Singapore is almost exactly the same size as St. Lucia, which means it is slightly larger than Barbados. It has a population of some 2.2 million, and it has even fewer resources, if we discount the human resources, than Barbados. It has to bring in water from neighbouring Indonesia, for instance. Sir, I will get back to the question of our own water later. Interestingly, tourism is also important to Singapore, but the bulk of its tourism is business tourism.

While we have airlines in the Region that consistently lose money, Singapore boasts of one of the best airlines in the world, as well as one of the best airports, which has, incidentally, been built on reclaimed land. What

also distinguishes Singaporeans from us is their attitude to work, civic order and responsibility in general.

Mr. President, I wish to elaborate on the question of education. I notice that the Estimates for the period 2009/2010 reflect that nearly 30 per cent of our spending is dedicated to Education and Health. I think this is a good thing in itself. Far too many developing countries spend similar sums on their militaries, which tend to be a counter productive force with respect to democracy. While I think it is good that we are spending nearly \$400 million on Education, I believe that the time is now ripe when we are looking at a tropical winter, in economic terms, to innovate, to restructure and to come out at the end of this hardship better attuned to our future requirements.

Mr. President, I have long advocated the abolition of what is euphemistically called the Common Entrance Examinations and have it replaced by a system of continuous assessments. Incidentally, we took this system from the British, and Scotland abandoned it in 1969. I have also advocated the abandonment of our simplistic fascination with Arithmetic and English Grammar and advised the broadening of the scope of our education base, develop other forms of intelligence in areas like music, sport, art, language, personal and interpersonal intelligence, spatial intelligence, and any other forms that I have failed to list.

Mr. President, I am pleased that the present Minister of Education and Human Resource Development has made some commitment to look seriously at this issue. We need to begin again at the beginning. Our primary problem is the uneven playingfield we have, with respect to children first entering school. It is quite evident to me that the children of any one of us here would have benefitted from the presence of one or two parents who read and have books in the house.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I am sure you would wish to rephrase that.

SENATOR R. O. MARVILLE: I am sure that the children of any of the Honourable Senators here would have benefitted from having two parents in the house and books.

2.20 p.m.

Sir, my first daughter suffered from petit mal as a child but that did not deter her from going on, finishing her university degree and becoming a consultant with a firm doing contracts for the State Government. She grew up with books, including a handful of her own, which she could not get read. She would, of course, always volunteer someone who would read them for her until she could do so herself.

What happens to a child, whose mother is not much more than a child herself, and whose father has long since gone missing? There are no books in the house and hardly enough for a decent diet. How can she or he be expected to compete with the equivalent of my daughter, even with a handicap?

Mr. President, I believe we should put more monies into PAREDOS to help parents understand their roles. We should have more big brothers and sisters spending some time with our children. We should put more effort into making fathers responsible for their young, not by sending them to Dodds for failing to pay, but by making them do community service, whether it is repairing the homes of old people, cleaning up gullies or whatever and that up to 50 per cent of the monies earned be channelled into the upkeep of their children.

Mr. President, I notice too, that while the quantum of funding for nursery education has increased by \$153 821, and this is to be lauded, that the total programme for Childhood Education is only just under \$2 million, as compared with \$126.33 million for primary education. I am not suggesting that the sums need to be exactly the same, but the disparity speaks for itself.

Mr. President, there is also a need for a curriculum change that includes civics, basic economics and a healthy respect for the environment. They should also learn Spanish as a few now do, at the earliest stages. We live in a sea of Spanish-speaking countries and yet few of us could ask for a simple direction in that language.

Mr. President, I mentioned Dodds, a place where a number of our young men and women are confined with little prospect of escaping what, in our small society, becomes a kind of continued home. We ought to look at having formal education programmes for the inmates. In Sweden, always considered one of the most advanced societies in all sorts of areas, many an engineer or Lawyer, and other technicians received their training while being incarcerated for a long period of time. We could look at this sort of programme as a means of rehabilitation and instilling the sort of self-confidence that was lacking when these young men committed their crimes.

Mr. President, we also have a problem at the university level where students, in general, are not ready for university. They do not know how to take university notes and they do not read extensively. Therefore, they would require a massive input into their learning to be able to use the English Language.

Mr. President, I think we need more sixth forms. Again, I am pleased that the Minister of Education has promised an increase. I see a need for at least four more sixth forms and another Community College. I hope that

any new building will be such, as can be expanded on site, a technique, which would have afforded us much more space at the present Barbados Community College location. Sir, no student should then be allowed to go to university without going through sixth form or community college or have had considerable work experience.

Mr. President, if we compare Trinidad & Tobago where all university students go through sixth forms, Trinidad & Tobago could claim practically all of the spaces at the three universities at present, if there were no restrictions. Indeed, I find that most of the very best students, because of their preparation at home, are from countries other than Barbados.

Mr. President, you may ask where I anticipate funding for all that I propose should come from. It would be pipe dreaming only to suggest such changes without indicating how they could be funded. I believe that one source of saving would be to make university students, who fail a course, pay for retaking that course. Sir, too many students have hung around at Cave Hill for nearly 10 years.

Mr. President, I believe too that students who take courses, like Law, for instance, should be privately funded, unless such students are committed either to work in Government for five years or are going to specialise in much needed areas like Trade Law or Law dealing with the new technologies.

Mr. President, I would propose the creation of a fund with a low interest rate for such students with phased repayment up to age 67 and with a strict collection policy. It has been done elsewhere successfully and we ought to be able to do it here. I would also wish to see some other courses, unless they were geared to teaching, have the same strictures.

Mr. President, I would also wish to see both greater private and public support to research and that the university on the hill become, as the Principal seems to desire, more of a research institution.

Mr. President, one of the Honourable Senators spoke of a green economy. I too would support the need for a green economy in our precious little country. We need to legislate for the commercial purchase of electricity to the central provider and not just simply the replacement of fuel cost.

Mr. President, we need to sort waste. In other countries waste is sorted into dangerous waste, glass, metal and paper and much of what is left is biomass, which could be converted. We could begin with a single community or institution and we could institute a school programme. This

is not something that Barbadians are going to do willing so we have to do it gradually, I believe.

Mr. President, with respect to the conversion of waste, I have suggested that we are too dependant on Government to do everything so a group of us has been looking at converting all forms of biomass into bio-gas. We have the blessing of the private sector and the Public Service in this issue and a successful effort would go to proving my point that we need to get up and do more things for ourselves.

Mr. President, I am pleased the Attorney-General's effort to improve the offices of our Police Force here. We need more effective policing of vehicles on the road and typically those who belch out carcinogenic diesel smoke. The effort of that smoke, I am told is such that if you are driving behind one of these diesel trucks for about half of an hour, it would be the equivalent of having smoked five packs of cigarettes. I do not think we are aware of this and we have not done much about it.

Mr. President, we waste a lot of water, not only in our methods of using the water but we let water that is treated flow into the sea. Sir, in Swaziland - I take countries that are comparable in size and sometimes lesser developed than we are - this water is further treated and used on golf courses and farms. We use already properly treated water, potable water in such cases and that is a tremendous waste.

Mr. President, if we made better uses of our water resources, I think we would not need to talk of ourselves as water scarce. Sir, part of that is the fact that we have a system, which is extremely old and porous, in every sense of the word.

Sir, about 15 years ago I said to a member of the Barbados Water Authority that Britain had just repaired most of its pipes and discovered that there was a leakage of 30 per cent and that if there was a leakage of 30 per cent in Britain, there would be at least 40 per cent or 50 per cent in our case. He said it was nonsense but subsequently, that turned out to be the exact truth. We need to have those mains replaced if we are not going to waste money on buying water reconverted from brackish water.

Mr. President, I would like to say a word or two about agriculture. Senator Symmonds mentioned salt fish and rum earlier. I indicated to Senator Symmonds that rum was made from vacuum pan molasses normally, not from fine molasses. I think he misunderstood but people from the City do not often understand these things as people who were born down wind from Mount Gay.

Asides.

SENATOR R.O. MARVILLE: Mr. President, I was born down-wind from Mount Gay. Sir, when they slapped me on my bottom, I took a sigh, took a whiff of Mount Gay, said it smelled good and that I think I would stay.

Asides.

SENATOR R.O. MARVILLE: Senator Symmonds suggested that we make saltfish.

2.30 p.m.

I think there is a better possibility since both in Suriname and Guyana cat fish is often fed to the dogs, and cat fish has the same sort of consistency as cod, and all that is required is salting at low temperatures. Since the Canadians are running out of business in this area, because people have taken their cod, we could set up something like that in Suriname or Guyana. This type of inter CARICOM cooperation, as Senator Goddard would tell you it has occurred before, and probably be more productive.

I also heard Senator Hutson talking about the difficulties with sheep. We managed to export sheep to the United States after a long period in which they said we had scabies in 1763, or something like that, and therefore we were still dangerous. Now they are claiming that they have the right to the black belly sheep, which we all know is a native of Barbados. We would have been better off if we had tried raising some in the Brooker Pondo, in Suriname or Rupununi, Guyana. St. Vincent and Guyana grow rice. I do not know why they cannot grow sheep there too, if you see what I am saying. We can use the common space of CARICOM to improve our situation. We do not necessarily have to produce everything here. If we own something else in CARICOM, it is still ours. I think the Trinidadians recognise that very clearly.

I had spoken before on the one product we have that is very humble and that nobody takes much notice of. I am talking about the breadfruit. The breadfruit is the most incredible eating matter. I skipped over cassava, eddoes and yams, things that were once discarded, but now discover have great antioxidant properties, and everybody is advising that you eat what is grown by you or close to you. Then you get more out of it than the stuff in cans and so on.

The breadfruit happens to be the one product that almost all of it can be eaten. The stem and the skin can be used as animal feed. Everything else is usable. The leaves, when boiled, bring down fever. We do it in several different ways. It can be boiled, roasted, baked and, on top of that, if you leave it long enough it becomes rather sweet and you can make a drink from it. You can make sorbet or ice cream from it. It has endless potential, but most of all, if we had 100 breadfruit trees growing and all the plant

varieties exist at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica, we could grow a relatively short tree, make flour from the breadfruit, make bread that is not allergic, because a lot of us are allergic to wheat bread, and we would have, in fact, the beginning of real food security.

This is an issue that we really have to look at and we do not have a problem here. We have probably two of the greatest experts on the breadfruit, one here and one in Trinidad, it is not something else, if we are looking for something new.

Sir, finally, a word or two on health. I believe it was in ancient China where doctors were paid when people were healthy. In other words, the idea was prevention rather than cure. The point was, this was their primary function. We need to do more of that and Government and the private sector in all their new building provide spaces for fitness training. We need also to advertise the benefits of good health and bad eating. Perhaps we should have a Law that limits the amount of sugar that companies put into their soft drinks, in view of the level of diabetes that we have in the country.

We need to promote good health as a matter of course. I think that cuts down on our health expenditure. We are growing older now, most of us, and the problem is, it is not that great if you grow old and for the last 10 years you are a vegetable. If you had better health you would probably live fairly comfortably up to the time when you say, I have had enough.

I thank you, Mr. President. With those few words, I support the Bill.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Chandler.

SENATOR Dr. F.L. CHANDLER: Sir, I must first congratulate Senator McClean on her explanation of the global crisis which I know has confused many people. The common thread running through most of the presentation in this Chamber has been the need for fiscal prudence, and in discussion elsewhere the words lean and mean, wise spending, accountability and transparency seem to be on the lips of everyone, and quite rightly so. Although I must say that I have not seen much change in the lifestyle of most Barbadians. I suppose the well will have to become totally dry before we come to our senses. Maybe we still believe that God is a Bajan and we can leave everything in his hands.

The Governor of the Central Bank is quoted in the media saying there will be a hard year ahead, yet in the same newspaper there are hard times: "Hard Times Hit We," "Fetes a Plenty." There would be partying, virtually none stop partying, competing for the wallets of all

Barbadians. Then, of course, we will come to the lead-up to Crop Over and so it will go on.

On the other hand we are told in Monday's newspaper that \$1.5 million is owed to the Barbados Water Authority every year. I have to agree with the NUPW that this recklessness cannot be encouraged, particularly it is the most vulnerable in society who tend to attend these events. They must be encouraged to get their priorities right.

I think we need educational programmes, possibly via GIS on TV trying to explain the situation and reinforcing the fact that wise spending is essential in the present situation, and possibly some kind of explanation like what Senator McClean gave yesterday about the whole situation, but Government must lead the way.

Sir, Government must have wise spending and a lean and mean operation. There is too much wastage in Government, as far as I am concerned, not only of materials but also of time.

Sir, we have before us an enormous document outlining the Estimates of Government's Revenue and Expenditure for the next year, but there is no similar document at the end of the year to summarise just how this money was spent. I think we need to have such a document presented to us here in Parliament.

If the Ministries and Departments were producing quarterly reports, then a summary of the...

Mr. PRESIDENT: Has a blank.

SENATOR Dr. F.L. CHANDLER: Mr. President, I was referring to the past.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Then you will have to make yourself clear, because if you say it the way you said it, people who are listening outside would believe that you are speaking of the present.

SENATOR Dr. F.L. CHANDLER: I said that in February 2006, Senator Sir John Goddard put forward a question and it is yet to be answered, and I was wondering if it was just a tradition. In my experience I have never heard a question tabled in the Order Paper.

Mr. PRESIDENT: That is why perhaps we have a new Government in 2008.

SENATOR Dr. F.L. CHANDLER: Possibly, Sir.

I think that in the CCB's report it eventually came out many years late, and this seems to be par for the course.

Only recently it was noted that the Report of the Supervisor of Insurance for 2005 came out in 2009, with upsetting revelations where a regulatory process was concerned, and for which timely action was needed.

Senator McClean pointed out the need for regulation and the disastrous results of deregulation in this global crisis. We cannot shut the stable door after the horse is out. We let everything get too far before we pull it back.

2.40 p.m.

The Auditor General's Report, for instance, seems to fall on deaf ears, year after year. Some years ago, both Senator Sir John Goddard and I were admonished by the then Leader of Government Business for saying this, but it is noteworthy that shortly after the Auditor General publicly said that same thing. We have to correct this.

There must be discipline and wise spending at every level of society, if we are to survive the situation. I think that Government needs to enforce regulations which discourage the "loans to go" and "no down payment promotions", which lead people to do what they cannot afford, and also leads to wastage of foreign exchange.

Sir, you have products coming in here, and you have to pay a lot of foreign exchange for them. They are used for a month or two, and then have to be returned, because the people cannot pay for them and then they are not worth as much as they were before. I even noticed a large advertisement in a bank, seemingly encouraging families to borrow, so that they could go out to fancy restaurants to have dinner. I am wondering how that can possibly be done at this time. I also agree with other Senators that we must face this situation together as Barbadians. There seems to be more interest on Parties scoring political points, than on finding solutions to problems. We have to find the solutions together.

There has been a lot of debate on housing, during the debate in the Other Place. Of course, it is an important subject, but I am a bit tired of listening to the Opposition about who did this, and who did not do that. Why the National Housing Corporation cannot publish a list of houses that are completed each year, and the land acquisitions that are made, and say where these houses are, and what stage of construction they are at. The public can then compare the performances for themselves.

I am not a Lawyer, so I cannot comment on the legitimacy or otherwise of selling the units, versus giving the housing units to longstanding renters, but, perhaps, the payment of \$1 for a unit might solve the problem.

I trust that those who will receive the Government units will maintain them in better repair than they have

been over the years, and also that insuring the units will be mandatory. It should also be compulsory for the homeowners, who will benefit from the VAT exemption on building materials, to insure their houses. These responsibilities come with ownership.

Although it is doubtful that the units in many of the housing estates will be eligible for Land Tax, I hope that any that are, will fulfill these obligations. This is also a responsibility that comes with ownership.

I agree with the building on empty lots, both housing estates and also in villages. As I go through the country, I see all of these open plots in villages where there is bush. Then, there are old washing machines, old mattresses, old cars, and it really looks totally untidy. Obviously, garbage then gets added to it. Therefore, I do not see if this is well planned that it should lead to shanties, as someone suggested.

Mr. President, it is interesting to see yet another list of derelict buildings which the Minister proposes to demolish through the Environmental Protection Department. It came out on February 28, 2009. Ninety buildings are listed, some with notices served as far back as 2006. The expiration date of the notices has all passed for the 90 buildings, but I would like to know how many have been demolished. My guess would be none.

What is the point of continuing to publish these lists, if nothing is going to be done about them? Meanwhile, we complain about the lack of land for building, and the need to build on agricultural land. Some will say that the lands are tied up in legal knots, but we all know that Government is capable of tying knots and untying knots.

I would also like to know why it is so difficult to ensure the removal of all the derelict cars that are left by the wayside, which are not only unsightly for an island dependent on tourism but also attract rodents and are unhealthy. You see MOH painted on them and that is as far as it goes. I certainly have watched one for almost two years and, as far as I know, it is still there. I think it got moved from the side of the road over to the gutter next to the road.

I agree with Senator McClean that we must pay attention to the environment and to alternative energy, recycling and climate change. However, I find that progress in all of these areas is too slow, and that separation of garbage in the home should be instituted, along with giving more support to recyclers. What is the point of mixing garbage to separate it again at a station?

I will also confess that I am not quite sure what is the plan for waste management and, I am sure most people are in the same boat. The issue has been skirted around for

years and, I think, it is time to make a decision. One minute you hear that Greenland is going to be used and it is not. One minute there is an advertisement for staff for an operation where compost would be made from organic waste, then you hear there is going to be incineration in electricity. We need to come to a conclusion.

Senator McClean noted that she hoped we would not have to deal with really stormy waves, as well as the figurative ones, but more than ever in these times, we should be prepared. I wonder how prepared we really are?

Mr. President, there are entrepreneurs in Barbados and overseas with Barbadian roots, who have developed emergency management systems, and GPS systems for quick response. These are quite impressive, and some of them have been introduced to relevant agencies some time ago and, again, more recently. These can be used in areas of natural disasters, as well as epidemics.

I know that the wheels of Government turn slowly but they would be well advised to make some decision on this important matter, before we are caught napping. I saw in today's newspaper only, that there had been a meeting, I think the Attorney-General and Ms. Judy Thomas were at this meeting, which was held on the subject, so I trust that something will be done fairly soon.

Mr. President, I know that there is a lot more in the mortar than in the pestle.

In the case of the Graeme Hall Nature Sanctuary, I truly feel that this should be owned by the people of Barbados and under their control, but run by a private entity, similar to the arrangement for the Concord Experience. The Sanctuary is a national treasure and its destiny should not be left in the hands of foreigners, although they must be congratulated on the transformation of the area into the wonderful place that it is today.

I was surprised at the offering of \$1 million to the Sanctuary by the Government, as I did not think that money was the problem. One of the problems which affect the Sanctuary is the poor operation of the sleuth gate, which results in frequent fish kills as well as discolouration of the sea at one of our most popular tourists' beaches. What I cannot understand is why this was not a problem in the past, when we did not have all the high technology that we have now. I am sure that the professionals at the Coastal Zone Unit are aware of a solution, so there should be no difficulty in solving it.

