
THE SENATE DEBATES

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2008 – 2013

THE SENATE

Monday, March 22, 2010

The Senate met in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, on Monday, March 22, 2010, at 11.10 a.m.

PRESENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SENATOR P.W.B. GILKES

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

SENATOR D.K.A. GRIFFITH

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

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

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

SENATOR R.G. CAVE, CBE., B.C.H.

SENATOR J. INCE, J.P., M.B.A., B.A., DIP (Mgmt.)

SENATOR A.E. HOLDER, B.Sc. (Hons.), MSW., LL.B. (Hons.)

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

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

Prayers were led by Rev. Father Errington Massiah.

Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT: This Senate is in session.

MESSAGES FROM HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL

Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I am in receipt of two Messages from His Excellency which are as follows:

1. Message No. 1/2010 informing The Honourable The Senate that in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister under section 39(1)(f) of the Constitution, the seat in the Senate held by Mr. Arni Bernato Walters has been declared vacant with effect from 1st March, 2010.

2. Message No. 2/2010 informing The Honourable The Senate that -

a. in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister under section 39(1)(f) of the Constitution, the seats in the Senate held by Ms. Patricia Irene Inniss and Mr. Damien Kerrel Anthony Griffith were declared vacant with effect from 15th March, 2010; and

b. in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, Mr. Andre Ralston Worrell and Mr. Harcourt Allan Husbands have been appointed under section 36(2) of the Constitution as Senators with effect from 15th March, 2010 and Rev. Dr. David Livingstone Durant with effect from 16th March, 2010.

Mr. CLERK: Senator Harcourt Allan Husbands, Senator the Reverend Dr. David Durant and Senator Andre Worrell are in attendance. They have signed the relevant declaration.

Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Therefore, I invite the Senators to take their seats.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome these Senators, Senator Harcourt Allan Husbands, Senator the Reverend Dr. David Durant and Senator Andre Worrell to their places here in the Senate. I trust that your time here would be fruitful and that you will continue the good tradition that we have set here in the Senate.

SENATOR H.A. HUSBANDS: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy President. It is an honour and a privilege to be nominated to serve in this Chamber and I promise to abide by the Rules and the traditions of this Honourable Chamber.

SENATOR the Rev. Dr. D.L. DURANT: Madam Deputy President, the distinct honour is mine to serve in this Honourable Chamber and I too pledge to do my best to hold the excellent standard set in this Senate.

SENATOR A. R. WORRELL: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy President. Thank you for the privilege to serve in this Honourable Chamber and I, too, plan to uphold the traditions of this Chamber and also to continue the good work which has been started by the former Senator, Damian Griffith, in this capacity as well.

Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator McClean.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Madam Deputy President, I rise to welcome our three new Senators, Senator the Rev. Dr. David Durant, Senator Harcourt Allan Husbands and Senator Andre Rawlston Worrell.

While I welcome them and I anticipate they will uphold the very noble traditions of this great Chamber, I also, Madam Deputy President, want to take the opportunity on behalf of my fellow Senators to thank the former Senators, Arnie B. Walters, Patricia Irene Inniss and Damian Carl Anthony Griffith for the duration of time that those Senators served this Chamber and, by extension, this country.

Madam Deputy President, I was very pleased, and I am positive that applies also to my colleagues, to have been associated with these Senators. They made very important contributions, giving of their time as Senators in the case of Senator Griffith, a young man who at one time was, I believe, still at the university as a student, and who I

anticipate will very soon be continuing his education at the graduate level.

Madam Chair, the former Senator Inniss is also a student at the University at a higher level. She would have been in a doctoral programme and would have also taken time to make a very significant contribution.

S/A28/11:30 Sequence 3

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SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Senator Walters was a Member of the Cabinet and in that capacity gave of his knowledge and experience, particularly in the areas of labour and matters relating to the social partnership and immigration. Together they made, as I said before, an invaluable contribution and in their new capacities and their new endeavours will continue to be good citizens playing a vital role in this country and contributing in various spheres.

New Senators, again I welcome you. As I said before, this is indeed an honour to serve your country in this capacity and I look forward to your contributions. You have joined the Senate at a time when Senators on This Side did two years ago. Our first debate would have been of the Appropriation Bill or the Estimates, as we were told.

In essence, you would have been thrown in at the deep end, but in talking to young men and so on in Barbados, they did not typically do it to young women. They would throw you in the water and you swam. For the females they might have been a little more cautious, but some of us, nevertheless, did what our bigger brothers did. We jumped in at the deep end as well.

Once again, I welcome you on behalf of my colleague Senators and wish you well.

Thank you.

Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Hholder.

SENATOR A.E. HOLDER: Madam Deputy President, on behalf of the Barbados Labour Party I wish to welcome the three new Senators to this Chamber and I look forward to their contribution to the public affairs of this country. I know very well they would add their expertise in their respective areas to debating in this Honourable Chamber.

I am very familiar with Senator Harcourt Husbands. For quite a long time we were schooled at the good old school, the University on the hill. We go quite a long way back. I know his expertise in the area of labour and I do look forward to meaningful contributions being made by all three persons.

I thank you.

Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Crichlow.

SENATOR the Very Rev. H.E. CRICHLOW: Thank you, Madam Deputy President.

On behalf of the Independent Senators, I should like to welcome our new Senators, Harcourt Husbands, Reverend Dr. Durant and Senator Worrell. I am sure they will contribute greatly to this Honourable Chamber, and we wish them well.

Also, I should like to pay tribute to the excellent work that has been given by Senator Arni Walters, Senator Patricia Inniss and Senator Damien Griffith. We shall certainly miss them from our deliberations. We are confident that they will go on and continue to make a contribution to the lives of Barbadians.

Thank you, Madam.

Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator McClean.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Madam Deputy President, I rise briefly again, because in my opening comments I failed to register my happiness and my desire to congratulate Senator Jepter Ince on his elevation to the Cabinet as Parliamentary Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office.

While I am on my feet, I also want, again, on behalf of the Senators here gathered to extend best wishes and a speedy recovery to Senator Hutson.

Thank you, Madam Deputy President.

Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I am in receipt of absence from Senator Hutson, who is, unfortunately, unwell. I take this opportunity to wish him a speedy recovery.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS

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

1. Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure 2010-2011.

2. The Schedules of Personal Emoluments 2010 - 2011.
3. The Actual Revenue and Expenditure (Dead Heads) 2008-2009.
4. Medium Term Development Strategy of Barbados 2010-2014.
5. Medium Term Fiscal Strategy of Barbados 2010-2014.
6. Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemption) (Barbados Rally Club), Order, 2010.
7. Annual Report of the Barbados Investment and Development Corporation for the year 2009.
8. A National Policy for Cultural Industries in Barbados.

MOTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OR SITTING OF THE SENATE

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Madam Deputy President, I beg to move the suspension of Standing Orders Nos. 22(1) and 45(2) for the remainder of today's Sitting.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Madam Deputy President, I beg to give notice that the following Bills be read a first time:

1. Appropriation Bill, 2010.
2. The National Insurance and Social Security (Amendment) Bill, 2010.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 2 – APPROPRIATION BILL, 2010

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. MCCLEAN: Madam Deputy President, I rise to speak to the Appropriation Bill 2010, better known as the Estimates. Before I do so, I also want to, perhaps, in my anxiety to speak, or nervousness, whatever it may be this morning, I failed to also recognise Senator Harcourt Husbands, or Harry Husbands as we know him, as also a Member of the Cabinet as Parliamentary Secretary, like Senator Ince, in the Prime Minister's Office. Again, I want to congratulate you and look forward to working with you as part of the team in Cabinet.

Madam Deputy President, this debate on the Appropriation Bill is much more than a process of approving a piece of legislation that allows Government to spend money in the coming financial year. It is an occasion on which we can report to the nation. It is a time at which we can give account of our stewardship over the past year and to signal to the good people of Barbados what we propose to do going forward, building, of course, on the accomplishments of the past year and our accomplishments to date.

It also discusses and determines, certainly, the contents of the Appropriation Bill. It is also determined on the basis of the constraints and supporting factors which allow us to make some strategic decisions.

Madam, one may question why we engage in this debate.

SA28 11.40 a.m. Sequence 4

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Estimates - Senate A28, Sequence 05, 11.40 a.m.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: I think a debate of this type is important because it allows us to signal to the nation that we understand, appreciate and take into account that any decision to expend financial resources should be done, and is done to achieve very specific goals and objectives. Furthermore, this exercise speaks to what this Government is seeking to do, why we are doing this and how we propose to achieve our goals and objectives.

I want to state also, Madam Deputy President, that in the tradition of a Second Reading Speech, the debate or discussion and, certainly, my contribution is to speak to the broad elements, the factors which have been taken into consideration, as the Cabinet, the individual Ministers and

the officials in their respective Ministries set out their Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue.

In other words, Madam Deputy President, it is an exercise which is grounded in a philosophy of the Government of the day. It is grounded in the targets that the Government seeks to achieve. Therefore, we have to appreciate those things. It is also very much grounded, Madam Deputy President, in a context that is local, a context that is regional and a context that is also international.

Madam Deputy President, the exercise is not undertaken in a vacuum. Indeed, as I said it is set in those three broad contexts. The local situation which in turn, of course, is internally influenced by what we inherited, as at January 16, 2008, what we have achieved in the past year and the previous financial year, recognising that for the Government of the day, this is the third Estimate exercise that we are going through. It is also grounded, Madam, in the regional situation, as I said before, and that regional situation is, to a large measure, influenced by our participation within the CARICOM framework and within the CSME.

As members of the CARICOM family, or as a member, if we look at it in the perspective of the total country, we must of necessity be conscious of what obtains in the economies of Member States. In fact, we can anticipate being affected by the performance of these countries.

I recall, Madam Deputy President, the constant reminder of some of the level of trade activity, between Barbados and the rest of the Caribbean. Indeed, I would say, the level of activity flowing in the other direction, the contribution that Barbados makes to the Region in several spheres beyond commercial trade, et cetera, its support of regional institutions.

As a member of a community of countries, Barbados is also characterised like our neighbours, and fellow CARICOM Members by some very specific features, which shape how we do things, which shape the possibilities for our society and our economy. One very obvious variable is the matter of the climate. In fact, Madam Deputy President, as I woke up this morning to the sound of rain, I continued to marvel that it seemed strange, and it was a phenomenon that I had to observe and there is a reason for that observation.

The reason is that we, as a small country, are dependent on ground water supplies because of our geological structures. We have been bothered as a nation by the absence of rainfall, but that is one of several phenomena that we can attribute to the nature of the climate, to the nature of what is happening to the climate.

When we talk about the regional situation, we need to look beyond the economic issues of the day, or of the past. We need also to focus on the natural environmental issues. I talked about climate change and that is something that is impacting on our society.

I know that some officers of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, have spent some time actually documenting the impact of climate change on Barbados' economy, and that is something I recommend to be read by those who want to understand the impact of that.

Madam Deputy President, before I move off the natural environment as a matter of course, none of us can forget what has happened recently in the Region and I speak specifically, Madam Deputy President, of the situation in Haiti. We have a situation where one of our sister-countries, a Member Country of CARICOM, has seen its economy almost totally devastated by an event in a matter of mere seconds, less than a minute.

Madam Deputy President, we have seen the almost total destruction of systems of Administration, of livelihoods, of churches, of all that made the people of Haiti a people. Those are things of which we have to be conscious, when we start to develop our Estimates, allocate revenues and determine expenditures, et cetera.