Similarly, I trust that the proposed National Park planned for the area adjacent to the Sanctuary will be supported by this Government, and the lands will not be allowed to fall into the hands of residential developers.

This type of development will not be compatible with the Sanctuary, which is a valuable asset to Barbados.

The National Park, in my opinion, would be a great boost to the tourism industry and would also provide a peaceful, healthy open space for locals, amidst otherwise busy surroundings. The question must also be asked, why the lands to the west of the Sanctuary, owned by CLICO, were specifically left out of the RAMSAR Agreement, as far as I understand.

Mr. President, I must say that the new Justice Building is very impressive. I trust that we can afford to maintain the building, and I am curious to know what is going to happen to all the other offices that will now be accommodated in this building. Will they go the way of the others, like the Welfare Department, the old Post Offices, Culloden Farm to name a few? Since these belong to Government, they cannot be tied up in legal knots, and should either be demolished to free up the land space or renovated for other useful purposes. The cry has always been that money is not available for maintenance, only for building, but this problem must be solved.

I am glad to see that Sherbourne, the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre as it is now known, is finally going to be completed. I would say it is a great asset to the tourist industry and to the country in general. It is noteworthy that it earned the Caribbean Conference Award for four straight years.

2.50 p.m.

I trust however that the Centre would be run as a business and that it would be sustaining. Hosting cultural events, including the ballroom dancing that seems to be coming more and more popular, should attract more people to Bridgetown in the evenings which should be good for business and for everybody all round.

Mr. President, I understand there is also to be a school of music and performing arts and that the National Youth Orchestra would be strengthened. All this would help to guide the youth in the right direction.

While on the subject of restoring historic buildings and protecting our heritage, I trust that Farley Hill would be restored and that a new location would be found for the music events that are presently staged there. I really do not feel that those events are suited to the location. I feel that they destroyed a lot of the landscaping.

I understand that the garden of the birthplace of the late Right Excellent Errol Barrow is to be restored. I trust that Sir Frank Worrell's home would also be restored and that we would always protect rather than destroy our

heritage. These things are important, not only to us as Barbadians, but to improve our tourism offering.

Mr. President, public confidence is always important and even more important in these challenging times. Confucius said: "In my relations with men..." I listened to many financial statements and budgetary proposals over the years and it is amazing how many things have been promised that have never come to pass. It seems that it is largely window dressing for appearances only.

In my opinion when a proposal is made in these statements, the method by which this proposal is to be implemented must already be known. One such matter which readily comes to mind is the promise of diesel price reduction for farmers which was to have been implemented on June 30, 2008.

It would soon be one year and no solution is in sight. Not all farmers can afford to have large tanks to store the reduced price diesel on their farms. Some method is needed for them to have the reduced rates at the pump. A solution, however unpalatable, was found for the PSV operators. The farmers as usual are at the bottom of the heat. I hope that this would soon be rectified.

The greenhouses at the Home Station, which Senator Benn spoke about, were proposed since January 2006, but the ground has not yet been broken. I trust that the then graduates of the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic and the Barbados Community College were not depending too heavily on these promised greenhouses for their livelihoods. Similarly, I think there was to be an updating and consolidation of all agricultural legislation since 2004. This was to be the Agricultural Protection Act, but again, this is yet to come to pass.

Mr. President, in these challenging times in particular, it is important that Government gets value for money spent on the Public Service. I have spoken about this over and over in this Honourable Chamber but people tell me that I am wasting my time, that nothing would ever change. I look forward to the day when an Administration would have the backbone to put the country before political considerations and stand up to public officers who refuse to work but who, under the present arrangements, are still paid.

Mr. President, I have experienced a laid back attitude in a number of Ministries with which I come into contact but, of course, the one with which I am most concerned is the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. I was pleased to hear Senator Benn say that those in his Ministry would earn their keep.

I must congratulate him for presiding over the resurrection, but as they say, the proof of the pudding is in

the eating. Mr. President, I would need much more tangible evidence like new varieties of crops being recommended, complete with yield and other data, and new pest disease controls to be convinced.

Mr. President, I do not see why there is a problem. The Ministry has much more staff than it did when I went to work in 1969. There, Richard Hoad, the other agronomist, and I tested hundreds of varieties for example, 48 onions, 50 carrots, 72 cabbages and 67 tomatoes. I still have the Report at home which I referred to last night. The recommended varieties were put into a manual for farmers who often called it their Bible. This was also used by the University of the West Indies St. Augustine for teaching.

Mr. President, I am sure that if you look at the recommendation leaflets that are given by the Ministry now, you would find varieties there that are no longer available. I think you might even find varieties that were selected in 1969/70 possibly.

Mr. President, somewhere around 2004, we were told by the then Minister that there would be a rebirth of Graeme Hall. Mr. President, I think that must have been a still birth because I saw no change for years. That is why I am glad to hear, instead of birth, Senator Benn talking about resurrection from the dead, because I think he said he found a funeral home when he went there.

Mr. President, farmers have numerous unsolved problems, but the two which come to mind are a virus disease of sweet potato where a yield is reduced to zero and a sudden bout of parsley. Both these problems have been with us for years with no solution in sight. Mr. President, I noticed an area of parsley planted at Graeme Hall when I was there about two days ago and it had the same symptoms that I saw about six or eight years ago, so I assume that they still have not found the answer to the problem.

Mr. President, I visited the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development's booth at Agrofest. It was very attractive, I must say, but there was not one new fact in the crop's research that the farmers could benefit from. I also visited the Livestock Section where the two ladies there were sprawled on the ground eating their full lunches. I was directed to them with my request about the goat project at Greenland. The answer between mouthfuls - they did not even get up from their position - was that there was no information.

Mr. Benn, I look forward to a great change but failing this, I would advise you to continue paying the non-performers their salaries since, apparently, it is impossible to get rid of them, but take the \$2.3 million which would be used for expenses other than salaries in the crop research information, workshops, and extension section and used it

to out-source the work. I say this because if you do not have research, you cannot generate any information to host workshops, or have anything to extend to the farmers, so the money in these Votes should be available.

Furthermore, you could perhaps lease the Pathology Laboratory to the private sector so that it would function in an efficient and businesslike manner. I am sure there are a lot of professionals with the knowledge that would be glad to start a lab.

I was a bit disappointed that Senator Benn did not elaborate more on the plans for cotton and sugar cane. It is upsetting when we think that good plans were completed for these industries about five years ago and we still have made little progress.

On a positive note, I would like to assure Honourable Senators of this Honourable Chamber and the public, in general, that we are capable of achieving considerable import substitution and food sovereignty, our food independence, as I prefer to call it, rather than food security because food security can rely on imported foods.

Mr. President, in order to achieve this, we have to develop a structured programme which is monitored by a coordinating entity. I like to speak from practical experience. I have been involved for a few years now in an import substitution programme. We substituted \$5 million in 2006, \$1 million in 2007 and \$1.1 million in 2008 with only about six or seven items. Furthermore, Mr. President, all the items are of a competitive quality and price, in most cases, much below the imported price.

We talked about reducing food prices. The Honourable Prime Minister mentioned about bringing fruits from Dominica since the beginning of 2008.

3.00 p.m.

Mr. President, I have experience with this and know that the prices of the Regional fruits compare favorably with the extra Regional, however, the problem is reliable and regular transport. Over the years, we have heard of various plans to set up ferry services between the islands. Sir, except for the one between Trinidad and Tobago, these plans have never materialised.

In August 2005, Caribbean Net News reported a new ferry service linking Barbados with some of its Caribbean neighbours. That has never materialised. In 2006, a highspeed ferry service was proposed between Barbados and its neighbours, where farmers would be able to pick up fruits in Dominica one day and have them in Barbados the next day, still fresh. That has never materialised.

In 2007, we heard that a Barbadian company would operate a Caribbean inter-island ferry service, which will run between Barbados and Guadelupe, with stops in St. Lucia, Dominica and Martinique, to provide transportation from an intransit country hosting events for the Cricket World Cup, 2007. That has never materialised.

Last year the fast-ferry service was again mooted by Minister Chastenet of St. Lucia. It is now the beginning of 2009 and we are still hearing that CARICOM is seeking to address intra-Regional shipping services and is in the process of commissioning a feasibility study on the introduction of a fast-ferry service in the southern Caribbean to transport passenger and cargo.

Just recently it was said in the St. Vincent media that Prime Minister Gonzalves has been given the responsibility of coordinating the various mechanisms that will see the launch of a Regional ferry. Meanwhile, ironically, there is a local entrepreneur who, on his own initiative, purchased a fibreglass-enclosed boat two or three years ago, with the equivalent refrigerated capacity of a 20-foot container, specifically for transport of fresh produce between the islands.

However, layover port and customs clearance charges became one significant constraint to the financial viability of this operation. Efforts by the entrepreneur and other interested parties to have the charges for a local freight vessel reviewed, have met with no success and the boat remains idle, a situation which is disappointing, to say the least. At the same time, there is a Barbadian farmer who has farms both in Barbados and Dominica, who has been trying, with very limited success, and is having very irregular shipping.

Regarding tourism, I think Senator McClean mentioned yesterday that Barbadians overseas have been neglected as investors and that they have also been overlooked in the area of tourism marketing. Do the Missions overseas know how many Barbadians there are and their contact information? I think the Vote for the Barbados Tourism Authority is about \$95 million. Do we get adequate returns from this sum?

Mr. President, I have said this before but I will repeat it. My brother has been providing over 200-persons nights for tourism business from Canada for the last nine years. These people rent accommodation, rent cars, buy groceries, eat out at restaurants and take back local industry. The rum and beer industries are well supported during that time.

There are two couples who came for vacation one week, they came back for two weeks, then for three weeks and this year they are here right now for four weeks. They are treated like family and love Barbados. Of course, this

leads to additional people becoming interested in coming. My brother did not need any incentive to do this but maybe other Barbadians might. Some thought should be given to pursuing this route to parallel with the less lavish and costly Barbados Tourism Authority initiatives.

Mr. President, another issue with tourism that we have to think about is that we have to go more aggressively at non-traditional markets, like Russia, Germany and India because of the competition that we will get and because of the problems with which we are now faced. Mr. President, now that the United States of America and Cuba might have improved relations, it is very possible that people from the United States of America will now visit Cuba and we might see the effect here.

Mr. President, I would like to voice a concern about airport security. We are all aware that there must be stringent regulations put in place, following the September 11th, 2001 experience. In the past, Honourable Senators were all issued with airport passes. I assumed the issuing of these passes was based on the fact that there was some confidence placed in us that we would pose no danger.

However, last year I was most embarrassed when I presented my pass, where it was taken from me and I was told that these passes were recalled and were no longer valid. Sir, we were not told about that. I was told that these passes were recalled because of international rules which had to be complied with. I was told that I could have a temporary pass if I so desired.

A few weeks ago, I applied for a temporary pass and after some ado I was issued with it. I met my party, I greeted them, which obviously involved physical contact, and accompanied them to the Immigration line, where I was told that I could take them to the Diplomatic Line. I complied and was standing just outside the line and a senior-looking officer informed me that I could not mingle with my party. I asked why and was told that they could pass something to me. I found this illogical since I was allowed to be in the building and also to physically greet them.

I was also told that the reason was that temporary passes are given to "any and everybody", so care had to be taken. Mr. President, this worries me that passes were taken from persons in whom some confidence had been placed by the powers that be, but were now being issued temporarily to "any and everybody". Can this be in keeping with international rules?

Mr. President, Senator Millington spoke yesterday about calling the police and they responded that they did not have transportation. I think I have the solution for him. I heard this story of an elderly gentleman in the United States of America, who noted a light on in his garden shed

and went out to turn it off, but saw that there were people in there stealing things.

He then phoned the police, who asked, "Is someone in your house?" to which he replied, "No, but some people are breaking into my garden shed and stealing from me." The police dispatcher then said, "All patrols are busy. You should lock your doors and an officer will come along when he can." He hung up the phone, counted to 30, then called again. He said, "Hello, I just called you a few seconds ago because there were people stealing things from my garden shed. Well, you do not have to worry now because I shot them", and he hung up.

Within five minutes, six police cars, a S.W.A.T team, a helicopter, two fire trucks, a paramedic and an ambulance showed up at the home and caught the burglars red-handed. One of the police officers said to the man, "I thought you said you shot them," to which the man replied, "I thought you said there was nobody available."

Mr. President, I would like to support the Appropriation Bill and hope that the funds would be spent wisely.

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNISS: Mr. President, I rise to support this Appropriation Bill for the grant of

\$1 920 772 158 out of the Consolidated Fund for the service of Barbados. I would also like to support it to the extent that it pays attention to the environment, to greening Barbados, to climate change, to mitigation and adaptation.

Mr. President, I think one point that has been clearly borne out in these discussions in this Honourable Chamber by Honourable Senators, and in the Other Place by Members of Parliament, is that we are now in a stage where prudent management is essential. I listened very carefully to the insights from all Honourable Senators, I very much appreciate the contributions made by Independent Senators, who all appreciate the fact that everything is not perfect, that a lot needs to be done and that advice needs to be adhered to.

3.10 p.m.

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNISS: Sir, most important, we have to work on the Party and the present Government has to work assiduously to correct problems which have gone unanswered and unaddressed for just too many years. Unfortunately, Mr. President, in essence, in some cases, it is suffering from inertia - the tendency of a body to remain at rest, or of uniform motion unless told to do so by a force opposite and equal to it. Sir, sometimes it takes three pushes.

Mr. President, these remarks on Both Sides, concerns have to be borne through, but I think what is most clearly put forward by the present Government is that prudent management has to occur. Sir, we are seriously in times of concern and, as has been borne out by some Senators, lavish spending has to be curtailed. If there is nothing more that I could do, I want to encourage Barbadians in these times to put aside differences and join with the Government that realises that prudent management is essential at this time.

Mr. President, I heard in this Chamber, and in the Other Place the approach to this Budget and, in the Senate, I heard the Opposition Senator speak quite nicely but laboured the point about why more money is being spent in one Ministry or another Ministry. He asked why we were only spending X amount at the Barbados Water Authority when we claim there were so many problems there. I even heard discourse to the effect that Government promised to drop the fiscal deficit to 1 per cent of GDP on the accrual basis. Mr. President, we all know that was never the case.

I heard Honourable Members in this Honourable Chamber and in the Other Place confusing the accrual basis with the cash basis, up, down, left, right and center. I heard them mixing up what is net international reserves at the Central Bank of Barbados with the commercial bank foreign reserves. Again, I would like to thank the Honourable Leader of Government Business who, in her opening, spoke to that matter.

Sir, even the Prime Minister in the Other Place clashed for lengthy period of times in these Estimates dealing with matters as related to what are international reserves as it relates to Government and the Central Bank of Barbados as opposed to those foreign reserves.

Mr. President, I heard these debates being brought down solely to a matter of only dollars and the confusion on something, which to my mind, is basic. Sir, I cannot claim to be an economist but I pay attention. I am amazed and I wonder if Honourable Members of Parliament, who have been in these Chambers for so many years, misunderstand or deliberately attempt to mislead the general population and these Chambers with such confusions. Sir, the whole concept of debate in these matters, which are seemingly straightforward, have caused me some distress.

Mr. President, through it all, what I think has been borne out by this Government is that this Budget cannot only look at dollar figures, but also must embrace prudent management. Sir, I do not want to drift from the Budget, but it is like discussions a short while back about the Manifesto promises. I heard yesterday that the Manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party promised \$400 000 relief on building funds and that we brought only \$150 000. Sir, this

is an Opposition telling a country to put out the Government and to have no confidence in the Government when it is clear to anyone who is listening, that prudent management and the present realities dictate that we must appreciate the intent of the initial contribution being brought to this House, Sir, a contribution which says that we realise how serious the situation is but that this is a start to dealing with the problem.

Mr. President, that is how I would like to couch the rest of my discourse. Sir, what the number of areas in this Budget does, clearly to my mind, is to show the intent. Sir, they want to know what this Government is doing and they want to know it right now. Sir, after 14 years of doing little to nothing...

Asides.

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNISS: I heard it in the Other Place..

Mr. President, even as it relates to the green economy and greening, which is of paramount importance to this Government, after 14 years of doing nothing, here again they want to know what this Government is doing. What was done in the last 15 years to negate this country out of the present crisis? Sir, I might get objections, but all I have seen as related to the grave concern about greening Barbados, about climate change; about the struggles that we in the Caribbean are facing; this present Government has to deal with the situation where little to nothing has been done.

Mr. President, I know we are often told that there is a new administration and that we should not delve too much in the past. Sir, rightly so, persons want to know what is happening now and what is going on. Sir, Barbadians want to hear, and rightly so, what would be the future for green economy. Sir, as I mention, for a short while more, the realities that we face it is only to put in context how this Government has to proceed.

Mr. President, allow me a slight bit of latitude. In 2007/2008, I listened to discourse about \$114.3 million to green Barbados; \$70 million in a local component. Sir, before the former Administration left office, I listened to them speaking about increasing the Environmental Levy from 1 per cent to 2 per cent to increase in the finding of environmental friendly solutions.

We were to establish, in Barbados, policy for the introduction of a green economy to put Barbados on a sustainable economic growth pattern that incorporates environmental management principles. Sir, all these lavish words came out of a former administration, prior to leaving office and doing nothing for 14 years.

Mr. President, please extend me a little more latitude. Sir, a task force to target the green economy was supposed to be established all of which I have no clue and I would have to admit...

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the Senate in suggesting that no green economy policy was developed.

3.20 p.m.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: A green economy policy was developed. It was put in part into the 2007 Budget. A total green economy framework was developed. A task force to develop sustainable indicators following from that policy was put in place. In 2007, after the roll-out of the green economy policy, if in fact it has not been acted on by the current Administration since they came into office in 2008, I really do not know. There is no evidence of it, so one would have to say that it has not been acted on. To suggest that the policy was not developed and that the Task Force was not set up, there were members of the Central Bank, members of the Ministry of the Environment and members of the Finance and Economic Affairs. A green economy sustainable development indicator for measuring the economy, and for measuring the targets set in the green economy were, in fact, established.

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNISS: Mr. President, the Task Force developed targets and indicators for green economies sustainable. Sir, I have spent months going through this paper and I am sure I will be challenged, but all that the former Government, now in Opposition, said in that Paper, if it needs to be made a document of this Upper House that is fine, all it said in that Paper about targets, grandiose terms and lavished statements did nothing tangible that would reduce the dependence on fossil fuel in this country, that will lower the dangerous emissions in the atmosphere.

It spoke about the atmosphere but it said nothing tangible. I do not know if I am going to have an objection. This is my perception. So if that is an objection I will bow to it. It did nothing to find an efficient use of natural resources and it did nothing to promote renewable energy.

Sir, we have here to deal with this Appropriation Bill. We all want to know what the Government is doing when it speaks, as was said in the Other Place by the Honourable Prime Minister, and the Leader of Government Business, here, about Government's emphasis on green Barbados. I thought I should spend two minutes explaining what is the emphasis and what is being done by this Government.

Sir, we all know that the whole concern is the green house gases. Sir, for your knowledge there was a benchmark set at 500 parts per million to limit the temperature rise in the Region, and this is important. It need not matter too much the extent.

Sir, for persons out there breathing in a small chamber, to limit temperature rise by 2 per cent, the Caribbean is very vulnerable and it cannot cope with the present day climate much less a warming of 2 per cent, as I have said to other Senators.

This benchmark was being lowered to 440 parts per million, for your general knowledge. Renown scientists have recently dropped this benchmark to 350 parts per million. Sir, present day levels are at 389 parts per million. So scientists around the world are desperate and Barbados has to get on board. This is why the Prime Minister, in the Other Place, spoke about the importance of Barbados understanding the impact of becoming a green economy.

Sir, all this Paper has is a lot of terms and technology but does nothing do anything. Scientists have concluded that our green house concentration has already passed the tipping point. In simple terms, Barbados, we are in a crisis, as far as global warming. We are not prepared for the onslaught and a former Government sat down for 14 plus years and put together... I have to say about the civil servants because they did what they were told and they worked as assiduously as they could, frustrated I know.

Sir, they did nothing for 14 years to prepare this country. Senator Chandler spoke about the crisis we are having, and we do have an obvious crisis. Sir, our biggest crisis and concern, now is our climate. The world has toppled the benchmark. We are now in crisis.

Sir, we speak about sea levels rising and the scientist's average was millimeters a year. This was between 1961 and 2003. They revised it recently. Since 1998 and 2003 it has been now realised that the sea level has been rising 3.1 millimeters a year. Even that is wrong. This is why we are seeing the changes.

We have been recording high levels of sea surface temperatures. Sir, 1990 was the warmest decade of the century. Sir, 1998, just the warmest year we have ever recorded in the entire world. This is why the bleaching is occurring. This is why floods are occurring. Sir, last year, 2008, had the most hurricanes ever recorded on this planet in the hurricane season for this area. Barbados has been mercifully spared but think about this, almost 1 000 people were killed in the Caribbean, as we know. It will affect tourism, as it already has, the financial sector and agriculture.

Sir, we have another compounded fact, Tamara, technically, that rise, because we have reached that crisis, and in the context of a government doing nothing for 14 years, we are now in a situation where 20 per cent of our agricultural crops will not only suffer disease, but will not grow under these conditions, rice, maize and a number of other products, so our Minister of Agriculture has another problem which may not seem so obvious, but it is the most catastrophic.

Sir, scientific documents reveal a 1 per cent in the Caribbean which will make our Caribbean waters unfavourable to dolphins. This is why the fish are drifting away at this rate, or even the dolphin that we love to see are leaving. Sir, when I saw the records I was amazed. If unchecked, we could look at a disruption in this Region and in the world probably worse than the great civil wars, worse than the economic depression in the 20th century. This is the context, and I am appreciative of the latitude you have given me.

Sir, we all probably know that President Obama, realising the crisis, speaks to energy as being paramount. This topic will be discussed extensively, of course, at the Fifth Summit of the Americas in Trinidad next month, when the President of America will be there. I hope that the content of what I said is clearly structured to prove that we are now in a crisis. Barbados is in trouble. The entire Caribbean is in trouble.

Sir, while other Caribbean countries have been doing things, we have been somewhat like Rip Van Winkle. I heard that context before. Sir, because of such the United Kingdom has definitely run protocols which they are tabling for the United Nations Framework Convention on climate change in December, with drastic measures.

3.30 p.m.

They have definitely run protocols, which they are tabling for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which will happen in December, and they are drastic to cut. The United States of America is now on board, as it has never been before. In the December meeting, it is hopeful that it will conclude with an urgent need for a successor agreement to the Kyoto Protocol.

Mr. President, we heard about education here, and in conducting a course called, Science, Medicine and Technology at the University of the West Indies, when I ask University graduates what is the Kyoto Protocol, they are shocked, and have not a clue. What is the United Nations Framework for the Convention of Climate Change? They do not know. The young people in our society seem to be clueless about our change and our climate issues.

This is why I am so impressed that this Government started and is encouraging public persuasion programmes. I am hoping and encouraging them to continue so that we understand what is going on. Sir, at such meetings, the Caribbean States are calling for the rapidly developing countries that, in essence, Mr. President, emit most of the Green House gases to make a stop or to reduce.

Mr. President, I now get to the most salient point, because as I just said, Caribbean Islands which produce 1 per cent of the green house gases in the world, are going to be the greatest affected, as what is called the least developed countries, or ocean countries. Sir, small countries in the Caribbean Islands are very strongly affected, as I had said before.

I was amazed at a recent meeting where Caribbean Islands have been doing so much in the last 10 years. Where was Barbados? Mr. President, St. Vincent has hydro power. You know that they have falling waters. Of course, different countries have different resources. Therefore, they used what they have, Sir, and 20 per cent of St. Vincent now, is hydro powered electricity. They have three hydro plants and they are looking for new sites. This is St. Vincent, across the road.

Sir, little Nevis, a number of years back started exploring for geothermal energy, that is, energy out of the ground. Therefore, we talked all about energy plans 'till the cows come home but nothing was done in this country. Nevis, Mr. President, is exploring and they will have a significant amount of geothermal shortly, sufficient, more than three times what we produce at our own Light and Power, to export to other countries. As I well said, different countries have different resources.

Unfortunately, or fortunately, Barbados is not in the vein for geothermal.

Sir, look at Jamaica. Eight years ago, Jamaica sat and studied and put down a 21-megawatt wind plant. Of course, the context does not matter, but that is about one-tenth of what is our own power. Sir, in eight years, they are now producing wind, which is slightly one-tenth less than what our own power station, the BL&P is doing.

Therefore, all the time that we were in this country sleeping, drawing plans, and talking about having an energy framework, countries were working.

Mr. President, there are wind farms all over the place. Guadeloupe has, Curacao has and all of the Dutch Caribbean Islands have wind farms.

Sir, what happened in Barbados was one attempt, which was badly assisted with a government, and we have everybody in St. Lucy saying that a wind farm is going to

flicker them to death. This is because a government did not help to educate a society and to help a community decide. Therefore, we have a country which is antagonistic against wind energy, so this is what we are faced with now.

Mr. President, Guyana has wind farms and, guess what? They also have mini hydro plants. I will go through the list, but it is so astounding and even hurtful. I do now continue. Guyana now, Mr. President, is digging for a hydro plant. Guess what? Guyana's hydro power, even if you slash it by half, is more than 3 000 megawatts. Sir, let me break that down simply.

Guyana's energy is more than three nuclear plants and they are sourcing it. Do you know why? Because the other islands realised we are in crises. The Caribbean is in crises, and things have to be done toward renewable energy, energy conservation, informing a population, but the former Government sat here for 14 years, collected awards and credits, and did nothing to inform a society that it has to change its focus. I now hear talk about ethanol. Jamaica now has.

Mr. President, bear in mind that we in Barbados are like, if I could personify, a man that was starving for 14 years. Full-fledged starving, bread and water and after 14 years, when that man is in the hospital, you can like all you want to give it baked chicken and salad, but you know what? You have to give it, intravenously.

This present Government is in a state where we have to feed a country slowly, to prepare it or to try to make sure that it can survive. This, Mr. President, is what we speak about when a Prime Minister in another Place and in this Place say this Government's concern is on greening Barbados.

It is not, Mr. President, to establish policies for introducing green economies to put Barbados on a sustainable economic growth pattern. In 2007 that was said, that incorporates environmental management principles. What the heavens is that? What is that, when we are suffering in this country?

Asides.

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNIS: Sir, that is the position, with Guyana having, in essence, three nuclear plants that they are getting ready to tap. Sir, to be able to do that Guyana, which is supposed to be struggling with poverty, having issues with Government, immigration, migration and still realising, guess what, the Government of Guyana told the country, regardless of what Government...

Asides.

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNIS: Therefore, while persons may think I am being political, I am not. I am concerned with the realities that a former government did absolutely nothing. Who was the Minister of the Environment? I am not even going to go there. Therefore, we have now, a man who has been starving for 14 years, and we dare not feed it a good plate of rice.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNIS: No. I am trying to say that I am not even carrying it on a political realm. I am carrying it on a deeper realm. This is the point. Therefore, let us talk about the intravenous feeding. Let us get now to the Appropriation Bill.

Sir, I sat and heard Members in the Other Place.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNIS: Yes, Sir, but I have to lay the context.

Mr. President, yesterday's newspaper and I am, therefore, answering Senator Chandler's question and the question that has been asked by other persons. If you looked in the newspaper in a small little area, you would have seen that this Government has embarked on a sustainable energy framework for Barbados' project. It has started.

Mr. President, that is no big grandiose, \$114 million or \$70 million, in the Appropriation Bill, that is bringing the stakeholders together with assistance from the IADB and JEFF. Do you know what that is saying, Mr. President? Legislation to allow for feeding tariffs, coming to Barbados, net metering Laws. Sir, to break it down simply, Barbados finally after 14 to 15 years, asleep, now has to turn.

We are starting, as has been said, to look at legislation. It means then that it will allow utility or energy companies to purchase electricity from renewable energy. Sir, everywhere you go in Barbados people are anxious. How can I put up a solar panel?

3.40 p.m.

Everywhere you go in Barbados people are anxious. They are asking how could I put up a solar panel? How could I do what? People want to do that because they were sleeping under a dead government, and I say that metaphorically.

Mr. President, that legislation has to be in place first because standards have to be established. Barbadians have to understand that. Sir, if I decide I want to do photovoltaic

and I bring in a cardboard and stick it on my roof, and I waste \$2 000 or \$3 000, I cannot connect to the grid, I am burning down every minute and I do not know what is going on, I would be in trouble.

This Government in coming into office is saying we have to start at the very beginning. This is what is happening after 14 years, so this is why it got there. Mr. President, do you remember the crises, the dolphins leaving and all of that? We are keeping that in context.

Mr. President, this Government has to educate the society so that they can do it. Why could that not have been happening 14 years ago? I go to other islands and the children know things, and we in Barbados, with this high level of literacy, education coming out of our ears, are behind as far as that is concerned.

Mr. President, Senator Sir Stanley Goddard spoke yesterday. I appreciate his contribution. He said that a budget is about the economy and jobs, and that the Appropriation Bill is such and really want to know how are these things being made. Prudent management is what it is about. Mr. President, once you set the stage, you can have jobs. Experts can come in on energy conservation as it is trying to be done.

Mr. President, let us talk about what is happening. Let us not be fooled by the lot of grand talk in this place, or the Other Place. We need to look and listen to what is happening.

Mr. President, the Caribbean Hotel Energy Efficient Action Plan, a two-year pilot project, is starting in Barbados where grants will be given to help hoteliers. The tourist industry would be happy for such, deal with energy conservation. There are more jobs coming in ESSCO for our young people who are bright. These are energy service companies.

Mr. President, so many people are interested in doing things. They would be able to audit and retrofit buildings, receive payments, teach, train and build capacity. Under this Government, 14 buildings have been audited and they would also come in. Mr. President, that is part of the intravenous drip that has started. Mr. President, do not expect grand statements.

Mr. President, a government that is clear about what it is doing starts at the beginning. If things have been dead for so long, you have to have a phoenix. This is what is happening.

Mr. President, yesterday, I heard Honourable Members saying we know the bus rides are good. Nobody is questioning the bus rides. Let us put it in context. Children are in the buses. Parents do not have to go for

them. There is less congestion on the roads at peak time and there is less use of energy, and less emissions.

When we talk about the ABC Highway and the confusion and then the scramble to not only make payments but to get it finished, let us put it in context. This is what the Appropriation Bill is about. The moneies that are allotted are to fix roads, look at congestion and see how things can be mediated to reduce what needs to be done. There is also the park and ride system. That is in context. All of this, as it may seem drifted, is part of a green energy.

Mr. President, as I said before, it is so important to have standards. The lack of standards is what is affecting our solar water heater system companies in Barbados because they are competing now with Israel, Cyprus and Greece. The gentleman from Germany with the Future Centre Trust and Green Peace came up to me and said that the other people in the Caribbean told him that Barbados is renowned for its solar water heaters. How do you all do it?

Let me tell you how it was done, Mr. President. The solar water heater industry was started in 1973 under a Democratic Labour Party Administration who provided incentives, and the entrepreneurs took it and ran with it.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss P. I. INNIS: You were the consultant, Sir? Well, I give you double kudos.

Sir, the recognition that Barbados has is in the only area that Barbados did anything, as far as renewable energy or the green economy is concerned. That makes people call you aside and say holy Barbados, look at the solar water heater industry. It was started eons ago under a Democratic Labour Party Administration where they provided incentives and the entrepreneurs took it and ran with it. These are the jobs we are talking about.

Mr. President, right now after 14 years of doing nothing, the industry is suffering, but I know it is looking to improve its product and to expand especially in the other countries of which they have such great acclaim. Mr. President, I would encourage this Government to assist the solar water industry in whatever way it can as it tries to expand into other islands both Regionally and internationally.

Mr. President, we come now to more intravenous drip; what is being done for the green economy. Mr. President, I will doubt tremendously if you would see this Government ever getting up and saying: "Look what we are doing for a green economy and agriculture. Mr. President, you will watch and see how little things make the difference. You do not start at the top. If something is dead too long, you have to start at the bottom.

Mr. President, with the crisis on hand, I spoke about what is being done to bring us through as far as photovoltaic is concerned.

In this Appropriation Bill, I see \$6 million for the maintenance of drainage and the prevention of flood programme. This is important because floods are coming. This Government prudently said to clear the drains. Yes, as you said Senator Chandler, there are issues in some places and they have to be dealt with.

Mr. President, I heard an Honourable Minister in another Place say: "Heavens, imagine Bridgetown getting clean up! The drainage network is finally getting looked at after years of neglect."

Mr. President, I live in Christ Church. I drive through Bonnetts. Any time it rains for half of an hour or whatever, and I am home and I have to go into Bonnetts, I would wait for half of an hour or an hour because it always flood. I saw the Drainage Unit working there, and that problem is no more. This is part of the greening Barbados simple as it seems.

Mr. President, when those in the Other Place speak about this and about Holetown, which is being cleaned, because of this kind of crisis... I heard Opposition Members of Parliament saying: "Oh, we used to clean drains too." That is the extent of their contribution.

Mr. President, an Appropriation Bill that deals with drainage, streams and gullies, as simple as it is, I support it because we realise that this is part of the greening. Mr. President, only 10 per cent gets back into our aquifers. The rest is run-off. Mr. President, the Ministry of the Environment is going to deal with cleaning gullies and all that was left undone.

Mr. President, I know Honourable Senators would get up and say otherwise, but unless I am dead or stupid, if someone wants to call me either of those, I have travelled and I have seen none of those being done. I grew up seeing things in disgust, and I am finally seeing cleaning. I am encouraging the Government to continue with its work and do not mind the naysayers who are going to say: "Oh this Bill does not deal with the Budget." This Bill is dealing with fixing problems, setting frameworks and frameworks that will encourage jobs. That is what it is about.

3.50 p.m.

Mr. President, we come to the issue of illegal dumping. I would want to suggest that this problem, which is a constantly reoccurring one, may probably need a stronger hand. I have always thought that a good idea would be to employ one or two young people and place them at strategic areas which are normally dumping spots,

where these persons would be able to police those areas and catch those perpetrators who dump illegally.

Sir, the Courts should then imprison these perpetrators or, at least, fine them. Sir, the problem is that people feel they are untouchable by the Law. These persons who engage in illegally dumping would not know which areas that would be under surveillance but we could have a few youngsters all over Barbados who would be policing these areas.

Mr. President, in relation to the issue of inadequate wells, for years there has been the issue where wells have been dug but have not been sunk appropriately, and so that has contributed to flooding. Mr. President, I heard the Honourable Member in the Other Place, who was proud to talk about the wells that have not been sunk properly - and that point was missed - where these wells will now be tested. Sir, there is an easy way to do that test. For example, excess water could be allowed to run into these wells and depending on the way the well takes in that excess water, you could determine if that well has been adequately or sufficiently sunk.

Mr. President, in relation to the Barbados Water Authority, I am hearing that we have not put sufficient money there. Sir, the question was asked, what kind of Budget is this? Sir, we all know of the issue, and Senator Marville was quite correct when he said that more than 40 per cent of our water is wasted.

Sir, again this is another sleeping issue. Therefore, Honourable Senators must excuse me if I am a little passionate because, for more than 14 years, a former government has been talking about an ASYCUDA system, about a SCADA system, about GPS technology and hydraulic systems that may not do this or cannot do that, while the Barbados Water Authority has been struggling and begging them for help that it needed a main replacement programme.

Sir, despite all the talk by the Other Side, we have and continue to have issues where excessive potable water is "going down the drain". This is a part of a green economy. This is a part of saving water, ensuring that it is recycled. Mr. President, I know that is being looked at now for the first time. I spoke to officers from that Department today, who said the \$9 million that has been voted in the Appropriation Bill will finally be going towards capital works for main replacements. Sir, I know a major main replacement programme is coming on board.

Mr. President, Honourable Members in This Place and in the Other Place are always concerned with this issue of main replacements, where one side says one thing, while the Other Side says something different. Sir, Senator Chandler wants the newspapers to print it.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: On a point of order. I rise because it would be most inaccurate to let it reflect on the Record that main replacements is taking place for the first time in Barbados under the Democratic Labour Party. Sir, I will speak only to that of which I have certain and absolute knowledge because, in the district known as Bagatelle, mains have been replaced or repaired at a cost of more than \$1.5 million. The entirety of the district had been replaced. There was also a main replacement project in the area of Welches, St. Thomas. Therefore, it would be inaccurate to say that this is the first time it is being done. Sir, I understand what Senator Inniss is trying to achieve, but she must not go to ridiculous extremes in pursuit of that objective.

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNISS: Mr. President, there are main replacements and there are main replacements, and this is one of the other ploys that is engaged by persons to confuse the people of the Barbados Water Authority who, for 15 years needed assistance in a major main replacement programme in this country. That assistance had continued to be unheard of and unattended to.

Therefore, if the Honourable Senators want to object to that, by all means, they may do so, but I would encourage Barbadians not to listen to Senator Inniss or rather, do not take the words of Senator Inniss but they could pick up the phone today or tomorrow and call the Barbados Water Authority. Sir, as a litmus test, Barbadians have to do such. Their major main replacement programme is now on the table.

What happened and continues to happen is that a former Administration had not looked at the holistic picture, as is occurring with this Government, where we are now looking at it holistically. You piecemeal it. The Barbados Water Authority was given a \$150 million....

Mr. President, Government still talks about dinosaur. Sir, this Government now has to pay off the arrears. Sir, people have to understand the context of what this Government is faced with. We are paying the arrears because of the fact that nothing has been done for so long. Sir, for a green economy, which is paramount, we have to look at a major main replacement programme. Mr. President, I am not going to go into the issue because it is not my major portfolio, neither do I have the authority to speak on such. Mr. President, Opposition Members could get up and tell me it is not so but the truth bears out and with God's grace, in the fullness of time, you will see a major main replacement as it refers to green economy.