We also recognise, Madam Deputy President, that as we talk about the regional situation as it impacts on our ability to survive and function as a society and an economy, we have to look at the social and socioeconomic trends that are taking place and I will come back to that at some point in time.

There is an issue brewing right now, which speaks to the need for a Government to pay attention to its social programming, its social policies and to the very philosophy which guides those social policies and programmes. We are seeing the infiltration of cultural variables - I do not want to say norms because they are not norms but if we are not careful they would become norms - creeping into our society.

The thing is, we talked about the whole notion of cultural penetration and when we traditionally spoke of cultural penetration, we were thinking, Madam Deputy President, of the influence of our big neighbours to the North, the USA, Canada, Europe, Madam Deputy President, but we are seeing creeping into our societies, behaviours and attitudes, which originate or, perhaps, influenced by some of those but which directly originate in some of our neighbouring countries and which are causing concerns within the very countries from which they originate and, certainly, are causing concerns within this country. Again, I will speak to that when I speak later in

my presentation to some specific Heads within the Estimates.

Madam Deputy President, the basic point that I am making is that as we start to talk about the Estimates, we have to do so within some broad parameters, which speak to:

1. Our circumstances at home
2. The circumstances in the Region
3. The impact of the international environment.

Madam Deputy President, the world is aware of and, indeed, has been feeling the impact of the financial and economic crisis. Much has been said and written about this. We have had the opportunity in this very Chamber to speak to those issues and again, we will hear about them over and over again. The reason is that, as a small developing country, open to the external environment in which we operate, we are impacted in substantial ways, positively and negatively, by what happens in that international environment.

Madam Deputy President, from an economic perspective, we derive much of our revenue from some key sectors, where dollars and cents literally flow in from that environment. Therefore, as you would know and we can anticipate, the impact of that financial economic crisis which, as we know, has not been of our making has, however, impacted substantially on us.

Madam Deputy President, it is against these scenarios that any analysis of the performance of the Barbadian economy and its current status must be examined. It is against that background, Madam Deputy President, that any analysis of the figures represented in the Estimates of 2010, needs to be addressed. Madam Deputy President, I will, therefore, seek to speak to those things.

Madam Deputy President, before I get into the business of analysing the issue of the economics and the numbers, let me signal very early that for me, as I said in a Second Reading Speech of this type, it is critical that we spend time going below the numbers, digging below the surface to understand what gives rise, what gave rise to those specific numbers and how we will use those numbers to address the many opportunities that exist out there for our people to address the many problems that we face, and the very threats that seek to challenge this beautiful society of ours.

Estimates - Senate A28, Sequence 05, 11:50:14

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SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: In that vein, I believe I should spend some time to speak to a

statement, which I believe, captures what this Administration is about.

Madam Deputy President, we would recall the comments of the Honourable Prime Minister who has signalled to the people of this nation on several occasions that Barbados is more than an economy, that it is a society. I believe that if we understand what that means, we would be in a better position to appreciate the various allocations of the resources available to this country, to better appreciate what this Government is charged to do, to better understand what we would be calling on the citizens of this country to do and to appreciate what we say to the rest of the world about who we are as a people.

Madam Deputy President, to speak of the Estimates and merely adopt an economic perspective would fail to do justice to the vision of the Democratic Labour Party Administration.

This Administration, in terms of its broad vision of this country, as a society that is just, as a society in which all Barbadians can aspire to feeling a vibrant part of the society that they all see opportunities to benefit from its resources, that they also see opportunities to contribute to the further accumulation of resources...

When I speak of resources, I speak of resources that are material and non-material. I speak not only of revenues and assets but also about positive values. I speak of the resources that are imbedded in us, as citizens, who feel connected to the society to which we were born, or which we have adopted and become Barbadians, and to which our children have found themselves rooted and grounded, and the society that we want to leave for those who come after us.

Madam Deputy President, in looking at a vision, we are talking about building that kind of society. We are talking about translating that vision into a broad mix of strategies, short-term, medium-term and long-term, which would allow us to achieve that vision, which would allow us to nurture that vision in the bosoms and the hearts of our young men and women and to remind our elderly that is what they worked hard to build.

Madam Deputy President, we therefore do not just pull numbers out of a hat. These numbers are crafted to match programmes and the various initiatives in the short, medium and long-term.

Madam Deputy President, as I said before, the Prime Minister, the Honourable David Thompson, has made it clear that there is a definite understanding of what lies at the heart of the vision, the strategies and related policies and programmes that are articulated, or that are reflected in dollars and cents in the Budget.

It is, Madam Deputy President, a known fact, an accepted philosophy, belief and indeed the knowledge of this Democratic Labour Party... I want to stress the point again, because we cannot say it often enough, that Barbados is more than an economy, it is a society. What does this mean, Madam Deputy President?

I believe that time has come and must be taken to speak to this. We must speak to this because amidst all that we have achieved, there are some frightening signs on the horizon, and not only on the horizon because when I speak of the horizon, I believe we look outwards and see something approaching. There are some very frightening signs that confront us every day.

As we listen to some of our leaders in the various sectors talk about what they see unfolding... They talk about our young people but we often do not reflect as adults on how we continue to shape our young people by our actions, by our inaction and by sometimes the hypocritical messages that we send, do as we say but not as we do in many instances, by the policies that might have emanated from public places, from Governments of the past where the emphasis was not so much on what kind of society we are shaping, but more on how much money we are able to mobilise, how we are able to balance budgets or how we are able to make our balance sheets and income statements look better.

The question I ask: To what end do we do all of that? The answer is: We should be doing those things with the betterment of this country in mind.

Madam Deputy President, I must reiterate that our Estimates are not numbers pulled out of a hat or numbers focussing in an unidimensional manner on certain kinds of results. These numbers are intended to be a means to an end.

It is critical, Madam Deputy President, that Barbadians in all capacities understand this. It is critical that the political directorate current, that is, the Government and the Opposition; our spiritual and religious leaders; our leaders in business; our leaders of our workers - in Barbados we have several trade unions captured under the Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados; those who lead civil society in very formal arrangements or less formal arrangements; our heads of households and individual citizens; understand this.

Madam Deputy President, I want to take a moment to say that it is important when we talk about our individual citizens that we pay some attention to our children and our young people. I would speak of a specific issue. I probably would come back to this again. For the past couple days, I listened to a raging discussion on the airwaves and so on. I must tell you that I spend inordinate amounts of time

listening to the radio. I pride myself on being able to multitask, how effectively may be another question. I also spent more than a decade, as many of you would know, hosting a call-in programme or a couple of call-in programmes, and over that decade or more, I recognise the critical importance of that medium to educating the public.

Madam Deputy President, I listened to the debate about a couple of artistes coming to Barbados, and as I listened I asked myself how well do we as citizens, young and old, understand what we are talking about, how well do we articulate but, more importantly, how well do we analyse the issues around that or any other phenomenon or any other factor.

I believe that when we start to talk about these things, it reinforces the shortcomings of this society in terms of what we strive for in terms of a vision. In other words, it highlights the work that we have to do and the foundations that have been built over the years since we became an independent nation.

Madam Deputy President, I will spend a couple minutes talking about this because I think it is critical. I listened to the radio on Friday. I listened to the radio yesterday and at other times, and there was this discussion about trying to solve what has been described as a problem among our young people who have aligned themselves to two contending sides of a feud created in the minds of individuals, or actual, or both, and I suspect somewhere along the lines it was both, there is the Gaza and the Gully. I am not sure that the average youngster even knows what the word "Gaza" speaks to. I listened to interesting exchanges about those.

Here you have two musicians out of Jamaica whose music is played in several forms and fashions and using several media across the length and breadth of the Caribbean. Coming out of that rivalry, either for commercial gain or otherwise, as you have seen in some other countries in the Caribbean - thank God Barbados has not reached there yet - a kind of tribalism developed and it, perhaps, mirrors what has happened in that country in terms of their political situation for many years.

Senate A28 Sequence 6

12:00 noon

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SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: I know of several successive politicians who have sought to address that, but here you have children, from what the media is saying, as young as primary schools, lining up and living it out, and somebody has come up with this notion

that we have to bring these two gentlemen to speak to our children.

My first reaction was, a picture tells a thousand words. Sir, as I looked at the two photographs in the paper starting from the visual image that I had, I asked myself why are we using this as a first resort?

Madam Deputy President, I took it upon myself to call the radio station yesterday, not as the moderator suggested in my capacity as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade but in my capacity as the mother of a teenaged son who tells me fortunately that he listens to the music.

We discussed it. Therefore, it is not something that should be allowed. My son said to me that it was foolishness to bring in those gentlemen and I was very happy to hear that, in terms of this rivalry. Madam Deputy President, there are people who listen to the music but who does not necessarily internalise the negative message that are sent. I asked myself, why have we resorted for those persons to use this opportunity to utilise that avenue as a first resort? I posed a number of questions which I will pose and perhaps move on. I may certainly come back to this before I conclude my presentation.

Madam Deputy President, my question to those parents, teachers, principals and even to an individual who is part of a group of former convicts, who felt that they saw this problem, why was that their first option? What has become of the positive models in this society? Why do I have to address a negative problem? Why are we addressing this situation in this manner? Have we sought to discuss it at the level of the classroom, teacher to child, or teacher to children?

Have we sought as teachers and parents to discuss this issue at the level of the PTAs? Have we gone into our Churches and talked about this? Have we talked to the parents of the children, specifically those who subscribe to this rivalry, to find out what is happening? Madam Deputy President, I speak now to the issue of whether we are addressing a symptom or are we addressing the problem itself. I believe that when we start to talk about understanding how we spend taxpayers' dollars, we have to do so against the background of understanding the difficulties that we face and the approaches that are necessary.

Madam Deputy President, I want, at all times, to link my contributions to this exercise of discussing and reviewing our performance and our projections as set out in the Estimates. Madam, we are talking about solving a problem which, first of all, we have not established is the fundamental problem. Even if it were, we are talking about solving that problem by using mechanisms which have not

been well-thought out, which have not been analysed and determined to be the best approach.

Madam Deputy President, therein lies the story. The story therein is that as we seek as decision makers, whether in the public sphere as we do in this forum and as part of Government, whether we seek to do so as members of civil society, or members of the private sector, we have to take time to critically analyse what it is we are doing to understand why we do what we do. I believe that in terms of that issue, it says to me that our leaders of this country need to take a step back and analyse how we do these things.

Madam Deputy President, if I may come back more specifically to the issue of our commitment as a Government and as we see what our commitment is, which is played out in the Estimates, it is our understanding that this notion of Barbados as more than an economy, as a society to which we want to contribute to its becoming more to be a just and more equitable society, a society in which there are opportunities created for us all, that we look at these numbers.

Madam Deputy President, it is, therefore, this understanding that has shaped the crafting by the Government of its Manifestos of 2008, its main Manifesto: "Pathways to Progress - Transforming the nation to meet the real needs of our people". Secondly, our Youth Manifesto in which we made several commitments to our young people.

It is also this understanding that has also informed our Midterm Development Strategy of Barbados, covering the periods 2010-2014, and a supporting document: The Midterm Fiscal Development Plan.

Madam Deputy President, these are documents prepared by the Research and Planning Unit, Economic Affairs Division of Ministry of Economic Affairs, Empowerment, Innovation, Trade and Industry. Madam, by now it should be seen that the preparation of these Estimates were not prepared on a whim or without reference to key influencing factors.

Let me also at the outset dismiss what, to my mind, is a pure political speech of those who would want to diminish and disrespect the contribution of the professionals in the Public Service.

I would have heard on other occasions reference to International Monetary Fund and things of that nature and as I said, I dismissed it simply as a political speech because when I look at the staff at the Ministry of Economic Affairs, for example, I feel very proud that as a former Lecturer of the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, where I spent almost 18 years contributing to the education

of literally thousands of Barbadians, when I look at some of those faces, I not only see them as Barbadians who might have gone to the University of the West Indies, I recognise them as former students, or students who might have been present at that institution when I was there. If I look higher up to some of the senior officers, there are people who would actually have been my contemporaries at the University of the West Indies.

Madam Deputy President, the point I am making is that this Democratic Labour Party - and I would say all Governments since post-Independence and even prior to post-Independence - would have recognised the critical importance of investment in education. I will speak to that when I focus more specifically on some of the elements of the Estimates. Madam, therefore, to suggest that some persons external to Barbados would have handed us a package which we then repackaged and captured, is to make a nonsense and to belittle our investment in our educational system.

Madam Deputy President, I want to say to raise the question of the International Monetary Fund in the way in which it is often done is to give the impression that there is some bogey man out here. On Independence, we became part of the international economy in our own right and, as part of that process, you become party to several multilateral organisations, and those things are a fact of life.

As part of the participation, we go through exercises, assessments and evaluation, the teams have been very consistent. We rely on advisors to facilitate the work of our locals and if you look at the names and faces, these are persons who would have been relating to Barbados in that capacity over the years.

Madam, I want to say that I congratulate the officials of the Ministries of Finance, Economic Affairs, Empowerment, Innovation, Trade, Industry and Commerce, and all other officials across the public sector who contributed to this process.

12.10 p.m.

Monday, March 22, 2010

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: I have observed the process now for three years. I have seen a process in which individuals come and they make their case, understanding, of course that their case has to be balanced against the total picture. There is dialogue, there is respect on all sides and people are able to discuss what effectively are the budgetary constraints within which they will have to operate within the given financial year.

Madam Deputy President, I laud the public officers for that because we must recognise in this part of the world - it is recognised by others - that we have systems, even though they are not perfect, where there is much room for improvement, but when we look at our regional brothers and sisters, we have a lot to share in terms of ways of doing things. Indeed, Madam Deputy President, we also need to move away from the internal to focus on the Estimates, within the context of world financial and economic crises.

Madam Deputy President, one of the hook lines that people grab on to is to suggest that there have been cuts. If you look at the Budget for any one of the Heads, a lot of them have been reduced and, Madam Deputy President, there is a reason for that.

We have to deal with the reality of the fact that as a country that depends heavily on tourism revenue, that as a country that depends heavily on revenue from the international business sector, to a lesser extent, we depend on the exportation of sugar, et cetera, in essence, as a country where we do not have a hard currency, we depend very heavily on external sources to generate revenues, not only at the level of Government because Government derives its revenues largely from taxation, but the private sector does that, whether we are talking about the major players in the tourism sector, whether we are talking about the international business sector, whether we are talking about the manufacturing sector and, by extension, the other productive sector, we rely heavily on the interface with the rest of the world.

Madam Deputy President, we are a very small market when we look at a population of 300 000 people or less, and we interface with those. If I could focus on the world financial and economic market crisis without spending too much time going into the history of this crisis, we all understand and we have discussed this before, Madam Deputy President, that this crisis had its origins in North America and Europe but because the world economy is so intertwined, so interconnected, it has impacted substantially on us.

Madam Deputy President, because of that, as we can imagine, we have seen a falloff in tourist arrivals in some areas. Let me say that applies across the Region in many countries of the Region. If we look at a situation where numbers may have been maintained in terms of numbers of persons visiting a jurisdiction or destination, where those numbers might have been maintained, we see a falloff in per capita spending.

Madam Deputy President, people may want to get away from the stresses of their current situation at home, they may want to get away from the harsh winters we have seen. Madam Deputy President, they might have travelled

but they took a decision that they would travel but that they could not afford to spend the money.

We have seen some decisions taken in the United Kingdom where the Government has looked at its revenue situation and it plans and has decided to impose a passenger tax with plans to increase it, et cetera, and Madam Chair, those things will impact on travel.

Madam Deputy President, the Europeans have found themselves facing fluctuations in the value of the euro, the British pound has fallen significantly in recent times and all of these are factors which shape the world economic situation, and a lot of them are factors arising out of what was first a financial crisis with the problems and the banking sector and later on widened to an economic crisis.

Madam Deputy President, this is not a crisis of ordinary proportions. It is a crisis which has no parallel probably since the 1930s during the Great Depression, or even before, because of the nature of our economies. Madam Deputy President, when we talk about cuts and when we talk about programmes, that is one of the critical factors that we had to look at but, that is not all, that is what I would term a threat in terms of what we could do internally.

Madam Deputy President, we also have to recognise when we look at the situation that there is also a positive, and I need to strike it here even though I am talking about the international impact of the world crisis.

Madam Deputy President, this Government is committed to greater efficiency and it is committed to proper stewardship of the resources that are made available to us. Therefore, situations where we saw spending of proportions that did not make sense, is something that we have committed ourselves to and, Madam Deputy President, I will use an example.

Madam Deputy President, I remember in August/September when schools across Barbados were reopening, I had a call from a friend. It was a simple thing and the person asked me if I had realised two things. I heard some numbers expended by the Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development on the repairs and major maintenance to schools.

The person laughed and said that in another dispensation, that money spent on X, - do not remember the number - would have probably been spent on one. I said that in all fairness you have to compare the magnitude of repairs. Madam Chair, the person went on to list the work done on the specific schools and spoke to the figures and told the person he had made his case because I did not want to say that I had agreed with him because I think we need to be honest.

Madam Deputy President, the point the person was making is that you seem, in this new dispensation, this current to be paying some attention to the issue of cost overruns and things of that nature and, that is a commitment. We have been seeking to identify ways to make sure that the cost where it is attributed to wastage, to sloppy management and execution of projects and programmes...

Therefore, while we recognise that constraints are put on the level of revenues generated from our intake of duties and other customs payments, VAT and other payments, et cetera, we also recognise that those things, of necessity with falling economic activity, given the world situation, that we also have to factor into our Estimates provisions for greater efficiency making the most of what we have in a way that recognises that we have a responsibility to our citizens.

Madam Deputy President, I also now want to say something about the contribution beyond the economic environment and so on, on our Estimates.

I want to look at the socio-cultural and other non-economic factors which have to be factored into the process.

Madam Deputy President, if you would permit me, I want to cite two interesting quotations. Madam Deputy President, in a speech delivered in Parliament on the Appropriation Bill, 1961, the Premier at the time, the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, our late Prime Minister and father of this nation said at that time and, Madam Deputy President, I quote:

“All scientific principles such as economics or priming the economic pump and stimulating activity should be applied so that we can raise the standard of living of people in the country in which we live.”

Madam Deputy President, I think herein lies the part of our underlying philosophy. He is saying, yes, we will talk about these economic principles and all these principles of fiscal policy, economic policy, et cetera, but they are done towards a very specific end and that specific end is to raise the standard of living of people in this country in which we live.

S/A28/12:20 Sequence 8

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SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: I want to say that when we talk about the standard of living, that is not in quantitative terms. It is not about how much income you earn, how many cell phones we can afford or not afford, or how much we spend on eating poorly in this

country, it is about working to ensure that the people of this country feel they are a part of this country. That is, therefore, not new. I think that tells us something about the thinking about the past and the thinking as it comes forward.

Madam, if you will let me, I will share a somewhat longer quote from the father of the nation as well. This is in his address to the United Nations on the occasion of the admission of Barbados to membership of the UN in 1966. He said:

“The people of Barbados do not draw a dividing line between the internal affairs and their foreign policy. They strive in their domestic arrangements to create a just society for themselves. In their Constitution, they affirm respect for the rule of Law, they declare their intention to establish and maintain the kind of society, which enables each citizen to the full extent of his capacity to play his part in the national life. They further resolve that their economic system, as it develops, must be equitably administered and enjoyed and that undeviating recognition should be paid to ability, integrity and merit.”

I believe that when we talk about a vision and translating that vision captured in that statement is something which is imbued in the hearts and minds of people who share the political philosophy and ideology of the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow.

Madam, that is what we sought to do when I was a child growing up at St. Stephen's Primary School, or Junior/Infants and Juniors, as they were called in those days, taking the Screening Test, as they called it in 1966, as one of those independent little children running around this country.

I remember somebody talked about singing two National Anthems. I too had the opportunity to sing both. I was trying to remember the other one the other day, but that was quite some time ago, so we sang that. I sang our National Anthem with pride.

Madam, when we look at that, what does it say to us? It says to us that as we look to build a strong economy it must be grounded in excellence. It must be grounded in the whole business of fair play, opportunity. People must share in what is involved in the economic pie, so to speak.

It is necessary that we continue to see what we have to do as we allocate financial resources to ensure that our citizens are able to play their part to the full extent of their capacities, to contribute to national life as they seek to participate in a system in which there is justice and fairness for all.

I think that as we look at those things, we will understand that these two statements aptly demonstrate that the Democratic Labour Party, from its very beginnings, has been committed to a fair society, a just society, a society in which each citizen feels that he or she can realise his or her full potential.

Madam, therefore, I, as one of 10 children who would have benefitted from education would have been one of the latter half of my family to have benefitted from primary to tertiary education, from primary school, secondary school and university education.

I can also tell you what it meant for my family. Well, I can only tell you what they told me, because as the ninth child you can imagine there is a fairly big gap between the top and almost bottom, in terms of that number. I knew what it was when my parents tried to find school fees, of minuscule amounts when I think about it now, to send my oldest brother to school, and having to stop him because, at the end of the day, they could not support him through the entire process.

I also know what it means to hear somebody say that he remembers his grandmother crying when she said to him, "Do not worry, you can go back because Errol Barrow just said that you can go without having to pay a fee", and these are people in my age cohort, or slightly older than I am.

The focus then is on building a genuinely equitable society, one in which a strong and successful economy emerges. The point, I must reiterate is, the economy is intended to support the society. We do all to build the economy because it is an essential element of that society which we strive to build. Therefore, let me say categorically that this is definitely the focus and intention of the David Thompson led Administration.

This Administration acknowledges that those in society who get service, who get finance, who get protected against risks whether it is social, economic or other risks, will give direction and dynamism to this country's development.

In essence, we can only consider ourselves to be a dynamic developing and hopefully soon, developed society if we ensure that we support people, that we get finance through initiatives to create jobs to support the private sector, if they get finance for those who have to rely on welfare-type benefits, that we have in place a proper system of law and order to ensure that we can live in a peaceful society.

If the emphasis is on the few who have, at the exclusion or the expense of the few who have little or none, we cannot build a just society. We cannot build a society

that is inclusive. If we move away from being our brother's keeper, we will be the worse for it.

I want to say a little bit about that as we talk about allocations. I will speak a little bit in detail on the issue of education in a couple minutes, one of the things that kind of disturbs me, and we may hear more about this at some point in time.