Mr. President, maybe in the Other Place, Ministers of Government did nothing short of saying, "Praise Thee God", in their seats, that after so many years under this Government, in these trying times, we are now trying to enact and get a West Coast Sewerage Project on board.

A cost benefit analysis has been done, it is coming on stream. Sir, that is happening now. You may say that \$1 million cannot do anything, maybe that is the objection that is going to be heard but this is a prudent government - and this is the point - so you start with something. You show that I am willing to help.

Mr. President, I do not want to belabor more of the points but I can go on. Sir, the Appropriation Bill speaks to serious issues as they relate to a green economy. The Bill speaks to a government concerned and determined to do what needs to be done.

Mr. President, I want to finish with the point that we have issues with our education and development. Sir, I am not trying to be condescending but in relation to most of what I have spoken about, in speaking to the realities of the lack of action by a former government, I would want to say that I would not be surprised that the majority of persons in this country have little or no idea about what I am talking about. Therefore, we need to engage in serious education in this country to have all Barbadians understand these issues, to prepare them for a green economy because it has not been done before.

Yes, a lot has to be done and I am imploring this Government to heed because I realise, as many have, that because of the urgency you are asking this Government to hurry. Sir, I am asking them to hurry too. I want them to finish the recycling programme because I get calls from persons asking when is the recycling programme coming on stream? Why is it taking so long? Sir, it has only been 14 months for us as a government.

Mr. President, bio-fuel is a huge issue that has already been discussed. Again, I cannot speak on such matters. Of course, that decision lies with the Minister of Energy and the Environment, who will speak to such matters but I know for sure that it is being looked at. Sir, there are a number of issues which have to be dealt with and, therefore, as soon as the intravenous drip takes, I am confident and I will do all I can to encourage this Government that as soon as the drip takes and we could take this starving man off the drips, we will start to feed it with food and Barbados, hopefully, would be able to "catch up" and be able to say that we are pushing ahead with a green economy, with a green Barbados, with renewable energy and energy conservation.

We would be able to do like Barack Obama - and you would see him all over the place - Barbados would be like a crazy man. The first thing coming out of our mouth would be about energy, not because we are paranoid, but because unlike the majority of Caribbean countries, Barbados is unaware of the issues of climate change and the negligence under a former Administration.

4.00 p.m.

Mr. President, hopefully the start will only ricochet, inertia will take place and we will have in the future, not too far from long, a country which is energy efficient; a country which is progressive in renewable energy in probably wind and photovoltaic and we can save this country for our children.

Mr. President, I thank you.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Thompson.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: I am rising on a point of privilege, if I may, and reserve my right to speak. Sir, it has already been drawn to the attention of the Chamber, a newspaper report on the back of the "Nation" today. Sir, in my view, and speaking as a member with privilege, it disparages me. It has been referred to the Privileges Committee of this Chamber. The Honourable Senator Hutson has already indicated that the report puts words in his mouth, which he never spoke, having not spoken yesterday.

Sir, I am concerned from the perspective of the privilege of a member that it is being suggested that I am almost reckless in absence. Sir, today I sent for the records of the Senate which show the times I was present and absent. Sir, I am not recklessly absent, nor frequently absent, the record shows. In fact, as is required by the Rules of the House, on the occasions that I have been absent, I was absent because I was out of the country and on each occasion, except one, Sir, the appropriate excuse came to the Chamber. Sir, that the media is suggesting otherwise, framing a story that suggests that I am reckless in my responsibilities and not attending, really is highly disparaging.

Mr. President, it has been the custom of the House and an understanding that those Senators who are not members of the Cabinet are engaged in remunerative work and, therefore, will, from time to time be absent.

I took the opportunity to pull the attendance records of other Senators and there are Senators who have been more frequently absent than I but, Sir, a mischief is afoot, so I am craving the privilege of the Chamber and craving the protection of the Chair relative to this matter to stop a gross misrepresentation from being put abroad to the public.

Mr. President, I will not say, although I could say that in the Other Place, the Prime Minister has been absent for nearly 50 per cent of all Sittings, but I will not go there because then that would be to offend the very Rule which I am seeking to invoke. I am going to assume that he has

been absent on legitimate Government Business just as I have been absent on legitimate business.

Mr. President, I take my responsibilities to this Chamber very seriously. In fact, on the occasions that I am going to be absent, all except one, I informed my colleague, the Honourable Senator Symmonds. I informed my Party Leader who is responsible for my nomination and appointment and, Sir, you are well aware...

Mr. PRESIDENT: What I can assure you is that since I am the President and, as President, I am the Chairman of the Privileges Committee, that a Committee will be convened as early as is humanly possible, and the matter will be fully ventilated.

I do not recall whether you would have heard my statement earlier this morning but I deplore the attitude of any newspaper that would misrepresent activity in the Parliament of Barbados. It is clear to me, as I said this morning, that the newspaper was not only inaccurate, it was grossly inaccurate, when it put in the mouth of a Senator, who had not spoken in this Chamber, words to the effect as published in the newspaper. The matter will be dealt with in the Committee of Privileges and I say no more on the matter.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, I am much obliged to you and reserve my right to speak.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Sandiford-Garner.

SENATOR Mrs. V. I. SANDIFORD-GARNER: Sir, thank you. Mr. President, I rise in support of this Appropriation Bill and I would like to make reference to the presentation of the Leader of Government Business yesterday. In her presentation, Senator McClean explained the economic environment that we will operate within, in the coming year by first giving a precis of global reality and local reality.

Mr. President, I would wish to take this opportunity to congratulate her or, as Senator Chandler would have said earlier, she explained everything in such simple terms that I had to smile and say that it was the teacher in her. Sir, it was not surprising, given her background as a teacher.

She was able to do so with such ease, notwithstanding the comments from Senator Symmonds, the Opposition Senator, who stated that in accusing the Opposition of not supporting free bus rides, et cetera, summer camps and other Government initiatives that Senator McClean was setting up a straw man to knock him down.

Mr. President, the irony of his presentation is that he proceeded to set up his own straw man by accusing the

Senator of not making contact with the Estimates and arguing that what was presented could not pilot Barbados through the economic storms, thus, Sir, making, in my opinion, his entire presentation anti-intellectual so, I will not dwell on it any further.

Sir, in debating when you set up a straw man to knock him down, it is termed as anti-intellectual debating and that is what the Honourable Senator engaged in yesterday, in my opinion. I am sure he was a member of a debating society, as I was, and he understands exactly what he did and, Sir, please take note that we understand exactly what you do.

Asides.

Sir, I thought the Honourable Member was rising on a point of order so, I will continue. Mr. President, listening to the Government present its case, one could clearly understand that we are in an environment where, not even the great United States of America can actually predict where we will be in the next four weeks or even four months.

Mr. President, at the beginning of our term in office, our overriding concern was the continuing spiral in oil prices and the failure of the United States of America sub-prime market. This Government did not waste any time because, within days, we convened and held consultation with the best economic brains in Barbados, the Region and the world, along with the local public and the private sector. Sir, many people do not remember that, but I remember very clearly. They were all assembled at what is now known as the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Conference and Cultural Centre in an effort to brainstorm and set the stage for Barbados' economic survival.

Mr. President, we were witnessing oil rising as high as US\$140 per barrel and the spectre of people with no jobs and no security were receiving mortgages at an alarming rate in the United States of America.

4.10 p.m.

Actually, banks up North were taking a bundle of assets, and this is putting it in plain economic terms. Unlike Senator McClean I enjoyed it. I do not know if it is because I had a dashing young lecturer but I did and I got an A. So I enjoyed it.

Asides.

Sir, I would take your comment with a pinch of salt because I would not wish to dash your hopes at this time.

Sir, there were actually putting these loans on their balance sheets with the objective of selling a few, then they

decided to sell all. As the famous May West said: "I began as a Snow White and then I drifted". Sir, the best brains in the world, we consulted them in Barbados. Dr. Delise Worrell was present, and he is a former Central Bank Governor. He told us then, not even the International Monetary Fund model was picking up the financial upheavals that were taking place. He said that the International Monetary Fund, which has the best and most sophisticated model, was unable to pick up the kind of collapse we were anticipating.

Actually, the International Monetary Fund did not expect the level of stock markets that occurred. They did not expect it. It was Dr. Worrell's opinion, we could imagine the magnitude of the financial meltdown that would follow when the capitalists went into over-drive.

At that time Sir Geoffrey Bell, the gentleman responsible for the idea of forming the G30 Group, suggested that Barbados should look at it this way. He said the safest assumption was to prepare for the worst and hope for the best. That is what he told us then. Much of what we gleaned from that consultation has guided our Government in its presentations this year. In essence, the Government has done exactly that. We have reduced budgets in an effort to minimise any excess, and any person who understands simple budgeting can identify with this reasoning.

I shall not engage the Chamber with the intricacies of finance or economics today. I will leave that to the Minister of State, Senator Darcy Boyce, when it is his turn.

I am now going to focus on our social policies. The policies that affect the people. Yesterday Opposition Senator Symmonds accused this Government of playing politics with housing in Barbados, and I cringed. I winced. I cringed because I wondered if the young Senator, and I would say young because I am considerably his senior, even though it may not look that way. I was wondering if he was aware of the implications of his statement.

Sir, at present, for the first time in Barbados' housing history, since the former Minister of Housing, at that time, I think was ...

SENATOR K.D. SYMMONDS: On a point of elucidation. I am sure that I never said that the Government was playing politics with housing. I am sure that what I did say was that I understood the politics of the housing policy. It is a completely different thing.

Sir, without wanting to delay the House of pulling the Hansard to verify what I said, I would want to urge on Senator Irene Sandiford-Garner that if I did say so, I certainly did not intend so to do, but I am almost 100 per cent certain that is not what I said.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The point is made.

SENATOR Mrs. V.I. SANDIFORD-GARNER: I would also like to enlighten the House that I was once a journalist. I was a journalist for over a decade and when I wish to...

Asides.

SENATOR Mrs. V.I. SANDIFORD-GARNER: I always wrote accurate stories. I never got reprimanded for accuracy yet. I wrote down what Senator Symmonds said. Even if he may not wish to hold up proceedings to bring Hansard, I wrote down what he said. He is now saying that he did not probably mean to say it the way it came across. I know the tricks of the Lawyer. I am a former journalist.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I am sure you will want to rephrase that.

SENATOR Mrs. V.I. SANDIFORD-GARNER: I am sorry. That is true. I understand how Lawyers can think and speak. Let me leave it at that.

Sir, for the first time in Barbados' history, since the Honourable DaCosta 'Joy' Edwards, the former Representative of St. Andrew - I know of his work very well because many members of my family worked with him. For the first time in recent history this country has seen a government launch an all-out assault on the housing crisis in this country, and I do not mean verbal assault. I mean launching an attack on housing with action.

The current Minister of Housing has attacked the problem as if he were, as I described him, "a Medieval Knight on a crusade," the holy grail in this instance being a practical significant recognisable reduction in the backlog of applications now on file at the National Housing Corporation. The number has been given as 25 000 persons, but I do believe that if this list is cleaned up, meaning a check to find out if all these persons are still waiting, since some have been on the list for more than a decade, it could be we could get a truer representation of the number of Barbadians we have to service.

Sir, if Minister Lashley is providing 77 houses in 14 months, with 247 under construction, then I say play on Minister Lashley. When you look at the record under the former Government, which had all the money and resources at their disposal, more than any other Administration in the history of this country, and they could boast of 32 houses per year in the first four years, 69 a year under their second Minister, 31 in three years, from the Minister who functioned from 2003 to 2006, I could understand why the Opposition is currently perturbed by Mr. Lashley's performance.

Sir, he has finished houses in Marchfield, Four Hill, French Village and Work Hall, Greens and Constance, for middle to low-income houses in 14 months, as compared with the record of 14 years. The Minister of Housing in this country must play on.

Sir, making the accusations against the Minister in pursuing the social good, using that type of language regarding an initiative to propel lower and middle-income Barbadians upwards, is expected from a member of the Barbados Labour Party.

Sir, their philosophy is not and has never been, they understand which Government is for them and which Government is for the brand name Barbadians, the aspiring brand name Barbadians and the transplanted brand name Barbadians who look down on the working class. I urge our Minister of Housing, Lashley, to press on because the majority of high-thinking Barbadians are behind him.

However, I would wish to give the Minister of Housing some advice this afternoon, and that is to make sure he does not, under any circumstances, enter into any joint programmes with the private sector for housing in this country in the manifestation of joint programmes that were articulated by the former Government.

Sir, the former Government's joint venture housing programme was an embarrassing expensive failure and one wonders how it was allowed to continue under successive Governments and I would wish to use this opportunity, as we are going forward, to exhort the current Minister to leave it as it is articulated by the Barbados Labour Party.

I have continued to hear questions asked by former Government Members regarding this arrangement. Much was said about it in the Other Place, and one former Minister, whose performance was less than stellar, asked what had happened to it.

4.20 p.m.

I want to take some time to tell Barbados what happened to the former Government's Joint Venture Programme and to illustrate why we, as a government, in going forward have to leave it alone, if we plan to be successful.

The Programme was launched in 2002. It was supposed to be an arrangement where developers financed and undertook the infrastructural work in a number of developments. To facilitate the process, the Corporation gave developers a five-year lease, which they used as security for the infrastructural work.

With this arrangement, the developers would be reimbursed the infrastructural cost, from the sale of lots, in

respective developments. Apparently, Sir, this arrangement was entered into at a time when the NHC had no money, or very little money. The developments where the Joint Venture Programme was in place, would have been Coverley, Christ Church, Deanes Town Heights, St. James, Buckeley Meadows/Ellerton, St. George, Lancaster, St. James Phase 1, and Lancaster, and St. James Phase 3.

Sir, among the many challenges, that the Corporation, under the former Government, experienced with the developers, was the fact that many of the so-called developers had no money for these types of projects. They were as we would say, impecunious. Sir, they were broke.

They were impecunious and they were inexperienced, so they provided costing for both the infrastructural work and building that was impractical. This meant that the NHC had to spend an inordinate amount of time, negotiating sensible costs, thus delaying those projects.

The developer's lack of experience also caused extremely long delays in the start of the very infrastructural work, for all of the developments which I mentioned. This meant that considerable time overruns were encountered and, as you know, Sir, in building, contracts on the length of time before building began, and variations to the houses requested.

Some of the developers could not obtain financing for the infrastructural development, because many times if you do not have any money, or any security, then you cannot borrow money. Therefore, the NHC realised that after the contracts were signed by the developers, very little infrastructural work was done, as in Coverley and Deanes Town Heights.

Since the NHC would have to pay interest on the loans acquired by the contractors, because remember, the NHC would have had to repay the contractors the money that they would have invested in the infrastructural work, which would obviously include the interest on the loans that they had borrowed. There was no urgency on the part of the developers to complete the work and begin building.

In addition, Sir, the contract with the builders did not stipulate any specific period for infrastructural work, but rather gave the developer a five-year lease to complete the work. Actually at Coverley, Sir, the developers refused to start construction on the houses, because they said they were deep soil lots. Sir, we have also read of the concerns of the purchasers at Coverley, who were unhappy with the workmanship, from these very contractors.

What is interesting, Sir, is that the NHC had terminated contracts in other developments with some of these same builders. This is interesting.

In the long-run the NHC had to cease work at Buckeley Meadows/Ellerton, pending an Engineer's report, based on the terrible quality of work of the houses under construction, and the quality of sites that these unfortunate homeowners were sold by the previous Government.

The NHC also encountered challenges in the mortgage process. There were long delays between approval of the mortgages and disbursement to the contractors, so that if the contractor received a 10 per cent advance and began the work, he could not then continue until he received more money, because, again, the contractor was impecunious. Sir, it was a very hand-to-mouth situation, and the purchaser would have had his work delayed, until the contractor received that money.

In many cases, where the client was required to pay bridging interest, they were also paying rent and I made reference to that a couple of weeks ago, when we spoke about Buckeley Meadows/Ellerton and the terrible, terrible plights that some of these purchasers had found themselves in, so, Sir, I could go on but, I think, I have painted a very clear picture. Sir, in a nutshell, the National Housing Corporation, under the past Administration, was a germination centre for storm builders, fly-by-night contractors, who had no money and no experience.

Senator Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, on a point of order. I did not want to interrupt the Honourable Senator in her form of self-entertainment, but really, the Honourable Member is misleading the Senate.

I cannot speak to all of the contractors, but some of the contractors in that Programme were highly experienced, who had satisfactorily built houses in large projects and small projects, all over Barbados. It is true that there were some new ones who were being given an opportunity, because we felt that it was important to help small black business people. They had not done such large projects. One or two were being given an opportunity to be involved in projects of this size.

The NHC was supposed to have oversight of the project. They had project managers on their side, quantity surveyors and a whole slew of professionals, overseeing what was supposed to be done and regulating the process, as is supposed to happen, if you are the contract owner or the project owner.

Therefore, it really is an unfair characterisation, particularly to some of those Barbadians, Sir, who had considerable experience and had done good work in projects, all over Barbados. I do not think that the Senator should really, in her zeal to attack the Barbados Labour Party, be so unkind to some of those builders.

In fact, there are persons in this Chamber, who also aspired to do housing project more than once, and we were trying to give people opportunities, and there is absolutely nothing wrong with that, Sir.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Point made.

SENATOR Mrs. V.I. SANDIFORD-GARNER: Sir, there has to be a lot wrong with that, when a complete initiative can be termed a failure. Sir, from a Minister who was less than stellar in her own performance as a Minister of Housing, I would understand why she would wish to defend some of the contractors. I do not know which one she is defending, but I will stand by my point.

Asides.

SENATOR Mrs. V.I. SANDIFORD-GARNER: The Programme was a failure. The former Minister has defended those whom she feels were competent, and that is her right to defend those whom she would feel are competent, or were competent. Sir, I stand by my point that the Programme was a failure.

Mr. President, I would wish the Democratic Labour Party Government to stay clear of it, as drafted, articulated and manifested by the Barbados Labour Party.

Asides.

SENATOR Mrs. V.I. SANDIFORD-GARNER: Sir, the incompetence in the Programme was an embarrassment and it put poor people through unimaginable hardship. Therefore, I make no apologies for my stand in saying the Programme was a failure, and it is to be avoided at all cost, in its present form.

Sir, I would believe, and I understand that the contractors, hired by this Democratic Labour Party Government would be, a credible lineup, and are committed to ensuring that our Programme is continued, with very little or no embarrassment, whatsoever. Sir, committed and competent, so should we enter into the Joint Venture Programme. Let them not be with the template which we have found. Our housing programme is too vital an element of our social policy framework for it to be waylaid by an untidy, unworkable ill-conceived programme or initiative.

Sir, I would now wish to touch on Head 30 and compliment the Government for the work it is doing with the police stations in Barbados. I compliment the Attorney-General for ensuring that the Police Force is in some way recognised in this financial year.

Senator Millington yesterday, made reference to the plight of, as we call it, Barbados' men in red and black, and I wish to add my piece, Sir.

4.30 p.m.

Sir, I witnessed firsthand the deplorable conditions under which some of our policemen have to work. I remember about a year and a half ago...

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator, I do not wish to interrupt you, but I would wish you would speak about police men and women.

SENATOR Mrs. V. I. SANDIFORD-GARNER: Sir, when I say policemen, I mean women as well.

Mr. PRESIDENT: It is very difficult for me to know that when you say men, you mean women.

SENATOR Mrs. V. I. SANDIFORD-GARNER: Sir, I would understand that, but there is a Chairman who once told me that you cannot say Chairperson that you must say Chairman.

Mr. PRESIDENT: That is correct. That Chairman was absolutely right. There is a difference between a Chairperson and a Chairman. The Law usually appoints a Chairman, not a Chairperson, but we have police women and police men. There is no question about it.

SENATOR Mrs. V. I. SANDIFORD-GARNER: Not at all, Sir, there is no question about it, but I said policemen as a collective.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Now that I am fortified in that knowledge, you may continue to say policemen, and we would know that you mean men and women.

SENATOR Mrs. V. I. SANDIFORD-GARNER: Sir, this Senator of all persons would never ever forget or not understand the gender explanation that you are giving. I am quite aware of it, but it is a collective, so rest assured that I am speaking of our women as well as our men.

Sir, there were only men at the Belleplaine Police Station. That was the police station that I would have witnessed firsthand the deplorable conditions, Sir. I visited that station one afternoon and the weight of the bat droppings in the ceiling had dislodged the ceiling.

Asides.

SENATOR Mrs. V. I. SANDIFORD-GARNER: No, it is not a laughing matter. Sir, I do not think that is amusing. It was deplorable. When I arrived, the policemen who were on duty were outside in front of the road in the

garage at a table with the telephone, the log book and everything else that they would necessarily have needed. I went into the building and the stench was unbearable. I attempted to go up the stairs and an officer said to me: "Miss Sandi, do not go up those stairs. You are going to risk life and limb and I would not be responsible." I said, but, Sir, how have you worked like this? He said: "Ma'am, we have a job to do and we come to work to do our work".

Sir, not that it was any fault of mine, but I felt so embarrassed and very uncomfortable to know that these men who risk life and limb for this country should have to work in such substandard conditions.

Sir, that was not all. About eight months before, the police station had just benefitted from a so-called overhaul. They had windows that had just been retrofitted that could not shut. When I did go upstairs, they had face basins that you would see only in the pediatric ward in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. I do not know how adults could wash their faces or attend to any hygienic purposes from those sinks, but this is what they had been dealing with more than a year.

Mr. President, I also would wish to add my voice to the comment made by Senator Millington yesterday when he spoke about the lack of transportation. Notwithstanding Senator Chandler's joke, I was in an accident in January this year and I waited an hour and 15 minutes on the highway for a police patrol to come to attend to what had happened.

Mr. President, the mischief in me was afoot and I was sorely tempted to take my cell phone and call Central and tell them that somebody had been injured subsequent to the first call, but I restrained myself as a responsible citizen because I knew that they do have their constraints. When they did come, the officer explained to me they had no transportation and they had been called out to four incidences in the one hour and so I had been there. Sir, they had to go to those before they got to us because, obviously, we did not report an injury. They had domestic incidences, a robbery and an assault and they had to attend to those.

Sir, not only was there a lack of transportation, obviously there was a lack of staff which leads me to a suggestion which I think the Royal Barbados Police Force needs to take very seriously, which is that they need to embark on a very aggressive recruitment campaign outside of the annual career showcases that we have every year. When I say aggressive, I mean going to the fifth and sixth form schools and identifying young people, through guidance counsellors of the schools that have them, and asking those young people if they would be interested in a career in policing. Sir, in this way, you would plant the seed in their minds so that when they leave school they have a career option in their head.

They used to have an advertising programme going on where they would try to recruit members to the Force. I would wish them to also continue with their advertisement because the Force needs all the manpower and womanpower they could muster, and they need a few more good men and good women.

Mr. President, in conclusion, I would wish to remind the naysayers and critics of something. Yesterday, Opposition Senator Symmonds - he did not sing, and I thank him for that - said that there were more questions than answers referring to a reggae song which we are all familiar with. Mr. President, it does not fall on one man's housetop. No political party caused it and no political party at present can be responsible. At least, I should say this Government, because I would still want to lay some of the problems that we have at present at the feet of the former Government.

We have just landed, 14 months... As Sir John Stanley said yesterday, I wrote down what he said, as loyal sons and daughters, we need to put... aside. Sir, I could not have said it better myself.

Mr. President, I would wish to commend this Bill and I am thankful for your indulgence.

SENATOR the Very Reverend H. E. CRICHLAW: Mr. President, I rise to support the Appropriation Bill, 2009. The context in which these Estimates were drawn up has already been ably dealt with by the Honourable Leader of Government Business, Senator the Honourable Maxine McClean, and other Honourable Members, and needs no repetition.

Senator the Honourable Haynesley Benn, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, helped the Chamber to understand how the various figures were arrived at.

As I glance at the amount allocated to the 69 Heads, I was struck by the very modest amount that has been assigned to agriculture. I am very much aware of the history of agriculture in Barbados and its fall from its leading position as a revenue earner.

The plantation system of agriculture has been with us for over 300 years and has conditioned the thinking and acting of the vast majority of the people of Barbados. It may well take another 100 or 200 years before most Barbadians will get over the physical and psychological damage done by it. I have included the physical aspect because of the many illnesses that are still with us, because of the poor diet and the subhuman treatment our ancestors received since they did not have the status of persons, but were chattel.

The dethronement of sugar has given us a chance to develop farms and so help us to begin to get rid of the plantation mentality. In my lifetime, there has been a flight from the land by most of those who work in the sugar cane fields in the boiling sun. There has been a very smooth transferral of operations from workers to cane cutting and other machines.

4.40 p.m.

Mr. President, those who really love agriculture and its byproducts and have the physical strength to farm should be encouraged to do so. Some of those who have been working from the 4-acre agricultural lots have found that there are severe marketing problems. I am sure that the Minister would want to look into that area.

We need to start developing in our children and grandchildren a love for the soil. They must be shown how it has taken millions of years for that soil to accumulate, through the agencies of rain, sand and wind. There has been a small effort in this direction, conceived by His Excellency the Governor-General and administered by one of our Honourable Senators, Senator Dr. Frances Chandler. In one of the two creation stories in the Book of Genesis, mankind has been entrusted with the care of the earth. Today we call it ecology, the study of our home, i.e. ecos, the earth.

I was made aware that the present allocation for agriculture was related to last year's Budget. I hope that with a change of outlook about farming, a bigger sum would be given to agriculture from next year. If we are to reduce our massive food import bill, we should have to spend more on agriculture at the local level.

Mr. President, following that brief reference to our social history, I need to say that one of the consequences of it is the hatred of work among most of us. This is responsible for the small amount of work, for a large amount paid out, both by Government and the private sector.

We need to develop in our people a love for work. Work is essential to our health and well-being. Can you imagine life without anybody doing any kind of work? Mr. President, nowadays we are paid to work. There are all kinds of jobs to be done, if life is to be lived comfortably. I would want to say that all jobs should be respected. All of us cannot do the same job and that we all depend on each other.

I know it is not easy to define a just wage but we have come a long way from making it an exploit attention. At one time only employers were allowed by Law, the combination Laws in England, to meet and decide wages, salaries and working conditions of workers, and workers

could not meet to discuss their grievances, et cetera. Today, unions have to be respected and listened to.

In our Caribbean area and especially in Barbados, the white planter merchant class were able to get their inferiors to produce. Now the black workers have little respect for black employers and black supervisors. We can forget about black supervisors. Most of them know they cannot get people to work and so most of them join those whom they are paid to supervise.

We need to change our attitude to work. Barbados cannot progress very far if only a few of us are willing to work for it. Most of us want to get as much out of our country, in terms of material and other benefits, but we are not prepared to sacrifice anything for it.

The late President John F. Kennedy is remembered in his advice to Americans, to ask not what their country can do for them but what they can do for their country. Most of us do not love Barbados. We love ourselves and, sometimes, our families. Over the years, Barbados has done quite a lot for its people, despite its meagre resources. Many of our people do not appreciate what they have and so we fail to make use of the opportunities offered.

Mr. President, successive Governments have spent a large part of their budgets on education and that is responsible for the level of development we enjoy. This year's Budget of approximately \$210 million is no exception. The Government now provides free education, from nursery stage to university level. Far richer countries like the United States of America and Britain cannot afford this. Parents have to contribute to their children's education.

Over 30 years ago, I sat on a commission to review the transfer of pupils from primary to secondary schools. This Committee was chaired by Dr. Leonard Shorey. We saw how the brightest pupils were selected and prepared for the common entrance, to pass for one of the better schools. We saw too that many of the five-year-olds were not exposed to anything educational because of poverty within their families, et cetera. We recommended then that nursery schools should be established at all primary schools. It took almost 30 years to have this done. We in Barbados take a long time to do things. We have to talk about things for 20 or sometimes 30 years before we could do anything.

Mr. President, at this time, we recommended that sixth forms be taken off those schools. We have fifth form schools and we recommended that a sixth form college be built. It was the Barbados Community College that was suggested but, at that time, there were very few graduates at the fifth form schools. Now all the secondary schools are almost fully-staffed with graduates and so the

recommendation would be different, if we were doing it now.

Mr. President, I am glad to see that Foundation School and St. Michael School are getting sixth forms. They both tried at one time but then the sixth form died out at those schools. Foundation School even produced a Barbados scholar at one time.

Mr. President, we started a sixth form in 1951 or 1952 at Combermere. We did not start with science subjects, the science subject came afterwards, and that why I feel that at all of our secondary schools today we should have sixth forms. I say this because a number of the newer schools are producing students with five or more certificates at "O" Level and so instead of giving people a lot of trouble trying to get into sixth forms schools, we have enough capable staff at all the schools, to provide for sixth form education in the various subjects.

I know that science subjects would be very expensive at this time but they can all start training with those able students for university entrance requirement.

4.50 p.m.

Mr. President, the argument that was used in the early 1950s for Combermere to have a sixth form was that the Cambridge School Certificate was going out and being replaced by 'O' Levels. The Cambridge School Certificate could give those who did very well in it exemptions from the London University entrance requirements. Sir, Major Nook then pointed out to the Department of Education that if they were going to replace that certificate, they had to replace it by its equivalent. Its equivalent meant that two or more "A" Levels would have to be done. He won the argument and that is an argument that all the then secondary schools should have used, but they did not. Sir, certainly they were not allowed to go on to sixth form schools...

Mr. President, we have science teachers, for example, in all our secondary schools and some years ago, when I was an ex-officio member of the Governing Body of Harrison's College, we advertised for a science teacher and not one person in Barbados applied. I think someone from Guyana applied, but he was not selected. Sir, in the end, we had to get a science teacher from England to fill that post. Sir, all the schools have graduates in science but they are getting the same salaries as those who teach at Harrison's College but, Sir, one time that was not so. You would have teachers wanting to teach at the College but not one of them applied.

Mr. President, things have changes and people ought to know that. Sir, an education cannot be arranged around Barbados Scholarships and Barbados Exhibitions. You

have to provide for a much broader group of children. The philosophy of education that we were accustomed to has changed. At one time we thought that only certain people could receive secondary education and so on but now we live in a society where we believe that everyone is educable and our system of Government and the Budget is prepared with that in mind.

Mr. President, every child is being given the opportunity and so a lot of the pressure can be taken off children and parents. Sir, sometimes the parents have more pressure than the children because of social reasons but times have changed. There are a lot of graduates from the lower schools that are going on to be professors in Other Places and so on. Mr. President, here on the island, we know of people who went to those newer schools and are making fine contribution to the society.

Mr. President, we need to have a change of mindset when it comes to our secondary schools and so on. If we had sixth forms established at all those schools, there would be less anxiety among the children and parents.

Mr. President, our university is now moving to the stage where it wants to do a lot of research. Sir, it is at the university that frontiers of knowledge is pushed back and our university is now reaching that stage and that means that we have to cultivate those who really love knowledge.

At present, people get university degrees mainly to make more money. The difference between a non-graduate and a graduate is so great in the salary scale that it is sensible to go and earn a degree, but some graduates never read a book after they have left the university. Those are the graduates that do not have a love of knowledge.

Mr. President, we go to the university to be helped to discover truth. It is just going to get a degree to get more money. Those who are going on to research, have to have a love of truth and they have to follow the evidence.

Mr. President, all this makes a person more humble. Some people feel that because they have higher degrees and so on, that they know everything and that is really a sign that they do not know much because the higher you go in academic knowledge, the less you see that you know and you wonder whether you know anything at all.

Mr. President, we need to cultivate young people who have a love of knowledge. The motto of our university is: (16:57:58) that is, light rising from the west and light rising out of the west can only be done if the post graduates work very hard if they are concerned with truth and if they are concerned with building their societies. We were told at our freshman's conference, we were told that it did not matter what kind of degree we got at the university. What was important was what we did with it after we left the

university, that is, the contribution we were prepared to make to the society in which we live. Sir, that is what we were told. It is not a matter of getting a degree to get more money. It was a matter of seeking truth and also helping others to find truth.

I remember my Principal in England calling graduates over the coals for this. He had just got his degree and said he heard somebody talking nonsense and that he could not care less. The Principal asked him if he had heard someone saying something wrong and if he could not care less and we have just given you a degree. He told him that he had to care because that is what knowledge was about. You cannot just hear people saying things that you know to be false and decide that you could not care less. Mr. President, we need this kind of development in the West Indies.

5.49 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. PRESIDENT: This Sitting is Resumed.

Senator Walters.

SENATOR Hon. A.B. WALTERS: Thank you, Sir,

Mr. President, I rise to speak in this debate in support of the passage of this Appropriation Bill, for the period 2009-2010. Mr. President, over the last three days, I attended a series of meetings at the ILO Governing Body in Geneva and on Monday, the President of the International Monetary Fund addressed the Governing Body on issues arising from the global, financial and economic crisis, affecting the world at this time, and the impact those prices will have on employment and labour issues.

Mr. President, I want to focus on some of the labour, employment, immigration, technical and vocational training, service excellence through NISE and GIVE BACK, the status of labour legislation and the social partnership. Those areas, I would hope to cover in the time allotted to me today.

5.51 p.m.

SENATOR the Hon. A. B. WALTERS: Mr. President, the Ministry of Labour's mandate speaks to introducing into Parliament new legislation on employment rights to cover all employed persons in the workforce. The consultative process for the Social Partners and other stakeholders has resumed. This piece of contemporary legislation should be available for parliamentary debate in the second quarter of this year. Some of the recent dismissals in Barbados can only be described as unfortunate in the absence of modern legislation which

clearly proposes that some forms of dismissal are unfair. We currently speak of wrongful dismissals in our environment.

In my view, all Barbadian employees require at a minimum a written contract of service. It is also proposed in Protocol 5, that there should be a written statement of particulars, that there should be a contract of service, and that all employees should have access through a disciplinary process where the rules are clear. There is also a process for the determination of a contract with an appeal process and the ability to be heard by an employment tribunal who may determine if you are fairly or unfairly dismissed.

Mr. President, the Ministry is currently working with the Social Partners on revising the Shop (Amendments) Order and the Shop (Amendments) Act with a view to modernising aspects of employment in the retail sector. Mr. President, as part of the Government's Throne Speech in February 2008, the Ministry submitted a number of amendments to the Attorney-General's Chambers with a view to modernising some aspects of this legislation.

Mr. President, with regard to the matter of a national minimum wage, there are proposals to set up a Minimum Wage Board outside of the existing Wages Council which essentially deals with the wages of shop assistants under the Shops Act. That Wages Council is due to report to the Minister of Labour in the very near future.

Mr. President, the Labour Department Act, Cap. 24, states that the Labour Department under the leadership of the Chief Labour Officer has responsibility for the enforcement of labour and employment legislation including the monitoring of occupational safety and health standards; the provision of conciliation services in industrial relations disputes; the Administration of an Employment Bureau and the provision of employment guidance services; and advising Government, through the Minister, employers and workers, in all labour matters.

Mr. President, let me spend a few minutes on these responsibilities, since in the next few years, and certainly in the immediate future these matters, including the enforcement of employment Law and labour standards, would come under severe challenge in the recessionary period.

Mr. President, whereas in the last 60 years, officers were asked, in a limited way, to enforce and prosecute using the existing legislation, such as the Shops Act, the Factories Act, the Holiday with Pay Act, the Protection of Wages, the Employment of Women Act, Maternity Leave Act, et cetera, the penalties are in some cases exceedingly low and not in line with international standards.

The introduction of the Employment Rights legislation brings with it a new set of statutory provisions which would require a new type of enforcement and management since it moves away from consultation and conciliation to firms of arbitration and the setting up of tribunals.

Mr. President, the distinction must be made that there is a distinct difference between the prosecution of employment right matters, which deals with the individual employee's contract relationship with his employer and the dispute resolution machinery available in employment relations and industrial relations, which is now the... and the preferred operational mode is in the case... is the use of conciliation in Barbados. There were other methods which have been tried in other jurisdictions such as mediation and an attempt was made last year to set up a number of mediation panels. Those panels have met and are at the point of delivering positions to the Minister. There is the methodology of arbitration as is set out in the Trade, Disputes, Arbitration and Tribunal Act. There is alternative dispute resolution. Maybe, as in the proposed Employment Rights Legislation, we should develop a series of tripartite tribunals to deal with any difficult and/or complex employment relations disputes. The training, retraining and retooling of all of our human resource practitioners, especially in the public sector, may result in a realignment of our disputes resolution machinery in employment relations in the very near future.

In essence, what I am saying is that there are a number of new people coming out of the University who have now made the specialisation in Human Resource Management and Employment Relations their profession. It may mean that the persons who have worked in the Public Service either in the Ministry of Civil Service or within the Labour Department may have to attain similar qualifications to be able to deal with some of the new complex matters.

Mr. President, I want to move away slightly from the Labour Department to the question of safety and health management because it is one of the more expensive areas where management fails to conduct its affairs properly, and they are open to all kinds of legal recourse. Safety and health at the workplace continues to be a challenge in the public and private sector workplaces. It is a challenge because sometimes there is not enough information that is given either to employers, or to the employees, who would be affected by the very safety and health issues that they work with.

6.00 p.m.

Mr. President, the Safety and Health Section of the Labour Department will continue to undertake its core activities in the factory and industrial sectors and continue

its public awareness and educational programmes in non-factory workplaces.

With the assistance of the International Labour Organisation, a number of new technical assistance programmes are being put in place, to allow for the proclamation of Safety and Health at Work Act, the ratification of the Safety and Health Conventions, which we have not ratified and which certainly, we would be able to compete in some of the modern environments in trying to get our goods sold, that is one of the new questions that is being posed to employers.

There is also the new trading initiatives which are aimed at enhancing management and employee capabilities in the increasingly expensive area of employment.