Madam, in talking to young Barbadians, there seems to be an attitude developing among some as they increase their earning capacity, having gone to university for example, that they are paying too much taxes. They are paying taxes that would not allow them to achieve the material things that they feel to which they are entitled. I like to ask questions because I guess that was part of my style of teaching over those many years. My question to them would be, if we were to reduce your taxes immediately and ask you to repay the cost of that education which allowed you to earn that salary, would you be happy?

Secondly, do you have any idea what was the full cost of that education? To me, if you do not understand that, we have not taught them all that we need to teach them, because if we are not our brother's keepers, many of us around this Table would not have been here today if we had to pull our pockets, or somebody thought selfishly that in the year 1966, 1976, 1996 or 2006, they should have paid less taxes because they did not have somebody going to university or they had finished. If we look at that kind of notion of being our brother's keepers, look at what happens in other societies.

I was particularly amazed, close to midnight last night, as we witnessed an effort of almost 100 years in the great United State of America to make what I see to be a giant step towards a new approach to health care. When we look at what we have been doing - I listened to that debate because it was very informative and inspiring for me as a Barbadian, when we are able to contrast what has obtained in this country for years and the US is trying to do, and persons who do not understand, or who do not mean well want to label it as socialism and communism, because they do not understand what those words mean, but to them being their brother's keeper is a negative thing.

SA28 12.30 p.m. Sequence 9

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Estimates - Senate A28, Sequence 10, 12.30 p.m.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: I looked at the quality of the education offered in some of the school districts in that country and those cities and states across that country and contrasted that with what we

have here, and what we have been able to do, because we pay taxes and do not start chalking up what it costs me, because we recognise that somebody pays for me today and I pay for you tomorrow, and because we recognise that we are our brother's keeper.

When I looked at that I said, here you have a situation where people are celebrating almost on the dot of midnight last night, as I listened to persons reporting, approximately 30 million US people who did not have health insurance.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: In fact, I will speak to this a bit Madam Deputy President, because I believe that when we start to talk about numbers, understanding the essential difference between us here in Barbados and what obtains in the USA, is very instructive.

I have had the pleasant opportunity of studying here in this country and I must say I did not have the desire to live in the country. I love this little island and I would not trade it for anything. As I say, I would go anywhere else in the world, but I will come right back here because there is something very special about this 166 square miles' country.

I heard one of the Members of Congress yesterday afternoon speak of a situation where children are born to parents, in parts of the great USA, underweight, probably malnourished, prematurely, I can extend the list a little bit, and there is a simple reason. The mother did not have access to health care during her pregnancy. Therefore, she was at risk and so was her baby.

Sir, we know that in Barbados we have had a system of public health care where, unless a mother decides that is what she wants to do, not attend a doctor, she has the opportunity to attend our prenatal clinics at no direct immediate cost to herself. If she can afford it, she can access private healthcare.

The critical thing is that when we start to allocate our financial resources, we recognise that there are some critical investments that must be made, investments in education, investments in health, investments in housing, and so on. We in Barbados pay taxes and allocate the second largest part of our estimated expenditure to healthcare.

In fact, if we look at the actual sum of money, Madam Deputy President, what we are talking about for Health under Head 23, is a sum of about \$270 665 757 that is almost \$271 million, and that is the second largest allocation of our budget and there is a reason for that.

It is recognised, as I said before, that this kind of expenditure is critical to having a workforce that is able to access medical care because a healthy person or certainly a person who may have health challenges, but have those health challenges addressed, is a better citizen.

It is an individual, a man or woman, boy or girl who, in the latter, can go to school and function, a man or woman who can function in the workplace and have his or her medical matters addressed. In essence what we are really talking about, Madam Deputy President, is a situation where we need to focus on certain social benefits to our citizens.

Asides.

Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT left the Chair and Mr. PRESIDENT assumed to the Chair.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator McClean.

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

Mr. President, having provided the overview that I did, I sought to conceptualise the Estimates for 2010 and set out a framework within each Member of Cabinet and officials in their respective Ministries, and identified the priorities for policy and programming. I will now spend some time, Sir, looking at some of the various Heads.

I have chosen, in consonance with my discussion of the importance of recognising Barbados, not merely as an economy and a society to focus on those areas within the Estimates that account for substantial portions of the programmes, not merely because somebody chose to allocate large sums but because they are vital to translating this Government's vision into reality.

If I may, Sir, I will start with the Ministry of Youth, Family and Sports. As indicated before, our objective in the Democratic Labour Party now and as it was in the case with the previous DLP Administrations, is to build a positive, strong and just society. It is with this objective in mind that our social policies in total and sectorially, are absolutely important. Sir, within the Ministry of Youth, Family and Sports approximately \$57 million, or specifically \$56 635 313 has been allocated.

As you are aware, Mr. President, the Ministry of Youth, Family and Sports in this configuration is a new Ministry. If a society is intending to build a strong society, the basis, the foundation, the cornerstone, has to be the family. Therefore, the quality of family life, the support given to the family must be something of importance and must be given special attention. Sir, it is that family that shapes a lot of what happens.

If I could, Sir, I will go back to some points that I made before when I made reference to an issue that is confronting us, and I am happy to hear the Minister of Family, Youth and Sports indicating that in relation to that proposed intervention by two reggae artistes out of Jamaica, he is perhaps seeking to do exactly what I said. He is perhaps seeking not to treat a symptom but to get at the root cause of the symptom. Therefore, this Government understands that it has to spend some time, money and proper programming to engage in supporting the family.

Mr. President, as I speak about family, we also have to recognise that we cannot look at that budgetary item in isolation. I mentioned we cannot look at the total package of Estimates in isolation and I want to also make the further point that we cannot look at the individual Ministry or line items within a Ministry, in isolation. We are not operating silos.

We are operating Ministries which are broken out to facilitate very specific objectives, but which are essentially like jigsaw puzzles. Mr. President, they fit together in some logical manner and fashion.

Mr. President, if we are talking about supporting family, we also have to recognise that as we talk about family, there is no homogeneous picture or manifestation of what we call family. We in Barbados have several different kinds of circumstances, economic, social and otherwise, facing families in Barbados. We also have a phenomenon of many single women heading households.

Estimates - Senate A28, Sequence 10, 12:40:09

Monday, March 22, 2010

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: We have a distribution of our families across income groups. As we look to ensure that people are given every opportunity to participate as active and full citizens in this country, we have to recognise where certain needs are. Sometimes major needs are met by relatively small sums of money.

Mr. President, I speak to a programme which is not within the Ministry of Youth, Family and Sports, but which supports a critical component of our family, that is, our youth in the form of our programme of free rides on the Transport Board buses. School children are able to ride on the Transport Board buses free of cost and there has been some criticism of that.

Sir, in putting it into proper context, it is really a credit, an incentive, call it what you will. In other sectors, people get tax breaks and so it is really a give back - I am searching for a particular word but it would come back to

mind. In essence, it is a provision made, small as it is in some people's minds.

Mr. President, I will use some numbers. Previously bus fares for children was \$1.00 on the Transport Board bus and \$1.50 if they were using other forms of transport, and so a mother or two parents who have one, two or three children, may find themselves having to pay two bus fares per day for one, and four bus fares for another, depending on where that child goes to school, so the bus fares can range from a minimum of \$10, \$15 or \$20 depending on what happens to over \$30 and \$40 depending on the size of the family.

Mr. President, for somebody who is working for a net weekly wage of \$300, \$40 or \$50 out of that \$300 is a substantial chunk of money, so the parent who has that saving is able to put that \$50 into groceries, into buying clothing, paying utility bills, et cetera. I think I have made the point, Mr. President, that that is critical.

There is another issue, which perhaps ties into what I was talking about, and I am happy that I spoke about it earlier, this issue of our children finding role models in negative images or finding avenues for their creativity and energies in negative circumstances, that is the provision in the Estimates for summer camps. There was a big song and dance on the part of many, who all I can say, were either misguided or mischievous because anybody who cannot see the value of that for a poor person and not so poor person...

I also believe that the summer camps should be open to persons who can pay and if they want to contribute to that they should too because it not only provides an opportunity for those children to develop their interpersonal skills and their social skills, it also provides them learning opportunities.

Above all, for persons who cannot afford proper child care and who cannot leave home feeling comfortable in the morning that their son, or daughter, or children will be taken care of, are happy that there is such a structure in place. For those who may have challenges feeding their children, there are opportunities for them to be fed, and this, again, is a minimal cost. It is a big undertaking with substantial benefits, but benefits which by and large are much more than what we can seek to quantify. We also have to look at those benefits in qualitative terms.

I recall, Mr. President, some time ago speaking to a Priest within the Anglican Church who moved from a rural parish to an urban parish and I would never forget the words he said to me. He said to me that after his first summer at the Church, he never would have imagined that he would have had to develop ways to keep children away from their homes. That was a very telling story.

What he discovered is that in moving from this nice comfortable rural Church where you probably had a level of social networks and so on to support those children to this urban Church, is that there were children who were being exposed to the worst kinds of matters, whether it was on television, whether it was visual, whether it was live in terms of observing adults, or whether it was cases of abuse.

Mr. President, we therefore have to ask ourselves what is it that we are providing for our children when we offer them the opportunity to participate in a summer camp. It is not only a physical activity, it is about security, about peace of mind, about ensuring that our children's lives are so protected and not damaged in a way that their psyches are damaged for the rest of their lives. It is about ensuring our children are given the opportunity to be children in a world where that is safe. Those are the things we think about. That did not come up because we wanted to put some money in the Ministry of Youth, Family and Sports, or in the budget related to Youth Affairs, it was put there because there was an understanding that as a Government we have a responsibility to our children.

Yes, we have a responsibility to focus on attracting foreign investment. I spent several years while I was teaching at the university serving on corporate boards in Barbados and I understand the importance. After leaving there, I spent many years running my own business and trying to figure out how I can convince somebody to do business with me as a management consultant so that I could pay my bills.

I also spent many years volunteering, among other places, in the Credit Union Movement because I felt that this was a chance where poor people could not only pool their money but could use it to do things to make sure that they were able to make the best use of their existence in this country.

Mr. President, when we talk about the Estimates, we also have to recognise that these things are grounded in an appreciation that as we look at our various Ministries, we have to do this in a way that recognises that we build a society from the bottom up and that we build an economy by building a society in which people would find that society to be attractive.

Mr. President, I have interfaced with investors. I have interfaced within the cruise industry. I served on the Board of the Bridgetown Cruise Terminals for 15 or so years. In the latter years, I functioned as Chairperson of that Board and I know what it is. When you talk to people in the tourist industry - I have heard this before - and you ask them what they like, they say that the beaches are nice, you have lovely buildings and so on, they love the people and the way of life.

Mr. President, right now in my capacity as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, I interface with many diplomats, past and present, and one of the things that I am constantly impressed by and happy to hear over and over again is the suggestion that they really regret having to end their assignment in Barbados. Sometimes you would hear I have been able to convince my spouse that we should purchase a house in Barbados or spend our vacations here as often as we can.

Mr. President, it is not about the work that they did or about, perhaps, even the opportunity to invest and get a return on a property, it is about the enjoyment of our way of life, the enjoyment of our people, and this is important.

Senate A28 Sequence 11

12.50 p.m.

Monday, March 22, 2010

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, when we look at Ministry of Youth, Family and Sport what we are looking at is identifying and pulling together, under a Minister and under a group of officials, a number of programmes which recognised that the fundamentals of any society have to include family.

Mr. President, I want to speak about an area of which I believe I know much and that is Head 54: Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development. This is the single largest allocation, \$291 281 507 to the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development. I believe we would have discussed in the previous Estimates the rationale for twinning and shaping this Ministry in the area of education and human resource development.