Mr. President, among some of the things I would wish to see and, certainly, that are proposed for 2009/2010 are: that:

1. an awareness programme will concentrate on matters dealing with the duty of care of employers and of employees;
2. the need for the undertaking of risk assessments, while employers are putting new systems, new equipment and new plant in place, so that there is an appreciation of the risk or hazards the workers may be confronted with;
3. there is improved training and supervision of managers, supervisors and employees; and
4. there is a need for better information.

Mr. President, I suspect part of our culture now has to say that the view which says that the information which concerns issues to do with safety and health is public information, as opposed to private information.

5. there must be a much higher level of communication and there must be better consultation.

Mr. President, one of the provisions of either the

Factories Act or the Safety and Health Act, is that there is a notion of consultation where Safety Committees, where there are more than 50 employees in the company, as in the case of the Factories Act, or 25 employees in the case of the proposed Safety and Health at Work Act, where management and employees of equal numbers sit in committees and discuss matters of safety and health. Sir, that consultation is not to be seen as a negotiation in the same way as industrial relations or collective bargaining, but as a consultation on matters which begin to affect the workers in those workplaces.

Mr. President, I now move to employment services because this is an area that we are going to have some severe challenges. When I looked at the television over the last three days in Geneva, when I read the English papers - The Times, The Observer and The Independent - the news is frightening.

Certainly, in the United Kingdom, the numbers I saw were like 365 000 people losing jobs in a very short period, either quarterly or monthly. I cannot contemplate that in the Barbadian scheme of things, since our population is about 275 000. That is the scale of the unemployment problem that we have.

Mr. President, in terms of our employment services, the National Employment Bureau proposes to enhance the local employment service component during the recessionary period, through the registration of unemployed persons, in conjunction with the National Insurance Scheme, at the point of the persons registering for unemployment benefit, where they have been displaced through redundancy or other forms of termination.

The Bureau will develop programmes for employers, links with education and training institutions, including the Barbados Vocational Training Board, the TVET Council, the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic, et cetera, and develop a series of remedial programmes for persons who are deficient in basic literacy and numeracy skills, to re-enter the job market. That is to say we still have problems out there with literacy and numeracy.

A lot of emphasis in the National Employment Bureau is currently paid to the external employment programme, which is experiencing minimal growth in the Canadian Farm Labour Programme, as Canadian farmers on the East Coast have advised that there is strong competition from non-traditional sources of fruit and agricultural products. In fact, they are saying, there are occasions when we produce the product, there is no point in trying to sell it at the prices the retailers want to purchase it at.

Our numbers have been reduced significantly because originally when we got involved in the Farm Labour Programme, most of our workers went to pick tobacco. Tobacco is almost a non-seller in Canada, except for a black market and, therefore, we have lost quite a bit of the numbers that we would have sent to the Canadian Farm Labour Programme. If we cannot send them to Canada, we have to ask, are we going to have jobs in Barbados for them in that same skill area?

Mr. President, the other component of the external programme has to do with the fact that we are involved in the H2B Programme in the United States of America and in the Canadian Hotel Programme on the East Coast of

Canada and a low-skills programme. Sir, despite the challenges, we still appear to be maintaining some of our numbers and we are picking up a few in numbers.

Sir, I would also have to remind this Honourable Chamber that the unemployment rate in Canada, on the East Coast, has been rising steadily, certainly since August last year.

Mr. President, there is, therefore, a need to provide employers in those markets with workers who have good skills, with good attitudes and aptitudes in a challenging environment. We have had the experience recently where I was able to convince a farmer to take on an additional 12 persons on his farm. Sir, within two days, two out of those 12 persons were back in Barbados.

Mr. President, I would want to say that if you go and convince an employer to give you some additional numbers and then you send people who do not have neither the skill, attitude nor aptitude to work in that environment, however hard it may appear to those employers at that particularly time, and people fall out of the programme, remember when I go later in the year, I am not going to be able to convince anybody that they should be hiring additional people. Therefore, that is going to add to our unemployment numbers.

Mr. President, the Barbados Vocational Training Board is a training arm of the Barbados Government and administers the four major programmes:

1. The Apprenticeship Programme, coming out of the Occupational Training.

Sir, apprenticeship programmes in Barbados have not done well within the last 10 years. Maybe it is part of our cultural problem in relation to how we deal with education.

6.10 p.m.

Sir, part of our cultural problem in relation to how we deal with education is that education in some cases, takes on an elitist type position and, therefore, some of our brighter people - although they tell me that even in the professions, you have to serve as an apprenticeship. They tell me that the apprenticeship in the legal profession is about five years, then probably any five years before you could get a job as a magistrate, judge or some junior position in that profession. Certainly, in medicine, dentistry and the other professions, there are forms of apprenticeship.

Mr. President, a number of people have been relegated to a large extent to an apprenticeship programme because, in our view, they had not done very well at school. Sir, maybe that is an incorrect position to take. There are

new areas of employment where one would be well-advised to serve an apprenticeship of five years.

The Vocational Training Board now certainly, has to take on, in the Government's view, a new role of retraining and retooling of our workforce as people come out of the workforce because either jobs or products that have traditionally been involved in, have disappeared and new opportunities appear on the horizon, then these apprenticeship programmes would be important for us.

Mr. President, one would have thought, certainly with the construction boom, the Skills Training Programme would have been our saviour in producing enough carpenters, masons, steel benders, electricians, plumbers and the like. Sir, wearing another hat, one of the things I am seeing almost on a daily basis is that a large number of the major construction companies have had to go out of the Barbadian space and attract people from overseas to get their construction finished because there are no available Barbadians with the skills to perform those jobs.

Mr. President, therefore, we have to, as part of our retraining and retooling, get people, as they come out of the workforce through redundancy, to go into the Skills Training Programme, and our emphasis has to be forward-thinking.

Mr. President, the In-plant Training Programme begins to look at a number of specialist areas and there is a component of the evening part-time study programme in skills. Sir, a number of persons take up these opportunities to acquire different skills.

Mr. President, part of the new remit given to the years of the Vocational Training Board is to identify the new skill areas and to retrain, and retool any Barbadian who has been displaced in the recessionary period with skills to allow for the working of this population to be able to complete in the future. I think we cannot look at the present. I think we have to look at what are our future areas.

Mr. President, the new courses to be offered in 2009/2010, are autotronic; auto finishing, furnishing and woodwork machining. We would have thought that we would have had a core of persons who could do furniture, woodwork and cabinet making. Sir, that is still an area where there is still some deficiency.

Mr. President, greenhouse technology. I am sure that the Minister of Agriculture, who is sitting next to me in the Senate, certainly would be glad to hear there is some training in an agricultural area of greenhouse technology. We hope that some young people would take that up as a course.

Mr. President, it is also proposed to conduct an in-plant training programme in fluid and air power maintenance. They tell me that the new vehicles deal with transmission, whereas the older vehicles deal with gearboxes and carburetors and that the new fluid and air power technology needs maintenance technicians and that they are firms in the Caribbean, that are skilled in training persons in that area.

Secondly, electrical power generation systems maintenance. Sir, those are two of the new areas that the in-plant scheme will concentrate on.

Mr. President, in the years, the Vocational Training Board is in the process of reviewing its Apprenticeship Programme by way of upgrading a number of these programmes. Sir, part of the review must challenge young persons from all walks of life and different education capacities, to join the new technological workforce and allow Barbados to compete in the future.

Mr. President, the second plant of technical and vocational training falls under TVET, which has as its mandate, preparing the Barbadian economy for the future; helping to close Barbados' productivity gap with its Regional and international competitors and contributing to social inclusion. Sir, those are the four major areas under the Ministry of Labour.

Mr. President, the Ministry of Labour also has responsibility for two important programmes, which would make the difference in the way in which we sell our services. One is called GIFT, which would deal more particularly with the Public Service and how we market our services to our internal and external customers and NICE, which is part of the Social Partnership and which begins to look at this whole concept of the National Initiatives of Service Excellence, where the expectation is that coming out of the recessionary period we will have a force of such quality that is able to provide such service excellence that our goods and services would be certainly superior than most of our Regional competitors and, therefore, we should have some competitive edge out of the NICE position.

Mr. President, NICE has just been handed to the Ministry of Labour, out of the Ministry of the Civil Service and there are a number of programmes, which they are certainly looking to put on during 2009/2010. There is training for front-line employees in the tourism sector and that, certainly, is an area that is going to be important to us.

If we fail at the point of contact, either at immigration, at retail stores, at the bars and restaurants and Other Places that provide services to those persons who are coming to visit our country and the service is not excellent, I would think that you would then have to ask yourself the question: Is that person going to be returning to your shores

because there are other destinations out there, who in some cases, offer much better service and much lower prices?

Mr. President, there is the customer service training mainly in retail and other services.

6.20 p.m.

There is national certification. NISE has teamed up with TVET and is now able to offer National Vocational Qualifications in Customer Service, and the first batch of persons who qualify under the NVQs would have graduated in early February, 2009.

Sir, there is also a programme where NISE is working with the schools. My remit to NISE, if you are going to work with schools on orientation is to work workshops. You need to go into all of the educational institutions. There is no point entering only those institutions where you believe that persons graduating will work primarily in the retail trade.

Maybe, you may miss a few at the fourth or fifth forms, what I would term in the senior secondary schools, but they need to know that when they get to the world of work, there is a certain level of service excellence that has to be provided. If you do not have the training then, maybe you need to have the training when you come out of University of the West Indies, or some other university, before you enter the workforce, because you may come into contact at that level with customers. In my view, every student in Barbados must come into contact with orientation through work workshops.

Sir, there are a number of other programmes including bench-marking studies. They will be lucky to have bench-marking study for the Public Service during the course of this year. That is in an area where we have some difficulty. Even at the level of dealing with local customers, there is concern about the way some services are provided to customers. No one wants to call an office to be on the other end of a telephone for 10 to 15 minutes before someone answers, and when you get an answer you are told, "Miss 'Ding Lu' en here", even at financial institutions.

Sir, one of the horror stories I experienced earlier in the year is, I drove into the Ministry of Transport and Works to do some business with the Licencing Department. There were probably 300 or 400 people in front of me, that is at 8.00 a.m., and some of them would have been waiting there until 12.30 p.m. or so, to get their business done. I do not think that is the way we should be doing business in 2009. We need to understand there is a level of service that must be available to the Barbadian taxpayer.

On the Social Partnership, I think I need to mention a few things. Quite a lot of work has been done in 2008/2009. You may not think so, but a fair amount of work has been done within the Social Partnership. There have been some changes on the Government Side, but that has not reduced the volume of work which has been produced by that institution. The Social Partnership, certainly, is going to become more critical, as we attempt to deal with some of the recessionary pressures in this community over the next year or so.

Recently the Social Partnership Consultation on the Economy, coming out of that consultation would have been the position of setting up a group of economic advisors who would look at the various issues on the economy. They are expected to meet at least once monthly and if there are other emergency issues, to meet at short notice. The Social Partnership, certainly, is one of those tripartite institutions that if allowed to work in the manner in which it was set up, and the respective institution reacts to the input in good time, then we should have very few fears about how we are going to deal with some aspects of the recession.

Within the last few months the Social Partnership, used that model to deal with issues coming to the fore. That Social Partnership made up of the trade unions and the Private Sector Association, certainly, has the opportunity to make significant inputs.

Sir, I want to make the point that I am getting slightly concerned about one of the partners. For a few months I noticed that there was very good participation on the part of the Barbados Private Sector Association. I noticed that within the last few weeks that level of participation has been reduced, somewhat, and there seems to be some conflict among the membership of that Association.

It would be nice if they could attend, as a body, as opposed to fragmentation among the membership. It would be nice if they would turn up to the meetings with a common position to deal with tourism, to deal with manufacturing, to deal with agriculture and to deal with international business as opposed to very singular positions, which they appear to have.

There are funds available for Barbados to do some work in its human resource development. There have been some discussion on the negotiations for the economic framework. That will probably have more prominence in the period going forward.

We have looked at the Shops Order, 2008, and we are at the point, certainly in dealing with the discussions of the Shop Order, where they will be ready to be signed off within the next month.

The revision to the Shops' Order may need almost a transformation to what we expect of shops in Barbados over the next few years, because it is likely that we will be going towards a 24-hour environment, but that is going to pose some challenges for a number of operators and there are going to be conditionalities placed on those businesses that would wish to avail themselves of the opportunity to work in that 24-hour operation.

The business of transportation after regular bus services, the provision of lunch rooms and restrooms and the business of child care facilities - In other jurisdictions, people who normally work the midnight shift are students, packing shelves. Very few people will go to the mega supermarkets, except probably on weekends. The distinction probably has to be made when a shop is open to customers and when shop assistants can operate within the shop to do cleaning, restocking and the like.

Sir, there are other issues which would have come up at the Social Partnership.

6.30 p.m.

One of those issues which came up prematurely, at the social partnership, was the question of the layoffs at the Windward Contact Centre, which is a union, and appears under a separate protocol. Sometimes there is no point trying to rush out of the domestic space to the social partnership, and that matter was referred back to the unions. This is likely to come to a conclusion, I would think, in the next few days.

The other area that we have had some discussion on, would be the Holiday with Pay Act. There are many provisions under the Holiday with Pay Act, which certainly need a review, to bring Barbados into the 21st Century, in the way in which we deal with holidays with pay. This matter has now gone to the Attorney-General's office so that we should have some work to do on that.

One of the areas that, certainly, would have caused us some concern very early in the year, and was a carry-forward item out of 2007, was the matter of the Louis Lynch Secondary School, and the closure of the closure of Louis Lynch Secondary School.

The decision of the social partners was that Louis Lynch would no longer be used as a school. The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of the Environment would undertake further tests before making a decision on the further use of the building, and the Government would make sure that the working conditions for public servants are as good or better, than those in the private sector.

Asides.

SENATOR Hon. A.B. WALTERS: Mr. President, I want to spend a few minutes on immigration. The mission statement of the Immigration Department says: To maintain the integrity of the borders of Barbados at the ports of entry, and to ensure that persons permitted to enter, abide by the Immigration Laws.

We are currently in the process of reviewing the Immigration Policy, and proposals are currently in existence for legislative reform. It is likely that within the next few days, we will make a ministerial statement on the issue of undocumented CARICOM workers. Sir, that will come before this Chamber, shortly.

There are issues with the office security. Within the last three months or so, almost one day in every week, there is a bomb threat or some other kind of threat to the officers in the Immigration Department. It means that there is a level of disruption, because the safety concern would be the moment somebody says there is a bomb scare, there is only one thing that you are going to do. Get out of the building.

I remember there was an experience not too far away from here, where one in one of the banks, a young lady decided that there were having so many bomb scares, she was going to sit down, and she was disciplined very severely for that, because on that one occasion, it could have been a genuine bomb scare.

I have lived in an environment where when the IRA was at its worst, and when you heard, bomb scare, the best thing to do if you could have get close to your car, was get into your car and get to your house. It would take the authorities probably three or four hours, having blocked off everything around the place, because you never knew in London, which day was going to be the real day for the bomb. Therefore, if you hear a bomb scare, you get out of the place because, invariably, probably once a week, there would be a genuine bomb scare, in which somebody would have gotten injured. This is something that we need to look at, Sir.

The proposal is that we try to put some security measures in place. There is one other proposal, which I would have put to the Department, and it is to move the senior officers out of the operational building, but they are not necessarily too keen on that, particularly.

We need to improve the skills of the officers individually, and strengthen the capacity of the department to function as a team, by providing ongoing training in all areas, including the use of technology as a tool to enhance and improve job performance, meaning that we have to train some people.

We have some young people there, who are good officers, but we need to be constantly training them to keep on the cutting edge of the technologies, and recognise that it is not business as usual. There is a great deal of terrorism all over the world to which we need to pay particular attention.

To improve revenue collection, Sir, among the things that we have done over the last three months, is to make sure that if there was any backlog in certain areas of the business of the Immigration Department, that we remove some of those impediments.

It appears that the revenue has risen from about \$9 million, to more than \$10 million last year. There is a fair bit of work still to be done in relation to areas of citizenship, immigrant status, especially short-term work permits, and CARICOM skill national matters. Sir, we are trying to get on top of those matters.

We are also trying to get a customer friendly face at the ports. I have spent some time both at the airport and the sea port, to see how best we can begin to improve some of the mechanisms which we have in place. There are many things that we can do, and we have started to look at those matters.

Some of the challenges arise out of our 2000-2007 challenge to do with a backlog of applications for our various forms of status, which were created as a result of Cricket World Cup 2007, when most of the available resources were mobilised during this period.

There was also an increase in the number of persons who overstayed their welcome, as a result of the single domestic space, implemented by Cricket World Cup 2007. Persons who were travelling Regionally were permitted to enter without being checked by Immigration Officers, and this meant that there were no proper records of entry and departure, and entry cards were poorly completed, or not completed at all.

There was a free-for-all in 2007 that is now causing us some difficulty. Sometimes you cannot find the people. Sometimes you only find the people when they do something wrong. Therefore, there are issues, so as much we want to make sure that there are some things in place, there are issues arising out of some of the arrangements we would have made at Cricket World Cup 2007.

6.40 p.m.

As much as we want to make sure that there are some things in place, there are issues arising out of some of the arrangements we would have made at Cricket World Cup.

Mr. President, I think I have covered most of the areas that I have particular interest in. There was only one other area that probably concerns me, that really has to do with how we are going to manage down the road, probably in another year or two, employment and unemployment, poverty and the whole business of the safety net to ensure that not many people slip through the safety net. It is an area that the Social Partnership as well as the National Insurance Board, along with the Ministry of Labour, would have to put their minds to.

Mr. President, one of the concerns that I have to ask the Ministry of Labour officers to put their mind to is the tie-in between the Ministry of Labour and the National Insurance Department when persons turn up to register as being unemployed. I think we have to get back to a system where once the National Employment Bureau is able to identify a job in the community for you, and it is deemed to be a suitable alternative, that it would be mandatory for you to go to that particular position.

Mr. President, what has developed over the last 20 years, which simply is a very common position among most employees who have been made redundant, is that they are going to stay home for the next six months. In the current circumstances, I am not sure how many people would do that, but if they look at the experience of what is happening out there in the wider world, when you get made redundant, you must remember that you might have tied up yourself in some debt, you might have a mortgage or rent to pay, and you might have your children to take to school or whatever. We may have to find very creative ways of putting people back in employment.

Mr. President, with that short intervention, I support the Appropriation Bill.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 7.40 p.m. today.

The question that the Sitting do now suspend until 7.40 p.m. today was put and agreed to, and Mr. PRESIDENT suspended the Sitting accordingly.

6.50 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. PRESIDENT: This Sitting is now resumed. Senator Crichtlow.

SENATOR the Very Reverend H. E. CRICHLLOW: Mr. President, on a point of privilege. The point of privilege is about the referral of the matter that came up

earlier, referring to the Committee of Privileges. I do not know, we have never had one before and I wanted to say that I did not notice that Senator Thompson was absent from this Honourable Chamber in an unusual matter. I am not aware of that.