Mr. President, one element of developing one's resources is the formal education that is provided. Sir, within this allocation, I must say that the largest sum has gone to that institution of which I was a part for the last number of years. I have spent close to 35 of my 32 years at the University of the West Indies.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I do not wish to interrupt the Honourable Member but I just to drew to your attention that you do not have 32 years in this Honourable Senate.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, on a very serious note, as I indicated before, the issue of education is one that is of vital importance to this country. It is one that has led many of us to be in this Honourable Chamber because it gave us the grounding, the confidence in many ways. As I said before, the largest portion of that money goes to the University of the West Indies.

Sir, I will take some time to speak to this because it bothered me in recent times to observe, read and listen to the public row between persons who were closely associated and most specifically, the Principal of the University of the West Indies and a professor in the Department of Economics. I believe that public exchange was unfortunate on several counts.

Mr. President, I believe that in doing so, it also attracted many detractors of the University of the West Indies to that discussion. In other words, there was a lot of counter productive negative discussion that took place. There were a lot of people who criticised the university where it did not want criticising, and, unfortunately, there was not enough criticism where it should have been place. Sir, I want to say as we look at that, and I know that there was a hue and cry on the Other Side in other fora about reductions to the University of the West Indies.

Mr. President, as I said I believe that given my physical residence in Black Rock, as a little girl I had the opportunity to see the sod being turned at a place where we used to go and pick dunks, as children growing up and feeling the pride when I saw that university going up. I had the pride of seeing my second brother who was to me the epitome of an engaged, committed, dedicated nationalist becoming the first Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, him having given up the opportunity to do a Ph.D. to set up that Faculty.

I had the opportunity, having had my brother participated in that process, becoming one of the first students in that Faculty of Social Sciences, having initially gone there to study history.

Sir, I am using that to illustrate that, as the old people would say my navel string is buried somewhere near to the University of the West Indies both literally and figuratively speaking, and that I have spent many of my early years there as a young professional. In fact, as I look diagonally across to me I see a former student of mine. As I always remark, his hair was not that colour then, but I had the opportunity to teach the Honourable Senator Holder in my very first year, I suspect.

Sir, hopefully I did a better job as I became more experienced but it was a pleasant exercise. I believe that on the basis of that and many other credentials, I happen also, until I moved away from it early 2008, to be a President of the Alumni Association. Sir, I still continue to participate in the University of the West Indies, there is an Alumni circle. Sir, I do not believe that you would give me too much trouble for advertising but I appeal to graduates of the University to give back and to give to the Alumni circle. I do that and I believe it is important.

Mr. President, as I was saying, the recent public row between the Principal of the University of the West Indies and Professor Howard was, perhaps, an opportunity lost for a serious discussion of the issues I believe needed to be addressed. The University of the West Indies across campuses has contributed to the building of human resources of the Region. Our graduates are everywhere but we also have to look at the cost of producing those graduates, as we deal with scarce resources.

Mr. President, what I am going to say now, I am sure I have said before, some of it was misunderstood and I had to repeat it in a previous discussion. What I am saying here I said before as a lecturer at the University of the West Indies before I left there. Sir, I say it now as a taxpayer and as a policymaker. If we want to subscribe to what the Principal holds dear to his heart, a graduate in every household, we have to move beyond the objective of what we want to achieve. We have to talk about how we would achieve that.

Mr. President, I have discovered, through analysis and through my years of teaching, that we have a phenomenon which has arisen perhaps out of some shortcomings or constraints which have developed in our secondary education. Sir, I speak specifically, or with more authority, of the Faculty of Social Sciences where I studied and also taught in the Department for Management Studies, for many years.

Sir, there is now a situation at the University of the West Indies, where I would estimate that about 45 to 50 per cent of its students who are taken into that Faculty, are admitted under what we call a low matriculation. This simply means that the normal requirement is that the student has "A" levels, CAPE and/or an Associate Degree.

Mr. President, In reality, however, that large number is not students who would have attained that level of education. There are students, in the vast majority of cases, who would have left our secondary schools with Caribbean Examination Council qualifications only. They are also characterised by youth, in other words, they are typically ages 17, 18 and 19. They are children straight out of secondary schools.

Sir, that, in itself, is not a problem but there are some other characteristics that I would want to highlight. I mentioned the limitation of our schools. Our secondary schools, for the most part, are now operating at their maximum capacity. They cannot do something which obtained in my days at school. They cannot have students repeating Fifth Forms.

1.00 p.m.

Monday, March 22, 2010

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: They cannot do something which obtained in my days at school. They cannot have students repeat Fifth Form. We also have a situation where students have to compete for Sixth Form places, so there are some restrictions in terms of the number of Sixth Form spaces and the number of places at the Barbados Community College.

As you would imagine, the students who participate in that exercise of competing, the Barbados Community College and the Sixth Form schools will, of necessity, choose the students with the best grades in CXC.

Sir, in fact, I can tell you that my alma mater, my understanding is, certainly, until a few years ago when my son was at the school, you had to have Grade 1 in the subjects that you wanted to pursue at CAPE. It means, therefore that students who cannot access are the ones with Grade 2 and Grade 3, with which they can enter the University of the West Indies.

Mr. President, I always contended when I was a lecturer that if we are going to take in low matriculation students that preference should be given. I can tell you when I participated in a selection process this is what was typically recommended to mature students. Sir, mature students being those students who would have worked after leaving school, who would have decided that they wanted to go to university at that point in time rather than following an instruction from a parent, who really was, in essence, ready for university.

Sir, some of them might never have had the opportunity to do "A" Levels, but they had worked, they had experience, they developed certain skills in reasoning, critical thinking, et cetera, on the job and through life experience.

Mr. President, we have a situation today where many students cannot repeat. They have the minimum requirements to get into the University and they are pushed by parents to continue studying because they may not want to work or they may not immediately find work and, any sensible parent would tell them they cannot stay at home, so what do you do?

Sir, I have said in this Chamber before, I have said it in private conversation with people at the University, I would have discussed this with the Principal on a one on one on more than one occasion and said that we need to do some evaluation of the performance of those students who enter at low matriculation. Mr. President, I can tell you from experience, because I would have been on the tail end of that, and many of those students found it difficult to cope.

Mr. President, I can use myself as an example. Sir, I made the decision when my son reached that stage that he

would not go to the University with CXCs. If he did not get into the Barbados Community College because he did not want to stay in Sixth Form and he could not because of the criteria I just mentioned, I told him if he could not get into the Barbados Community College that he would do "A" Levels privately because I made the assessment that the transition from Fifth Form to university is too big a transition for many students and, certainly, for a weaker student, it is almost impossible to make.

Mr. President, I want to link this and to move away from my particular situation because if my son were to do that, he would have had the opportunity to draw on my many siblings who went to the university, on their children who went to university, on his father, who went to university, on his mother who he does not like to draw on to help him with his work. I do not know why, maybe he does not think I am bright enough, who also knew the system. Sir, in other words, he had a network of parents, siblings, uncles and aunts who could assist him.

Mr. President, we talked about a phenomenon of one student per household and I want to raise what I see to be a red flag in terms of ensuring that we do not almost destroy the very objective that we want to achieve by the process that is being used right now. I used an example of a young lady I knew who I assisted from the time she was a child in primary school. Because of her financial circumstances she was being raised by a grandmother who could not afford to look after her grandchildren on her own. Sir, this young lady was very intelligent. She went to school and she did very well with her CXC and she did not go to a school with a sixth form.

Mr. President, my recommendation to her was that she should go back to school, or go to the Barbados Community College but people advised her because she was one of the brightest in her year to go straight to the University of the West Indies and so she did. Sir, within one semester, she failed every single course.

Mr. President, I will tell you how I saw this happening. She did not have the network that I spoke about. In other words, where she recognised that sitting in a large class of students that she was not fully equipped and that she did not have a network to draw on.

Sir, because she would have been the first from her family, she had self-esteem issues which most lectures do not have time to recognise because of the size of the classes. She would not have felt comfortable approaching a lecturer and saying that she did not understand and so, she dropped out. The last time I checked, she still had dropped out. I trust that she will take a couple of steps backward and do what is necessary to go back.

Sir, I was very disappointed to hear this mouthed in circles that should know better that the people in the Democratic Labour Party - I was named and one of my colleagues in the Other Place was named - benefitted from the university and now we are criticising the place.

Mr. President, I say that I have the right to constructively criticise, but I am not only criticising, I will offer a solution. This is a solution which I have discussed with the Minister of Education. We have, as a Government, to look at the realities of the cost of students without "A" Level or CAPE typically registering at the university. Sir, I will look at some cost. The information that I was able to get on the website of the University of the West Indies Campus suggests that there are two fees that the Government pays directly for students, a tuition fee and an economic cost.

I will use my Faculty because that is the one I knew. The tuition fee for the full-time student at the University of the West Indies campus, is \$5 499 per year. If the person is part-time it is \$245 per credit, so depending on the number of courses, you multiply it by \$245. The economic cost, in addition to the tuition fee, for that same Social Science student is \$27 494 per year, or per credit \$1 201.

I will simply use some information on the educational cost per student at Harrison's College which is an "A" Level school. Sir, in 2008/2009, the cost per student, according to the statistics that they were able to provide me, was \$6 378 per student per year. Sir, let us assume that you are comparing like with like.

A student who is low matriculated would start out that first year as a part time student so the economic cost of \$27 494 would not apply in full, but when you do some calculations, you will recognise that as a part-time student, if they were carrying three credits, it works out at \$5 499 plus \$3 603, if they are doing three courses per semester at approximately \$9 102 per year for that part time student. If you are successful and passing, you would spend two years part-time to cover that first year, so it would cost the taxpayer \$18 000 as opposed to about \$14 000 in Sixth Form because it is two years.

Mr. President, what I am suggesting, as I would have shared my thoughts with the Minister, and he is certainly looking at a system to address this is that we have to rethink the wholesale transferring of students who are young, who are coming straight from CAPE, who have not necessarily developed the skills in research, analysis, critical thinking, writing, et cetera, that comes at the level of an Associate Degree or Sixth Form, that we look at new mechanisms.

S/A28/13:10 Sequence 13

Monday, March 22, 2010

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

Mr. President, we have a school plant that is available after 3:00 o'clock. If the children cannot stay in school and they cannot get into the University they are at home, so we have to look at that.

Sir, there is one other point. I think I would have made the case, and can go on to talk about that in more detail. The key point I want to make is, when we set our objectives of what it is we want to achieve, we also have to be realistic in how, and we also have to ensure that the very objective is not destroyed by the process that we currently have in place.

I would also want to say that it is useful to sit down and reflect. What sometimes appears to be a bearer of bad news, is perhaps a bearer of good news in the sense that if you reflect, you respond and you modify, you probably can come up with a system that will allow us to do that.

I believe very strongly that when we start to talk about the University, I have not time for the naysayers who want to criticise, but I have time for persons who say that when we take our young people, they are thrown into a semester system where they are part of a large number, and I used Management Studies where you can have a class of 300 students, and a tutorial of perhaps 40, which is the size of a class, when I was a student, that the weak ones will get lost.

The Faculty does not have the time or the tutors do not have the time to work with them on a one-on-one. The system does not provide for remedial support and my question is, are we channelling money in the right direction when we continue to expand those numbers in that way?

I challenge anybody to sit down, do the analysis, undertake the discussion and ensure that we give our young people a fair chance at that university education. I want to move away from the cost element to another element.

Tertiary education has to do more than a university education. Tertiary education - there is technical education, and I am happy to say that in the area of agriculture, and I am sure that my honourable colleague, on my right, will speak about those plans.

I know that very early in the term of this Government I participated in a meeting with the Minister of Education and my other colleague, the Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance, looking at a plan that was on the table for a University College of Barbados.

The first question I put on the table was, what problems are we trying to solve in the creation of this University College of Barbados? I suspect that I stumped the other parties in the room, because I did not get an answer, to me which justified creating such a college, because we were talking about merging a number of institutions. Sir, I heard recent discussions referring to that as something to be looked at.

Our problem is, we have a technical institution which has expanded in terms of offerings. It has expanded in terms of the requirements to enter and so on. It is coupled by a situation that I described before of the schools being at full capacity. Mr. President, what this has done is to create a situation where there is a demand that is not fully met. This Administration has undertaken to expand and, perhaps, go back to the original concepts of what the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic was intended to do, to look at campuses.

Sir, my suggestion is, tertiary education must be looked at beyond the traditional offerings of the university, and even within the university. Perhaps, we need to look at those, but I believe if I get going the curricula would take us substantially more time. I believe we are on the road to addressing those issues.

It is recognised that we have facilities which lay unused after traditional school hours. We need, and this is my personal plea to the university to do the analysis, to share with Barbados the performance of those students, to ensure that we are able to maximise the opportunities for our lower income persons who traditionally, and those families where there are no beneficiaries of tertiary education, to really benefit from tertiary education, and there are many creative ways in which that has to be done.

It is absolutely necessary that is done in a way that allows the country to talk about building our human resource capacity in a manner that maximises the use of financial resources, that maximises the opportunity to benefit from the skills, attitudes and capabilities of our young people and our people generally, because education is also about continuing education.

Mr. President, I believe that I could go on talking about education, and we have seen what has happened in our primary education programme. There is a commitment to also undertake work in expanding the offerings of our nursery education. As a Barbadian, I am proud to say to people when we talk about our country, our system of Government, our public expenditures, that we offer education to our population now from nursery to tertiary, and that is something that will continue.

Sir, if I could move away from the Ministry of Education and speak briefly on Head 55, Ministry of

Tourism. Sir, \$99 083 034 has been allocated under this Head. I want to say that again questions were raised about this budget. There was much discussion on expenditure in relation to tourism. The point that I made before is, the intention is to maximise the financial resources allocated to ensure that they are put to good use.

Sir, I want to signal that from observing and participating as a Member of Cabinet in what is happening in tourism, I must say that a lot has been done, and will continue to be done.

I mentioned earlier in my discussion the matter of the financial and economic circumstances facing our major trading partners. What we recognise is, as a tourist destination, as a country that depends heavily on tourism, most of those major trading partners have found themselves faced with declining income because of the economic and financial crisis. They have been faced with falling consumer confidence across those countries. We have also seen a concerted effort on the part of the respective countries, to encourage their nationals to stay at home.

Sir, in the United States, for example, part of the crisis was largely because the - one of the consequences of the crisis was that people found themselves in very dire straights, because the level of saving in the US was substantially below the rate of savings in other developed countries, et cetera. Essentially, what we see in tourism has been a decline in spending, perhaps, hesitation on the part of people who have been, in societies where substantial unemployment has manifested itself, et cetera.

However, I am happy to say that this Administration has been proactive and it has sought to move to build our markets which, perhaps, have been somewhat neglected or unexplored in the past. If you look, for example, at the Canadian market, and I really must acknowledge publicly that this is something about which the Honourable Prime Minister, David Thompson, felt very strongly, that is the Canadian market. He from very early said that there is an opportunity to be pursued in the Canadian market. As we look at the Canadian market, it has been one of the success stories in the industry.

SA28 13.20 p.m. Sequence 14

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Estimates - Senate A28, Sequence 15, 1.20 p.m.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Of course, we see that tourist arrivals from the USA have risen by about 30 per cent in the last year as well. What we recognise, Mr. President, is that as we seek to further penetrate our existing markets, there are markets out there which have gone unexplored.

When we looked at the performance internationally, at a number of countries and we looked to South America, Brazil is an excellent example of a developing country that has been able, because of its policies, et cetera, to weather the storm. Part of Brazil's success is the sheer size of its economy and the fact that it was able to build the economy, not only on an export thrust, but it had a substantial domestic market on which it could build, and it has been able to pursue policies that have been to its benefit.

In fact, only yesterday in discussing this country with my sister's husband, I think it was, he made the point that he was reading or watching an interview with a political figure from Brazil, and the person made the point that one of its successes is that it has not gotten involved in any wars.

The suggestion is, of course, it has been a country that has sought to be friends of all. It reminds me of the words of the father of Independence, friends of all, satellites of none. They have, therefore, been able to put their resources largely into productive uses, rather than using it for other kinds of activity, fighting and war-type activity.

The point I am making, Mr. President, is we have looked at Brazil in the past. We have made some initial fore raising to that market. However, come June we will see a concerted effort made to penetrate that market again. I want to say, again, Mr. President, up-front and very bluntly, the success of Brazil as a prospective destination for tourists, cannot and should not rest with the Government.

The beneficiary of any initiative taken by the Barbados Tourism Authority or the Ministry of Tourism is intended to lay the ground work. It is the private sector who will benefit. Therefore, the beneficiaries are expected, I certainly would implore them, to use their initiative, be proactive and get involved in exploring the market and capitalising on that market. It is absolutely essential that they play their part.

I sometimes sense that when it suits certain private sector players, they will simply say, "well that is Government's responsibility to do X, Y and Z", but they are the beneficiaries at the end of the day. Barbados benefits but they are the direct beneficiaries. They are the people who will receive the visitors.

The attractiveness of Brazil, Mr. President, and countries in South America, Argentina, et cetera, is that when we look at the climatic conditions, they are properly located to provide us with a boost in our off-peak period. That is the summer season because, as you know, the weather patterns are the reverse of those above the equator.

Therefore, I see an opportunity not only for using Barbados as a transit point to get to Europe and, indeed, to some parts of North America, I see it as an opportunity in which the slow, summer cruise season can be boosted because we can work with cruise lines. Those representatives of cruise lines in Barbados should sit down and do their homework, analyse the market and target Brazil and other countries in South America that can be fed from the airline and they can see to do business with the cruise lines to attract Brazilians to this market.

Cruise ships leave this part of the world not because they necessarily want to, but because they have not seen the best business opportunities in the summer. They go somewhere else but I can tell you, having spent many years in that industry, that in talking to senior executives of several cruise lines, that they would be quite happy to retain their ships in this part of the world, if there is business.

Mr. President, I believe that the time is probably approaching when I will be asked to wrap up but I need, as I talk about tourism, to say something about the Ministry for which I have been given the responsibility and that, Mr. President, in the context of the Estimates is the small Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade. I spoke of the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development receiving \$291 million.

The little Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade and I probably say "little" in tongue and cheek, received \$56 363 938.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: It is a Ministry, certainly, I would agree that does a lot of work and has major responsibility for facilitating the work of other Ministries.

Mr. President, I will thank other public officers but I want to publicly thank the officials at the Ministry - I think that is the word we hear often in terms of foreign affairs and foreign trade, officials. You go to your multinational and bilateral meetings and you talk of Meetings of Officials - but I must say that the Ministry has been playing what I see to be its critical role and purpose within the context of the Government and governance of this country.

Barbados as a nation has to have a face in the international arena and that face is largely shaped by our international relations. I am very conscious that I have a former diplomat sitting among the Independent Senators, so if I see him frowning, it tells me that I am not saying the right things, but I am saying it, as I understand it, and I see the vision of it rolling out.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, the key point that I want to make is that in terms of diplomacy, or building that international face, the Government of Barbados does this through the work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade. Clearly, our interactions at the bilateral level are very important.

I spoke of the initiative to seek to do business with Brazil and, as part of that process of doing business, it is essential that we also have a presence in various markets and in various jurisdictions. I also want at this time to recognise, Sir, that as this Administration came to office, it quickly undertook to establish missions in a number of areas which had been identified.

China, unfortunately, took quite a bit of time, but as you would imagine, it had to do with issues of staffing and the reallocation of people, et cetera. We have recently established relationships with Brazil. If you observe, Mr. President, the identification of those three jurisdictions also are indicative of the recognition of the need to engage in what I call South/South dialogue and South/South relationships.

As we look and anticipate the elocution of the world economy and the revival of the world economy, it is interesting to recognise that major players in that economy happen to be China, Brazil and, of course, India. We have not yet established ties with India but we do have other working relationships with the country.

Cuba, of course, Mr. President, is a jurisdiction that has been a friend to Barbados for many years. It also has been a country which has been able to demonstrate that, notwithstanding the very many challenges it faced, it has been able to use its indigenous creativity to identify all kinds of innovative solutions to matters in the area of medicine and pharmaceuticals, et cetera.

Estimates - Senate A28, Sequence 15, 13:30:07

Monday, March 22, 2010

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: It is interesting to note, Mr. President, that they have been working in areas of major importance to us. When we think of Cuba, we also think of Barbadians in the Diaspora. It was indeed a pleasure, when I accompanied the Prime Minister on an official visit to Cuba, to see the pride with which we were received by descendants of Barbadians in Cuba and persons who exclaimed in various ways and so on and who really were excited about the opportunity to interface with a diplomatic presence in that country.

Mr. President, as this Administration continues, I envisage that the role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade would be central to the shaping of our relationships with our neighbours and with the international community, in which we would be able to influence, notwithstanding our small size, the environment in which we, as a people on this earth, live.

I can tell you, Mr. President, that we have established our reputation as a nation that is progressive and as a nation that is able, as they say in boxing terms, to punch above its weight. We have made very important contributions in many fora particularly in the United Nations system. I take my hat off to the young official from the Ministry, Mr. Selwyn Harte, who represented this country very well within the forum of the whole issue of climate change.

He was specially invited to participate in what I guess the World Trade Organisation would call a green room setting, at those pre-conference meetings where they try to shape the policy. I saw him engaged diplomats across the countries of the G77 and so on in a way which tells us something about how we have been able to develop our human resources from education through their careers in the Public Service.

Mr. President, as a Ministry, we are not only charged with foreign policy, but there is also a critical role that this Ministry, for which I have the responsibility to oversee, has been contributing domestically. The current Administration identified an initiative called the Council for Investment, Export and Foreign Exchange in the Diaspora in which a new approach to pulling together Ministries with the objective of achieving some very specific purposes or objectives was conceptualised.

When we talk about generating foreign exchange, about building and drawing on the capacity of Barbadians outside of Barbados and drawing on the friends of Barbados, we recognise that it calls for an across Ministry approach, which seeks in one sense to centralise and in another to decentralise our efforts. It seeks above all else to have a coordinated structured approach to this.

Mr. President, in that process, we have identified a number of opportunities in the manufacturing and in agricultural sectors to bring some innovative solutions to youth in agriculture and drawing on our relationship with foreign countries.

Mr. President, I will speak very briefly of our efforts with Suriname, but I am sure that my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, would speak to that. We recognise that there are opportunities for us to build our relationships bilaterally. We, as part of the family of nations and as part of an EPA agreement, must recognise and do recognise,

certainly in the Ministry, that multilateral agreements have to play out bilaterally. Let me explain what I mean, Mr. President, even though I do not think that I need to explain that to you.