Mr. President, I am saying that since I have been in here, I have never noticed that Senator Thompson was absent without leave, so to speak, from this Chamber. When I read it this morning, I was very surprised. I know you have already ruled on it but I felt that I ought to say that. I do not know if I would be called on at the Committee of Privileges to say anything. I thank you.

Her Honour SENATOR Miss K. F. IFILL: Mr. President, I rise in support of the Appropriations Bill 2009. Sir, I do not propose to detain this Honourable Chamber long by any wandering discourse, or by anything that proposes to go over ground that has been so well covered. The Leader of Government Business has been complimented continually, and rightly so, on the manner in which she has already spoken on the current global crisis in terms of economics.

Sir, like the Leader of Government Business, I never fancied Economics as a subject. I cannot pretend to understand anything with finance too well, except what is in and out of my bank account, in relation to paying bills and so I will just say that I do not think the public needs to be reminded of the challenges that we are facing. Anyone who has ears to hear, eyes to see, and a brain to calculate, would know that we have challenges.

Sir, I am assured by these Estimates that our Government continues to be aware of the proper fiscal management and will, therefore, not spend money in any strange, outlandish or irresponsible manner. Therefore, I do not need to continue on that point.

Mr. President, I do not also propose to speak on housing, not because it is not important, I think it is vital. The reason I do not propose to go on about it is that evidence is clear that Government is committed to providing proper housing, at a speedy rate. Therefore, I do not think the public needs to be reminded of that either. People only have to take up today's edition of The Nation Newspaper and they would see what wonderful work is being done in Country Park Towers, at Marchfield and at the Other Places. Therefore, I do not need to go on about that either.

Mr. President, I will spend a brief moment though, speaking on drainage because that is a matter, I think, all Barbadians have had some challenges with in the past. Sir, I remember about three years ago sitting at work, at 3.00 p.m. on a rainy Friday afternoon. Sir, knowing I had to leave at 4.00 p.m., I decided I would order a taxi early.

Well, Sir, I thought I was early at 3.00 p.m. Imagine my shock when the poor guy did not make it until 6.00 p.m. He did not make it to me at 4.00 p.m. because flooding was so bad in Bridgetown that he had been creeping along from 3.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m. to get to me. It was bad that I got home at 8.00 p.m., a journey that only takes me 15 minutes, so much so that the taxi drivers changed in midstream.

It was the most alarming thing to me. I am sitting there, one driver pops out and another pops in. Mr. President, therefore, I am extremely thrilled to see somebody is finally doing something in this country, so that people are not stranded in traffic for such long hours on rainy afternoons when the roads are treacherous and we do not need to be out there.

Mr. President, I do propose, however, to speak on a matter that is dear and near to my heart, that is our policy with regards to social care. It pleases me greatly to see that in this year's Estimates we have in excess of \$79 million allocated to this Ministry, an increase over last year's allocation.

This is a Ministry whose responsibility lies greatly in keeping the social order in Barbados in good state. We have many challenges with our vulnerable people in Barbados - the disabled and others - and I think that a Ministry such as this is more than vital.

I am very pleased to see that we are finally giving some serious attention to some situations that have for a long time gone, I would not say unattended but little heeded. It pleases me much to see that there is an allocation for the National Disabilities Unit, which has been increased. Their allocation is an increase in excess of up to \$2 500 000. Mr. President, persons with disabilities in this country have many, many challenges.

Asides.

Her Honour SENATOR Miss K. F. IFILL: No, Sir, not me, I do not have any challenges. I have a few but not that many. But these challenges are not limited to the provision of ramps, bathrooms and such only. There are many, other challenges. Sir, it is my hope that with this increased allocation, the Unit continues to expand its work in the area in which it has been working for a long time.

There are many agencies which have worked on behalf of persons with disabilities, one of which is the Barbados Council for the Disabled, which is also mentioned in the Estimates this year. This Council has worked long and hard to ensure that persons with disabilities are accorded their due rights and status in society. It pleases me to see that our Government continues to take the needs of persons like myself seriously. It speaks not just of lip service of wanting to be inclusive, but to real

action in moving forward the policy of inclusion, and that pleases me greatly.

Mr. President, however, there are some other challenges that I would like to see attended to. For example, unfortunately, many persons with disabilities live on very slim means. They have very limited budgets, employment is difficult in the best of times, employment is almost impossible for persons with disabilities in challenging times.

Therefore, it pleases me too to see that we are increasing our job opportunities through medical transcription and since this is a field that internationally offers persons with very many challenges, I am sure that this would be continued here in Barbados, as we continue to lead the way in providing for our vulnerable citizens.

Mr. President, I would want to say that it is more than that. Sir, too often many of our persons with disabilities are left to live on welfare, through no fault of their own. They have a challenge and they have no other means of gaining employment and gaining an income. Sir, I would love to see the day when we would provide a disability living allowance. It is not provided for in these Estimates as yet, but I am sure that our Minister will continue to examine such policies and would look to them realistically.

7.50 p.m.

Thursday, March 26, 2009

Mr. President, it is important for us to recognise that education plays a vital role in moving persons with disabilities and our nation forward. Sir, again it pleases me greatly when I look into these serious Estimates to see that we have an increase up to \$297 million for education. The allocation to Special Needs Education has increased by 100 per cent from \$1 million to \$2 million and, Sir, I think that is fantastic. It speaks to all the policies we plan to bring on stream, increasing interaction with our parent support groups, working towards providing better educational technology and providing more wide-ranging scope of education in terms of special needs.

Mr. President, I am extremely pleased as well to see that the Challenor Creative Arts and Training Centre is again given a realistic budget. Sir, for too long, that institution was left to languish on a very limited budget. They repeatedly cried out. They have repeatedly spoken. They wrote. They did everything they possibly could to get their budget increased so that they could increase the programmes they have there.

Mr. President, they provide training for adults with disabilities. They provide education for children with

special needs and in this year's Budget, their allocation has also increased and, Sir, that is extremely good.

Mr. President, I think that I do not need to go on to point out how committed we are to ensuring that things are going well in terms of when we look at the needs of our society.

Mr. President, under Health Care, we have an extremely... I do not know what word to use but I do not want to use the word "generous" because I think no matter how generous our budget is, we will never be able to fully cover all our health requirements. However, Barbados continues to lead the way in providing good health care.

Mr. Speaker, yes, we have challenges at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital but, Sir, they did not start yesterday. They did not start last year. They will not end tomorrow. They will not end next year. They will continue but what is important is that we continue to take a meaningful and realistic look at the policies implemented. We cannot continue to just blame this one person or the other person, nor we cannot say it is because the wrong person was put in this place. What we will do is realistically move ahead with policies and programmes at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital to put it into better stead.

Mr. President, yes, a new hospital was called for by one of our Senators yesterday, and others made mention of it but we cannot simply focus on putting a new hospital and leaving the old one to languish.

Mr. President, looking at these Estimates shows our commitment to ensuring that what health care we have already would be conducted at the highest standard, and we will look at moving forward and improving the situation.

Mr. President, I think it is important for all of us to recognise the role we all have to play in moving these things forward. I know that we spoke at length in a previous session on the Constituency Councils and, at that time, I called on the Barbadian public to play their part. I, again, reiterate my point that we cannot do it alone and that we need everybody to do it together.

Mr. President, there are times that we will not agree. There are times that some of us, sitting on either side, will look at each other and wonder why we said what we said but, Sir, I think people like us, people who have the best interest of a country at heart, would recognise the value of the contribution of others and involve them. Sir, that is what this Government continues to do, involve all people.

Therefore, Sir, with those few words, I have had no trouble in supporting these Estimates and I am obliged to you.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Thompson.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Thank you very much, Mr. President. Sir, during the course of the day there have been some very interesting observations and points made. One of which has stuck with me was, perhaps, the singular truth spoken by the Honourable Seantor Inniss during the course of her comments, which was that Barbados is revered. Sir, Barbados is revered, not accidentally, but because, over the course of the last 14 years, the Government pursued a policy direction which allowed us to stand head and shoulders above other sister islands in the Caribbean, and to be compared favourably with developed and developing countries in the world. Yet, the Honourable Senator suggested that life support and medication and other medical support have to be supplied to an ailing Barbados.

Mr. President, the reality is, Sir, that, if insofar as there is a patient, the patient became unwell after January 15, 2008, moreover, the Democratic Labour Party is the wrong doctor, with no prognosis and without appropriate medication to deal with the woes and the illnesses which they have inflicted.

Mr. President, I do not say this lightly. I accept that we are in difficult economic times and nobody would deny that.

8.00 p.m.

What I have not heard today is a connection between what is wrong in the world and in the country and how the Government proposes to establish buffers, safety nets and mechanisms, to give support to wider Barbados and those who are under pressure. I have not seen or heard that. Sir, I came in early, came straight, virtually from the Airport making one stop and sat with the Estimates and started to read through the document Head by Head.

Sir, let me give the perspective as I see it. Having gone through the Estimates in the Lower House and the Upper House, virtually complete, I do not think that the average Barbadian can feel certain or confident that mechanisms have been in place to save his job; that the promises made in the Manifesto and the Throne Speech of 2008 are seriously pursued and fulfilled, or that there is a national response to a global economic situation such as would allow Barbadians to feel confident that the Government knows what it is doing, has a clear direction for the Government, or, in fact, has included in the Estimates the resources which can carry the country safely forward, given the international economic turbulence.

Sir, it is a great concern, therefore, that critical issues relative to how the Government has to shape its macro economic policy and, in fact, its national policy framework,

do not at all appear to have been addressed, and that after 15 plus months the focus of the Government is still on cursing the former Administration.

I would have thought that emerging from the speeches today there would have been an excitement and a plethora of recommendations about the new policies that they are coming with, some of which they promised and some of which they would have formulated subsequent to winning the Government. Instead, I am disappointed, because that is what I was listening for.

Sir, in January 2008, when the Government came to office, the international economy was already in a serious significant slide, if not depression. The sub prime market in the United States had already started crumbling, and it was clear that if the situation accelerated, that other components of the economy would be dragged in as well.

It seems to me, and I agree when the Government said that nobody could have at the time anticipated the collapse of AIG and some of the big international United States institutions. What happened? The Government came in, the Throne Speech, which was to develop the platform on which the Government's policies would have been developed, never at any time connected with the international economic realities.

We then went on to a Budget in July, which taxed all of the productive sectors of the economy, made it more expensive for a woman to have a small shop, for people to live, work, engage in professional careers, die, and have recreation. Sir, if you were riding a bicycle the Budget of July sought to tax you considerably. If you wanted to have a small shop to improve your circumstances, or if you had a motor car, there was no area of economic activity which was spared the cudgel, I would not call it a holocaust yet of the Government.

The July Budget again did not make any contact with the international realities. It put us in a position, rather than giving support to the productive sectors, generating and stimulating activity at the macro and micro levels in the economy, it put us in a position where, if you thought of the economy at the top of a precipice, the ground under it started to slip and it would head downward quickly.

Sir, then, when there was a call on the Government to, at least, have some dialogue with the country in relation to where it wanted to go, the National Economic Consultation never came until September/October, so that there was an absence of measures needed to help stabilise the economy and stave off the worse effects of the international situation.

Sir, I say that, bearing in mind that post 9/11, the international economy also was in a bad place, though I

would be the first to conceive now that we are totally in uncharted waters. Sir, post 9/11, the world economy went into a slide, very quickly the former Government moved to put measures in place to give support to the economy, to give support to the productive sectors, to make sure that support to small businesses was increased and that the tourism sector, the manufacturing sector and agriculture sector all had a lifeline to keep them going so that jobs were not under threat.

In fact, within weeks of 9/11 taking place and in fact, to the extent that when in the Caribbean as a result of the slide in the international economy, hotels in other Caribbean islands were shutting down, hotels in Barbados remained fully occupied and the economy remained strong. Jobs were not lost.

Sir, by contrast, let us understand too - I hear the Government virtually throwing up its hand and saying we are hapless and hopeless. They are not saying that. They are saying we are doing a lot, but when you examine and separate word from deed, what really emerges is a picture of hapless and hopeless, that the Government in approaching this matter is not putting in place the kind of measures in which the people of Barbados can have confidence, that they know and understand what they are doing and we are safe with them.

I make reference by comparison. There is virtually a falling of, well it is an international situation, so really what we can do is limited. While there is an international situation, some degree of creativity and the right kind of approach would still stop things from getting bad and going from bad to worse. That is, in fact, the case.

I would wish to remind the country that in 1994, when the Barbados Labour Party came to Government, the state of the economy was significantly worse than it was at January 2008. The Barbados Labour Party was still able to take unemployment from 25.5 per cent, and I am using the Budget given by the then Minister of Finance now the Prime Minister, down to 7.6 per cent. We were still able to create jobs, still able to build houses, still able to do a vast number of things that I am not now seeing being done when, in fact, the economy in 2008 was stronger, had more foreign reserves, was in far better shape.

There was no inclination at that time, no talk, no fear, no suggestion as there was in 1994 that the dollar was about to be devalued.

8.10 p.m.

Hence, the Government does have a pool of cash from which it can draw. It does have a degree of wriggle room, so that if it had commensurate level of competence,

capacity and creativity, that greater could be done to move the country from where we are now.

Sir, not only that. I spoke about a precipice and there is a sense of unease and fear. It is through this, that people are out there spending. People will spend. If you read what people spend on in tight economic circumstances, they will spend on entertainment. They spend on make-up and some things that would surprise you. I did some research to see what are the things, when an economy is bad that people would be inclined to spend on.

Sir, having listened to the Government, last year there was the excuse that there was inadequate time to prepare their own Estimates. What then is the excuse this year? Where are the new and creative policies? Where is the support for them within the context of the Estimates? What are the imperatives of the Administration vis-a-vis the vision for which they ought to have for the country, and vis-a-vis what they need to do to protect the country from the international economic storms?

I listened to the Honourable Prime Minister in his address, and there was no broad vision articulated, no broad vision of where we are now, where the Government intends to take us, how they will get us there, by what means, within what time frame and what are the extra safety or security measures that they are putting in to stabilise the country. Sir, it is a matter of concern.

Mr. President, on my arrival into Barbados this afternoon, it is very interesting, Sir, because on the day that Four Seasons shut down, I was out of the country. I heard about it. Today, the same thing. I was out of the country and I came in to hear that Sagicor sent home 44 people today, or is sending home.

Now, StarCom has already sent home. The Government can laugh and make fun about whether or not I am here. Sir, what we should be more concerned about is not my absence, but the absence of the Government in proper policy formulation in this country.

Mr. President, about three weeks ago, we heard from the Prime Minister that the Four Seasons Resort will be reopened by the next Monday morning. Sir, that Monday has not come yet. The persons who are going on the breadline in this country can take no comfort in anything that the Government is doing to give support to them. I listened very carefully to the Honourable Senator Walters today, very interesting, even though the presentation was highly sedating, but the content was interesting.

The reality is, however, that having heard somebody who is responsible for Labour in this country, there is no single individual who was unemployed, could have pointed to his speech and said show me from the Estimates, what I

can do, Sir, not to get some of the training opportunities to which you are speaking, some of which existed long before and are merely programmes re-christened with a different name. Ultimately, no matter how much training you do, unless the Government has mechanisms in place to create jobs, there is nobody going into the labour market.

Sir, as much as I have nothing at all against the Honourable Senator, I heard nothing that would give me comfort that hundreds of people getting laid off, or are going on short time in the construction sector, all of those small black businessmen whom the Honourable Senator Sandiford-Garner was so quick to criticise us for giving an opportunity in the Joint Venture Programme.

A lot of people who are in construction have had to put down their trucks, because the work is not being generated in the sector. Whereas before, some of them had not only one but two to four, a lot of businessmen were being created out of the construction boon that had been going prior to this Administration taking the reins of office. A lot of them had to lay off people. A lot of them, as I have said, cannot service their loans.

It is all right to speak in terms of illegal immigrants. The Honourable Senator Walters himself spoke to the fact that imported labour has been necessary to carry the construction sector, which is something that we were saying, I have not seen this Administration sent home the Chinese from the projects that they were on, or the other people. This is not the point, however.

Sir, my concern is that there was nothing emerging from these Estimates, how the Government proposes to address the issue of burgeoning unemployment in this country. Unemployment has gone up significantly in the last year. Therefore, we would have wanted to hear something from the Government relative to how the issue of unemployment is going to be addressed.

Equally, people in the small business sector would have been concerned, and people with small shops. Sir, I am going to come to that in a minute but there are some figures that I would want to share with the Chamber.

One Senator spoke in terms of President Obama and some of his new initiatives. One of them has concerned small business, because small business is a significant driver of economic activity, and has, in fact, been driving a lot of the innovation and technological advances, within the United States of America.

This Administration put in place new financial support for the Small Business Association, new loan policies, debt forgiveness and so on. I am not hearing about those people who are feeding families by way of small

business, who are entrepreneurs in their own right, and there are many of them.

Sir, think of all those men and women who have vans, selling to people in the construction sector. When the construction sector shuts down, or you can think of Cinnamon 88 for instance, when 500 people go home from there. They are not only the 500 people from Cinnamon 88 that have gone home. They are the people who were building other ancillary things like furniture manufacturing, doing woodwork, building cupboards, balustrades, rails, all of the work which would have gone on in workshops, and Other Places, that are effected. Therefore, we see the 800 that go home, or the 500 that go home from Four Seasons, but you do not see the spill-over and the escalating effect from those going home.

Equally, again, making the link between small business, entrepreneurship generally, and the construction sector, I spoke to how people who are in the construction sector itself, are being affected, proud men who were building businesses and doing relatively well under us, now reduced to having to beg for work that they are not getting.

Those women for instance, who would have been selling food at Cinnamon 88 to the 500 people on that site, there is no other large project that has replaced it, so what do you think is happening with them? There is nothing in the Estimates that reaches out to them.

Sir, I see the Government in self-congratulatory mode, suggesting that they are doing very well. This is not a connection with the reality of the average Barbadian. Mr. President, let me remind the Government that part of its responsibility at this time is to put in place measures, to support those who are the most vulnerable, and most marginalised.

8.20 p.m.

In the Throne Speech of last year, one of the now abandoned commitments was that the basket of goods, put in place by this Administration, would be significantly increased. We heard that a Cabinet Committee was set up to look at it. I do not know if they eat all of the goods in the basket themselves, but nobody has spoken to this issue at all at a time when food prices are up.

Mr. President, I called a shopkeeper this evening who said that in the last year corned beef went from \$87 a case to \$139 - work out what the poor person has to buy it at - a case of tuna from \$107 to \$144, and a pack of Eclipse biscuits from 84 cents to a \$1.60. That is the current price. Mr. President, people are suffering.

Mr. President, at the time of the presentation of the 2007 Budget, the then Leader of the Opposition indicated,

during the course of his address to the Chamber in the Other Place, that the reason food prices were so high is because the then Government had these relationships with the white Barbados distributive sector that would not allow the prices to come down. He committed that the cost of living and the price of food was one of the primary things to which he would give attention if the Government was put in his hand. The Government is in his hands today, but food prices are significantly higher than they were and going up further, and he would not even address the issue of the basket of goods to which he committed.