We have participated in the signing of an Economic Partnership Agreement with Europe as part of CARIFORUM. CARIFORUM being CARICOM and the Dominican Republic. To make maximum use of those opportunities, we have to do it on what I call a country to country basis, that is the bilateral relationship I am talking about. Suriname, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, and Belize are all fellow Members within CARIFORUM.

There are opportunities, which have been identified in part by our bilateral arrangements and those multilateral arrangements which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade is seeking to translate into concrete programmes working side by side with the functional Ministries, as I would call on them, to make those things a reality.

To that end, Mr. President, we have established the EPA Implementation Unit which has been working hard to push the CARICOM Secretariat to observe the need to act hastily to take advantage of the benefits. We are also working with local private sector entities to help them to take advantage of those benefits. We have also been working on bilateral arrangements to build on those relationships.

Mr. President, one of the most recent initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade in its efforts to build on opportunities has been a bilateral between the Prime Minister of Barbados and the President of Panama. As we all know, when we talk about the Barbadian Diaspora, Panama is an excellent example of where Barbadians have gone and retained substantial manifestations of our tradition and culture.

In addition to what I mentioned about Brazil, the Ministry of Tourism and the Barbados Tourism Authority have sought to encourage Copa Airlines to fly to Barbados. It currently flies to other countries in the Caribbean, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, and it is another opportunity to open up that market. We are working on a joint commission of a visit to Panama. Again, that is just one other opportunity which would be facilitated through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade.

I have seen the signal, Mr. President, that I have about a minute to wrap up. I surprise myself that I have been able to speak for two hours and, perhaps, I could speak for another, if I had the time

Mr. President, let me wrap up by saying that what I have sought to do, as is intended in a second reading

speech, is to identify the broad parameters which inform the Estimates. We can talk about the numbers, Mr. President, but it is absolutely essential that we not discuss numbers simply by looking at line item by line item but to understand what thought, what intention and what objective went into the crafting of these Estimates. I believe, Mr. President, that these Estimates recognise the financial constraints which we face as a country and as a Government. I also believe that it also demonstrates a commitment to focus on those critical aspects of this country which would help us not only to strengthen the economy, but to strengthen the economy in an effort to build a just and equitable society.

I thank you.

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

Mr. PRESIDENT: Are you going to speak? Senator Thompson, you have the Floor.

Senate A28 Sequence 16

1.40 p.m.

Monday, March 22, 2010

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, I was thinking that the Luncheon Adjournment would be taken at this time. I have every intention of speaking for my two hours. I am not going to surprise myself with that, so let us go lunch and fortify ourselves and I will come back for my two hours.

SUSPENSION

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I beg to move that this Honourable Senate be suspended for lunch to be resumed at 2.45 p.m.

The question that the Honourable Senate be suspended until 2.45 p.m. was put to the Senate and agreed to and Mr. PRESIDENT suspended the Sitting accordingly.

1.40 p.m.

Monday, March 22, 2010

RESUMPTION

Mr. PRESIDENT: This Senate is resumed.

Senator Thompson, you have the Floor.

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

I listened with great interest this morning to the presentation of the Honourable Leader of Government Business, as I imagine did a number of people across the entire spectrum of Barbados, and there are a number of matters and themes to which I would want to speak in these Estimates.

Sir, some of my comments would be cast, as you would know they would, in very political terms and others are really going to be broader and generic because we come to these Estimates against a background, to use the language and imagery of the former Prime Minister, in the Other Place, which I found very attractive, that Barbados is between fault lines in terms of the international economy and, therefore, there are certain perils and fault lines that we face as a country. We do not face these perils as a Barbados Labour Party or a Democratic Labour Party but we face the perils as a country, and there is much to be concerned about.

Mr. President, I believe that the public is concerned not about hearing that you left us with this or that, or you used to be such and you did not do a good job, or you did not do it well, or you did worse.

S/A28/15:00 Sequence 18

Monday, March 22, 2010

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: The public is really focussed on trying to identify what are the solutions to the challenges which the country faces. I think that the nature of the peril has prompted many to say and feel, that they want some of the solutions to be bipartisan, that they want to see us pooling our heads and talents to come up with suggestions that might be viable, that even if there are not viable, at least, you can try.

When the Prime Minister said that he wants to hear suggestions, that he is amenable to listening, one will hope that others on his Side are also amenable to listening and one will not hear the usual, but you did, or you did not do, refrain. That is always the chant when one attempts to make a suggestion.

The Prime Minister has invited us to wrap ourselves in the flag, in a speech made, I think, before the Chamber of Commerce, maybe a month or two ago. It is, I think, a call that is very appealing, and perhaps, some may even think effective, because for us whose navel strings were buried here, or who have lived here so long, that we feel as if our navel strings might as well have been buried here, for those of us, no matter where we go we regard Barbados as home, for those of us who own property and have to carry mortgages and debt and financing arrangements, there is, in fact, a concern about what our future might be.

For those of us in the majority who were born poor and black, and who aspire to leave poverty behind and bring along generations of our families through dint of hard work, many of us, particularly middle-class people, and those who can be regarded as poor, live a pay cheque or two away from peril and from risk of loss. That is the reality, therefore, against which these Estimates are set.

I will attempt to speak, therefore, to the broader audience of Barbados and to throw some ideas towards the end of my speech, perhaps, because I do not feel it is for me to necessarily find the solutions, but merely to say that these are my thoughts.

Some of what I am going to say reflects what I hear when I go into the supermarket, walk the street, or lime in social settings. You can, as a Government, very quickly become the captives of your civil servants and those around you who are saying, "Yes Minister," and "Yes Parliamentary Secretary" and "Yes Senator," but you have really to keep your ears rooted to wider Barbados.

I am sure that, Mr. President, as somebody who has long experience in politics, another former Honourable Member of the Lower Chamber, Sir Richard Cheltenham, said to me that politicians are the eternal optimists, so much so they never even know when they are losing an election, but it is because they become so insulated, and you cannot help it because you are so consumed by dealing with the issues of Government day in and day out, that those people who are saying something other than accords with the direction in which you are going, you tend to see them as opponents and unsupportive and so on, without pausing to reflect to what extent their view is widespread, and whether inherent in the opinions that are expressing is something in which you can draw strengths, options, a change of direction, based on what the national sentiment is. I really want to speak in those terms.

Sir, I want to say that when I first came to politics, there is a feeling that all right and righteousness reside on your side. I have learnt over time that Governments are Governments of men and have the flaws of men, but equally, we must have the finest achievements that men are capable of. I say men, but I mean men and women.

It is at times like this that we have to reach into the resolve and on the characteristics of what is intrinsically good about Barbados and Barbadians, and rise to the occasion to offer to the country a level of governance, a degree of solutions that are unprecedented and are needed in the current climate.

I also want to make the point that having observed politics seriously, from the time I was about 15 years old that would make it 33 years, I am 48 years old. Let me help those with the maths, for those who are wondering, of

observing politics. Possibly, 30 years active in politics at some level, canvassing, going out to political meetings, being involved and having people on all sides of the political spectrum. Even the political break away and splinter groups that died natural deaths over the years, I have had friends.

Sir, you come to the point where you recognise, and I really want to say, that while in Barbados we spend a lot of time, and I think that Senator McClean really spoke to it this morning, and it resonated with, and she does not often do that. We quarrel with each other. We like to talk about B and D. I think that the time has now come when the B we talk about must be Barbados.

Sir, the reality is, over time, irrespective of our political differences, and I am not saying that there are not things that have not gone wrong, because clearly they have and will go wrong, either intentionally, through mischief or simply because you are trying something, but it does not work out as you had projected or anticipated.

We have in Barbados got it right over and over again. Successive Administrations have got it right, and I did not stay up to listen to the debate in America, because I recognise that the President would have got the numbers, because long ago I dismissed that debate as a society that does not begin to understand that fundamentally a society must exist for its people.

When somebody can lose a child or die because they cannot show access to insurance cards, when people can sleep on the street in Washington - I have been walking on the street in Washington and come on a bundle in the dark, and think that it is an old box or something that is discarded and a man is underneath a blanket, on the street, in winter, when a society could oppose social security, the debate on health in the United States is not new. When Social Security was proposed in the United States, it was opposed by the Republicans in the same way that health care is being opposed now. In Barbados we are so behoved to these things.

Sir, through successive Governments we have had free education, free health care, now from nursery to tertiary. I can make the political point irrespective of who gets the credit that free education started under the Barbados Labour Party. I could make the point about free health care. I said that I would not speak in partisan terms, and I do not intend to, because I am deeply concerned about where we are and where we are going, so we have got it right.

I dismissed the US debate because I was more focussed on what was happening in Barbados.

SA28 15.10 p.m. Sequence 19

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Estimates - Senate A28, Sequence 20, 3.15 p.m.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: We have used mechanisms like health care and education, not only to build human resource but to build a quality of social capital that is the envy of countries, which have resources that surpass what Barbados has ever had and, perhaps, might ever have. Sir, when you look to a country like Nigeria, the 15th largest producer of oil in the world, which I believe occupies something like 168th on the Human Development Index, little Barbados is doing better than that, Sir.

Mr. President, people want to curse the politicians, and I have heard politicians vilified in this country. Aa a matter of fact, Mr. President, I recall a speech made by a certain Member for St. Michael West, who was recalling that once out of office, attempting to go through the airport on one occasion, there was a customs officer who took the opportunity to "gallery" as the Trinidadians would say, and to rinse him out saying, "What you got there? Open it and let me see."

Sir, I have known what it is in this country to sit on political pinnacles and I have known what it is to sit in the political valley. I know that in times when the pendulum swings big one way, it swings back the other way shortly after. Sometimes it takes longer than others, but the nature of things is that it swings back. What we must be careful of in the interregnum is that in the swing those fundamental things that have shaped Barbados are not allowed to be lost, because we are facing dangers and uncertainty.

Sir, coming to this debate, I come from a perspective that irrespective of what the differences are, there is much about which we have to be grateful, much that we have gotten right, much that is worth preserving, so wrapped in the flag, I have come to make my comments.

The Prime Minister ended his speech very provocatively and effectively I thought, by saying in the words of Joseph Niles that he knows where he is going, he knows. He knows where he is going, he knows, but we do not and that is, in fact, the problem, that even after hearing the Estimates in both the Lower House and the Upper House, we have not been able to share the Prime Minister's knowledge of what his destination is, or in fact, how he is getting there. The tunnel for the majority of us appears long and dark and we are not being guided by the present Administration, or we do not get a sense that we are toward the light.

I have heard and I accept, that there is a national context, a regional context, and an international context to where we are and nobody can, at all, deny the international circumstances. What we have to be concerned about is the

quality of the national decision-making and how that decision-making impacts on the international situation to exacerbate the worse of the circumstances that people must encounter and face.

I hear a lot of discussion about the last Administration having left debt. Countries are not run debt-free. Leaving debt is not in itself a problem. Sir, the majority of us who own property, we went to the bank to get a mortgage. We go into debt to enhance our social and economic position. We go into debt to build on what we already own. We buy cars, property, secure long-term, short-term and medium-term financing to achieve certain family or personal goals. Sir, having debt is not a problem. The problem then, is how you service the debt. If after you enter into loans, you are not working and earning, that is where you have a problem.