I am not hearing how they are proposing now that they are the Government. If you do not have incestuous or iniquitous relationships with the distributive sector and the white merchant class, then why are you not dealing with the food prices which you said would be one of your priorities? They promised that VAT would have been taken off light bills for the poor. That is yet to be done. Mr. President, those issues which would have served then to act as a buffer in times of great hardship, none such exist. There has been a removal of the safety net on which the poor could rely. The Vote for Welfare has been cut by \$5 million and the Vote for the Poverty Alleviation Grant has been cut in half at a time when people are under severe pressure and most need to have these measures of support. All of those persons who are being put out of work, who have little children to look after, who cannot afford food in the supermarket at the current high prices, are now thrown to the vagaries of the marketplace without any support mechanism and the previous Vote in the Estimates like welfare and poverty alleviation, which would be used to give support and assistance have been significantly cut.

SENATOR Mrs. V. I. SANDIFORD-GARNER: On a point of order. Mr. President, I do not know if the Honourable Senator was out of the island when this Government employed over 200 Barbadians in the first instance in the Welfare-to-Work Programme.

Sir, I spoke earlier about the excess that we are looking to curtail, therefore, we could not have a welfare grant at the same level it was at the last time if we are aggressively involved in finding work for those people. The drainage programme was one and there are others. I am sure that there are others that I could probably think about when I sit, but we pursued the Welfare-to-Work Programme which would have considerably cut into our need to have welfare grants.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: That is very interesting, Mr. President, especially when the statistics issued by this Government showed that unemployment has increased significantly. Therefore, the support would, in fact, not only be needed but more needed now than it was when we were Government because under us more people were at work than there are under this present

Administration. If Senator Sandiford-Garner wants to delude herself and take comfort and think that 200 people could cause a \$10 million reduction in the welfare grant, that is a matter for her.

SENATOR Mrs. V. I. SANDIFORD-GARNER: On a point of order. Mr. President, I said 200 and I also said there were other programmes. I do not have the details on me, but I am sure that most Barbadians know that we aggressively pursued a Welfare-to-Work Programme. I could remember those in the drainage programme. I cannot at this present time give you accurate statistics, but I have already given our argument.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, unemployment went up by 3 per cent in the last six months. That is a fact. I do not know who is in the Welfare-to-Work Programme. What I do know is that they do not have more people working now. The reality is that fewer people are working now than they were in 2007.

SENATOR the Hon. D. W. BOYCE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House when she said that unemployment went up by 3 per cent in the last six months. I am not aware that the statistics for the end of March - this is when the figures will normally be measured - have been released as yet, and I certainly know that the figures at the end of December were not 3 percentage point above the figure at the end of October.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: It appears to me that the Honourable Senator is conceding, all be it in a roundabout way, that unemployment has, in fact, been increased even though he does not agree with the percentages I am giving.

The fundamental point that I am making is that there are more people unemployed today than they were in 2007 and all of the Votes that would give support to people who are in those circumstances have been cut. Moreover, we are not hearing from the Government how they are going to put measures in place to stimulate jobs in this country so that people can feed their families. It is all right for people who did not walk about and beg anybody for a vote and who do not know what it is to look into the eyes of a householder, and a woman who has children to feed, and so on, to deal with economic matters as a matter of statistics.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: I know that the Chair not only knows how to beg for a vote, but did so with great success all over the City but there are others in here who now have the fate of this country in their hands who are bringing an accounting perspective to Government. Government is not about accounting only. It is about taking account of people and the consequences of

your policies on people. The statistics are showing, and they know statistics, that people in this country are under stress. What I am seeing is an approach to keep the deficit down rather than put measures in place that will help the woman who tonight does not know how she is sending to school her child tomorrow.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: It is vacation time. Sir, that is the approach of the Government, be glib, it is vacation, so she does not have to send them to school, when you are trying to raise a substantive point. There are people worrying about how they are going to make ends meet, how they are going to pay their car loan, how they are going to pay...

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: I am hearing talk. Somebody seems to be saying they cannot buy a house cash as somebody did down Bathsheba. Their wife and the wife of their friend bought a house cash down Bathsheba. I think it was so. If that is what you want to talk about, that is a matter for you, \$900 000 cash, no mortgage.

8.30 p.m.

Mr. President, my argument is that the safety net has been removed, and I am not hearing anything from the Minister today which would persuade me that they have an understanding of the level of pressure which people are under. We heard an announcement early in the first quarter of last year that the Fishing Agreement would have been resolved and settled by July of last year. It has not yet been resolved, nor settled, and since then the robing Ambassador or whatever is his correct nomenclature, has been silent on the matter.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: An Honourable Member in the Other Place, who has responsibility for the matter, made a public comment that he was on the brink of resolving it and that it would have been resolved by July last year. Sir, the Prime Minister has said that the Fishing Agreement was not a problem, that it could have been resolved over a bowl of soup. Therefore, if these things were that easy, if they were that easy to govern, where then are the safety nets? Why has the basket of goods not been addressed? Why is it that we are not seeing in the Estimates how unemployment is going to be addressed?

There was also a commitment given by the last Administration to address the issue of governance and integrity legislation. That is another committee that was to

be established to deal with it. That too, to date has come to nought. If you go back to the Throne Speech, it was something that was to be done in a matter of quick months. It was to be done immediately after a Democratic Labour Party was formed. We are still to hear about it, but all the time allegations of impropriety and corruption are being made against the former Administration, because the Democratic Labour Party understands propaganda very well.

Mr. President, if you develop a mantra and repeat it often enough, people will chant it with you because they are hearing it but, to date, after 15 months, no evidence has been brought forward to substantiate these allegations which are being made against people who, from all accounts and from all the evidence, conducted themselves with propriety while in office.

While Honourable Members on our Side have sought to disclose their assets, nobody on That Side has sought to do the same, even though these are some of the promises that were being made at an earlier time, but now we are hearing nothing at all about the matter. Mr. President, if there is, in fact, an issue the public needs to know...

Sir, I am not going to respond to the propaganda and the facetious comments which were used to help to win an Election, but which are not sounded or grounded in facts.

Mr. President, other issues relative to energy and environment were raised and I would wish to raise some of them. There was a \$300 million replacement plan for mains, so that this notion that there had been no main replacement programme is utterly ridiculous. On the matter, there is one thing about which the Honourable Senators and the Democratic Labour Party boast, that is, the matter of housing. The Throne Speech commitment was that 500 lots were to be created in five months, at \$5. They used all the five's in the world - 500 lots, in five months, at \$5. And it has not happened after 15 months.

8.40 p.m.

It was then between the 1986 and the 1994 period that you stopped being able - the then Government disallowed solar water heaters to rebates on your Income Tax as was previously done and it had, in fact, to be reestablished after we came back in 1994.

Mr. President, if the Honourable Senator Inniss wants to talk about what was done to help the solar water heater industry, it all happened under the Barbados Labour Party Administration.

Mr. President, let me add now to the last thing that happened in relation to the solar water industry. We started

to work with the manufacturers on the development of standards. Sir, they themselves are extremely divided on the issue, but we had a number of meetings and a technical officer in the Ministry was working on the development of a standards document that would have satisfied them.

In addition to that, the UN established a \$12 million solar water heating project and Barbados was not included. I lobbied extensively to get Barbados involved in that project so that our solar water heaters manufacturers could benefit. I have heard nothing more about the money and the project since this Administration came to Government. Moreover, it was under us that funding was given to a solar water heater manufacturer, who is, at this time, I believe, if it is not completed already, in the process of setting up a plant in Africa. Sir, the point is that much was done to give support.

Mr. President, we speak in terms now of a National Energy Policy. In 2007, a National Energy Policy was developed and laid in the Other Place. In fact, the National Energy Policy is such a strong document that if you turn to the Budget of 2008 in July, there are about four initiatives relative to energy in that Budget, and three of them came directly from the National Energy Policy, including the establishment of IPPs, the use of people generating energy from renewal sources and feeding into the national grid.

The negotiations for the process had been done by the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited. Sir, three of four initiatives which this Government said in the Budget that it would pursue in energy came straight out of the 2007 policy, which was laid in the Other Place.

Equally, there is a disaster risk mitigation initiative, which was ongoing relative to climate change, and it was the Barbados Labour Party that set up a drainage unit that dealt with the problems at the Holetown Lagoon. Sir, Barbados is low-lying and I do not believe that we are ever going to reach a stage where nowhere in Barbados will flood. In that regard, I think we also have to ask whether or not we really want to continue to have the Queen Elizabeth Hospital at Martindales Road, which is in a flood zone and which, in my view, is not in the best possible location if you are talking about climate change impact.

Mr. President, under the green economy policy, we developed initiatives for green businesses and to allow businesses to green and to get benefits for so doing, tax rebates, et cetera. Sir, persons who develop houses following a set of protocol developed by the Ministry were also entitled to climate change. We supported significantly the establishment of the Climate Change Centre in Belize. We are being pilloried for not having done everything in relation to climate change.

Mr. President, the reality is that the big United Kingdom, about which the Senator was boasting, only developed their legislation between 2007 and 2008. Sir, that is a fact. With all the resource at their disposal they only developed theirs in 2007/2008.

Mr. President, we had a national energy policy, which sought by 2020 to transition the country to a certain percentage of renewable before the rest of the Caribbean, except for Jamaica; before many countries in the world; before the United States of America and before several countries in Europe.

We moved to non-leaded fuel, if you are talking about climate change impact and things that would reduce our ecological footprint. We took all the technicians who were working in refrigeration and put them into three training programmes so that they would become familiar with the new eco-friendly gases rather than the CFCs that were being used for airconditioning and refrigerants prior to that.

Mr. President, the policy was not just something that would have attracted international and UN attention, even though it seems to disturb some people. It had benefits for people working on the ground. The person who was the refrigeration technician, the policy meant something to him.

Mr. President, educational programmes were developed and given to the schools. In several instances, including at the Harrison's Cave, when the refurbishment was done, it was done using green principles so that Harrison's Cave will now function in an environmentally friendly way. Equally, there were several initiatives which included allowing us to use photo voltaic energy and other sources of renewable energy that reduced the bill for the National Heritage Unit.

Mr. President, I am being asked about the cost overruns at the Cave. I would like to hear about the significant costs overruns down at Bath, which is really the platinum Bath.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: The bath at Silver Sands did not have cost overruns but the one at Bath does. Moreover, I want to hear about the bulldozer or tractor that was brought in and is sitting up at the National Conservation Commission and cannot work for over nine months. If you want to talk about mismanagement, squandermania and improper use of public funds, let us talk about those things.

Mr. President, the Government had already started ethanol initiative; a biomass and a bio-fuel initiative. The

Senator spoke to dual thermal, wind, and so on, but clear assessments need to be done to determine what are the appropriate technologies, given countries peculiar to geophysical circumstances. You just do not talk and say that Nevis has geothermal that we should have geothermal because it does not work like that. Sir, when you list countries and say that Nevis has geothermal, Guyana has hydro but we do not, that would persuade the simple-minded that there was some deficiency but, in fact, Barbados did not have a deficiency.

Mr. President, when the Senator said we were revered, we are revered because of the policies that were implemented that other people in the Caribbean look to as a standard guide and template for how they should go forward. Equally, in relation to energy, there are a number of initiatives, I spoke to them just now, which were put in place which we have heard nothing more about from the present Administration. We heard via the media that the 26 blocks which existed, that two were awarded to a particular international company. We do not know what has happened in relation to the others, or what the Government is proposing to do. There was to be a biddable signature bonus. The Government has not confided to the public what amount of money the company has indicated they were willing to pay as a biddable signature bonus. In fact, in the matter of energy, this is another area in which the Government appears to be hapless and hopeless.

8.50 p.m.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: I am now hearing that they are turning to the IDB for a solution. Well they may get the right solution from the IDB, but we believe in homegrown policy initiatives and solutions. That is why in 1994, when we came to Government, the International Monetary Fund was told, we believe we have the capacity to develop appropriate solutions for the country and over time those were proven to be correct.

Sir, energy prices were increased in this country in a way that made hardship descend on all sectors of the population, particularly the business sector. Diesel was kept at a particular price to give support to the manufacturing and business sector, to give support to farmers and others because the tax take from petroleum products is very high. Therefore, any debt to BNOC would have been easily satisfied within a short time if the Government knew what it was doing.

The Government did not recognise that when you push energy prices up, it causes an inflationary impact on the economy and the prices do not come back down generally. One or two will but, generally, the inflation remains high and prices remain high, because those in the business sector just take any additional monies as additional revenue.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator, you have five more minutes.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Sir, what I have attempted is to use the Estimates to try to connect with the reality of the average Bajan. All of the heckling me in the world will not deter me from that process, nor will it change the fact that no matter what you say, the Government has solutions.

It is a matter of grave concern emerging from these Estimates, that rather than hearing new and creative policies when they are not mimicking the policies of the Barbados Labour Party they are themselves critical of us, without saying how they are proposing to carry the country forward. In fact, the position of the Government, as seen in here and in the Lower House, can be summed up. You know the expression, the more things change, the more they remain the same.

Sir, this is a document of the House from which I am quoting.

“Let no one fool you, I wish that I was able to be the Minister of Finance, who could usher in a new era of new employment opportunities in Government, new social programmes, pave roads in every tenantry, wage increases for the public sector workers and the answer to every dream, but I can’t. We need to be careful and prudent. We have done work which has to take root. Dramatic changes will come in time. We will need to do more before those grains can be loosened.”

Sir, I am quoting from the Budget of 1994, I believe by the Honourable David. J.H. Thompson, Minister of Finance, as he then was. It is horrifying that since 1994, after the country has grown well and come so far, that the Government is today repeating this, that there will be dramatic changes coming but you have to give them time. They cannot deliver on their promises. You have to give them time.

They cannot give new employment because they are not in a position to do so. We have gone full circle back into a back situation, into the hands of an Administration that is hapless and hopeless, and the people of Barbados deserve more and better, based on the promises that you made last year for which they were persuaded to vote.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator McClean.

SUSPENSION

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Mr. PRESIDENT: I beg to move that this Sitting be now suspended until tomorrow, Friday, March 27, 2009, at 10.00 a.m.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, on a point of privilege, I would wish to notify you and this Chamber that I am scheduled tomorrow morning to present a Paper at a Conference at the University, and would therefore be here late. Once again, I am working.

The question that the Senate be now suspended until Friday, March 27, 2009 was put and agreed to, and Mr. PRESIDENT suspended the Senate accordingly.

8.55 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. Appropriation Bill, speech of Her Honour Senator Miss K. F. Ifill, take-slip 7.50 p.m.. The source file carries two reporters' versions of the same passage of the Deputy President's speech, on the National Disabilities Unit allocation, the Barbados Council for the Disabled, medical transcription and a disability living allowance, either side of the 7.50 p.m. take-slip. The first version is printed here and the second (about 410 words) has been left out. Please confirm.

Q2. Opening and Order of the Day. The record opens with 'The Sitting is resumed.' and gives no PRESENT list, prayers, Order number or full title of the Bill being debated; Members refer to it as the Appropriation Bill, 2009 (for the period 2009-2010). Printed as in the source.

Q3. Resumption, about 5.50 p.m.. The heading 'RESUMPTION' and 'This Sitting is Resumed.' follow the speech of Senator the Very Reverend H. E. Crichlow, but no suspension of the Sitting is recorded before it. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Speech of Senator the Very Reverend H. E. Crichlow. Where the Senator quotes the motto of the University, the source has a time stamp in its place: 'The motto of our university is: (16:57:58) that is, light rising from the west'. The motto itself appears to be missing. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Speech of Senator Miss P. I. Inniss. The Senator's opening sentence breaks off: 'I rise to support this Appropriation Bill for the grant of'. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Suspension. Senator the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McClean's motion begins 'Mr. PRESIDENT: I beg to move ...' within her own speech, and the Sitting ends suspended, not adjourned, until Friday, 27th March, 2009 at 10.00 a.m. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The Senate resumed on Thursday, 26th March, 2009, Mr. President in the Chair, for the continued debate on the Appropriation Bill, 2009. Senator J. A. C. Hutson rose on a

point of privilege about a report on the back page of the Nation newspaper attributing to him remarks about another Senator, when he had not yet spoken. Mr. President said he had been almost as upset by the story, since Senator Hutson had not spoken the day before, and directed that the matter be referred to the Committee of Privileges. Later in the day Senator Miss H. E. Thompson rose on privilege about the same report, which she said suggested that she was recklessly absent, said the Senate's records showed otherwise, and was assured by Mr. President, as Chairman of the Privileges Committee, that it would meet as early as possible; Senator the Very Reverend H. E. Crichlow said in the evening that he had never noticed Senator Thompson absent without leave.

Senator Hutson then spoke on agriculture, welcoming the payment of over \$3 million owed to the sugar industry for more than two and a half years, and describing falling sugar prices, reduced cane lands, the industry's need for Government subsidy and the cost of nearly \$12 000 a year to insure one harvester. Senator R. O. Marville spoke of education, urging the abolition of the Common Entrance Examination, more sixth forms and more support for parents through PAREDOS, and of a green economy and better use of water. Senator Dr. F. L. Chandler called for wise spending and less wastage in Government, noted that \$1.5 million a year was owed to the Barbados Water Authority, and spoke of the greenhouses at the Home Station that had not yet been begun.

Senator Miss P. I. Inniss spoke at length on the green economy, climate change and renewable energy, comparing Barbados with St. Vincent and Guyana, and said a former government had done nothing; Senator Thompson rose to say that a green economy policy and framework had been developed and partly included in the 2007 Budget, and Senator K. D. Symmonds disputed her account of mains replacement. Senator Mrs. V. I. Sandiford-Garner defended the Government's housing record, citing houses finished at Marchfield, Four Hill, French Village, Work Hall, Greens and Constance in 14 months, criticised the former joint-venture arrangements, and described conditions at a police station; Mr. President asked her to rephrase one remark, and there was an exchange on the use of the word 'policemen'. Senator Crichlow spoke of the dethronement of sugar, attitudes to work and the purpose of a university education.

In the late afternoon, Senator the Hon. A. B. Walters, who had just returned from the ILO Governing Body in Geneva, reported on employment rights legislation, expected for debate in the second quarter of the year, safety and health legislation, service excellence through NISE, the

Shops Order, 2008, and the work of the Immigration Department at the ports. After a suspension, the Deputy President, Her Honour Senator Miss K. F. Ifill, supported the Estimates, welcoming more than \$79 million for social care, an increase of over \$2.5 million for the National Disabilities Unit and the budget of the Challenor Creative Arts and Training Centre, and hoping for a disability living allowance.

Senator Miss H. E. Thompson, for the Opposition, said the Estimates showed no broad vision or plan for

rising unemployment, which she said had gone up by 3 per cent in six months; Senator Sandiford-Garner and Senator the Hon. D. W. Boyce rose on points of order to dispute this. She also said a National Energy Policy had been developed and laid in 2007. On the motion of Senator the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McClean, the Sitting was suspended until 10.00 a.m. on Friday, 27th March, 2009, Senator Thompson notifying the Senate that she would be late because she was presenting a paper at the University.