Sir, in 1994, when the Barbados Labour Party came to Government there was debt then. The country was on the verge of, or was resisting devaluation. There had been wage cuts and cuts in benefits like unemployment benefits. There was national debt. The first thing that the then Prime Minister did was to try to stimulate the economy, so having debt by itself is not a concern. Every Government has to deal with the debt which the Government before accrued and has to find ways of paying it.

The debt that Barbados had was used to build out aspects of the economy and you can look around and see the physical development, the social and economic infrastructure that the debt or the money was used to purchase.

Mr. President, we also left foreign reserves to the tune of \$2.9 billion, the highest ever in the country's history. It took us 14 years to accumulate foreign reserves of that length. It took this Administration 14 months to reduce that to \$1.2 billion. Sir, you have to be careful as an Administration with regard to what you do with your money, how you spend it so the question is not debt. The question and the issue would be one of management.

How is the present Administration managing the economy? For the people who complain and want to suggest that the Barbados Labour Party left the country in a perilous state, I would wish to remind them that in the first quarter of 2008 up to June of 2008, the Central Bank of Barbados commented, indicating that the macro fundamentals and the economy were strong.

The Governor of the Central Bank also commented that the Budget of 2008 would have an inflationary impact on the economy. I listened to the Press Conference and it has had an inflationary impact on the economy and that is what I mean when I say, yes, we know what is happening

in the international area, but decisions being taken in Barbados are making a bad situation considerably worse.

In the first quarter and first half of 2008, Moody's, and Standard and Poor's commented that the Barbados economy was in excellent shape. In the first half of 2008, the IMF and IDB spoke to the soundness of the Barbadian economy, and right here at home, Professor Michael Howard spoke to the soundness of the state of the economy.

This was the situation within four to six months, the first quarter, Sir, and just beyond of 2008, so this notion that the Government inherited really bad situations and a country in bad state and a country in deep debt is put to the lie, by the comments of the international rating agencies and independent commentators.

We have since been downgraded. When you read the IMF Country Report, when I spoke about it in here, it was made to appear as if such a report did not exist.

Estimates - Senate A28, Sequence 20, 15:20:14

Monday, March 22, 2010

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: I mentioned it in another place on television and they said, well, produce the Report. Mr. President, the Report and its contents are now largely commonplace.

The International Monetary Fund has said that the economy is in a downward spiral, that the outlook is downward. We have been down-rated by all of the independent agencies. Mr. President, that is important because your rating determines the extent to which you can borrow on the international market and the rate at which you can borrow on the international market.

Mr. President, I will go back to the analogy I was using. If you go to the bank to borrow money to buy a house, a car or anything, if your credit rating is bad, if you do not service your loans well, or if you have a poor rating, you either cannot borrow at all or the rate at which you are going to borrow will be extraordinarily high, or the conditionalities to be imposed on you would be difficult to meet.

In fact, part of the reason why we borrowed from the international market and not from the Inter-American Development Bank... I note the change of the present Administration to go back for Inter-American Development Bank loans. My experience with the Inter-American Development Bank is that their procurement process, their preliminary process for assessing loans and financing and so on, is extraordinarily long, often seven to 10 years, in the making, so much so that by the time the loan financing

comes through, the circumstances for which the loan was being borrowed have been dramatically altered.

In addition to that, when you borrow on the international market, not only do you get your loans faster and at rates that are acceptable, but the conditionalities that are imposed are significantly less.

Mr. President, the Inter-American Development Bank and the International Monetary Fund conditionalities are onerous because they are significantly policy-based and can push the country in directions that the country does not necessarily want to go. For instance, they have or had a rule that you always had to go for the least cost option, so when you are looking to have a policy solution, the least cost option is not always the best option, but that was the rule. If you were going with the Inter-American Development Bank, you had to go to the least cost option, so immediately your policy options were constrained.

Sir, the International Monetary Fund is part of what has come to be known as the Washington Consensus where they have a template of 10 things that you have to do, privatise, free up certain aspects of the economy, open up, liberalise completely, et cetera. These formulae, formulas, if people prefer formulas to formulae, are known.

Sometimes, part of keeping our credit ratings up was to be able to keep our option for financing open to be able to have the soundest policy decisions and choices available to us.

We have to be concerned that even though the import bill fell by a billion dollars, and we borrowed US\$100 million, and from the International Monetary Fund, BDS\$170, that our foreign reserves are still down by in excess of \$1 billion. This says that the pistons of the economy are not firing. That is what that is telling you, because if your import bill is down, and if you are borrowing and bringing foreign exchange in to boost the foreign reserves to have capital available and your foreign reserves are still down so significantly at the end of January 2008, then it means that the pistons, the engines, for the economy are not firing.

How do these Estimates help those engines to be fully charged to fire fully, to drive the economy and to help continue to build social growth in the country? Right now, while the Prime Minister might be going, the vehicle that has to take the rest of the country with him is stalled. It is going nowhere. The problem is not debt but delay.

When you read the Throne Speech, it was clear that the issues in the international economy were not on their front burner because the Throne Speech did not deal with a lot of the critical issues, and when the economy started to slip, the national consultations on the economy came all

down in the last quarter of the year when it should have been the first thing that was done because the signs that the international economy was going south fast were evident from December of 2007. This did not happen suddenly after 2008.

SENATOR J. INCE: On a point of order. Senator Thompson is misleading this Upper Chamber. I sat here listening to her and I really had to restrain myself. In 2005, the economy started to show signs of deterioration. The current account balance of payment in 2005 recorded its ninth consecutive deficit and acceded 12 per cent of the GDP. I would like Senator Thompson to go and check the Reports. It started to deteriorate in 2005 and if she continues on that path we are going to have a long evening in here discussing the economic issues of Barbados.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: The Barbados economy recorded consecutive years of growth under the Barbados Labour Party. Of course, when you are managing any situation, there can be some ups and downs but when you have all downs and all the international agencies are using the word “downward” and “down”, you have to be concerned.

The point I am making, which cannot be challenged, is that despite all the borrowings to prop up the foreign reserves, the foreign reserves are down. We are not projecting growth in the economy this year, and there was no growth last year. If we continue at the present rate with an economic engine that is not working, there will be no growth next year either.

Sir, no matter how long the evening is, that is exactly the point I am making. People want to get up and engage me over numbers when, in fact, this is going to be a long night for the people of Barbados, not a long evening for me, if the present Administration keeps sauntering the way it is going.

SENATOR J. INCE: On a point of order. Senator Thompson is again misleading this Upper Chamber. In 2000, when the net international reserves increased as a result of the economic activity, when the real GDP increased by 3.1 per cent, the Government of Barbados borrowed \$350 million on the international market for a rainy day. You borrowed \$350 million and you had tremendous economic growth. None of us are bemoaning the fact that the economy was not growing.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I beg your pardon. The President did not order anything. I assume that you are addressing the Chair.

SENATOR J. INCE: I am addressing the Chair, Sir.

Mr. PRESIDENT: You did this and you did that, I did no such thing.

SENATOR J. INCE: Mr. President, the previous Administration with the net international reserves up and the economy growing strong and doing well... Net international reserves at the time were \$964.2 million. You could not want anything better than that, but the previous Administration borrowed \$350 million. Do not mislead this Upper Chamber. We are going to have a long evening in here.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Point made.

Senate A28 Sequence 21

3.30 p.m.

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SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, I think that Senator Ince has made my point. He said the economy was doing well and that is the point I am making. Sir, the economy did well under the last Administration. It is not doing well now. Sir, that is my point and my point remains that you cannot say the Government borrowed this money, and when the Government borrows, Barbados borrows because we have to pay it.

Sir, the fact is that despite it, the foreign reserves are still down. Sir, my question therefore is, how do these Estimates stimulate the engine to cause the economy to grow?

You can shout as much as you want about what happened in 2000 but the food that somebody ate last week does not help them next week. This is 2010. Nothing that you said has any relevance to what is the present situation with the foreign reserves; it has no relevance to how the economy is to be made to grow now.

Mr. President, Senator Ince will have his opportunity to shout as much as he wants. In fact, he will have his opportunity up in the Ministry of Finance, whatever his role will be up there, to see if he could make it any better. And I wish him well.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Sweetheart, I deal with real men, so you cannot deal with me.

Asides.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I have no objection to being your sweetheart, except in here. Please do not address the Chair as "sweetheart". I have not been so called for a long time.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, I know the Chair has many sweethearts and I would like to think that sometimes I am counted amongst them when you and I are on the best of terms, but you know that the last sweetheart comment was not directed to you and you do not hear asides.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Since I know that you are fully seized of the Rules and that you would only address the Chair, if I hear sweetheart I have to assume it is an address to me.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Well, sweetheart, the Honourable Senator who spoke was misleading the Senate. Mr. President, our rating has gone from A to B-. The Honourable Senator must speak to that this evening. Do not mind me, speak to that.

While you are on it, let me say that there is a view that the Government is not working hard. Parliament does not meet regularly by comparison to how it used to pre-2008. The Senate now meets once a month on average. The Honourable Senate has met 28 times since January, 2008, an average of once a month for an Honourable Chamber that used to meet weekly and sometimes twice weekly. Sir, Cabinet is finished many days by half-day. There is a view that the Cabinet and politicians are not working hard.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: On a point of order. Mr. President, the Honourable Senator is misleading this Honourable Chamber. While the Honourable Senator is free to state and dramatise whatever she wills, I wish that the Honourable Senator would stick to the true facts when it comes to the meeting of the Cabinet.

I would also want to suggest that it is totally misleading but I would also suggest that in trying to speak about time, quality and quantity are not necessarily equated to quantum.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, I agree with the comment about quality over time but if there is no business to do, then the House is not meeting, nor the Senate cannot meet, and so it is really a question of production. When there is business, the House and Senate meet. If there is no business, there is no meeting.

Mr. President, the Honourable Senator has asked me to speak to the facts. It is a fact that the Honourable Senator Boyce is charged with economic and financial responsibility within this Administration, and at a time when this Administration should be talking the country through the issues, we have heard him speak, out of the 28 times that this Honourable Chamber has met, only four times. Sir, the Senator said, do not mind quantum, the four speeches cannot come to 1½ hours, and this person is leading our economic well-being.

Mr. President, you have to talk the country through the present circumstances. The Government is engaging in a public relations exercise that is focussed on Guyanese, that is focused on all other kinds of issues but not on substance. We are now hearing that there is a proposal to sell the assets or shares of the Government in the Barbados National Bank.

When this Administration took a strategic investment decision to sell some of its shares and to grow the value of the bank, to sell some of the shares and in selling some of the shares, to earn on the shares it retained, a greater value and worth than previously, I sat in the last Chamber, when the last Opposition, as they then were, vilified the present Administration for selling them. Sir, we are now going to get rid of them all together. When you sell off everything, what would be left?

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: On a point of order. Mr. President, the Honourable Senator is misleading this Honourable Senate. Sir, for Senator Thompson to suggest that this Administration is selling off the shares that it owns in the Barbados National Bank - and I deliberately waited until she finished her statement, selling off everything - is to misrepresent to the public of Barbados the fact that what was inherited, in terms of shares, was a minority shareholding in which the Government is no longer in a position to contribute to any strategic decision-making of that entity. Therefore, it is better-placed to allow Barbadian to purchase those shares, rather than holding them, and put that money to good use. Mr. President, therefore, for Senator Thompson to give the impression that the situation now is what might have obtained in the past, is erroneous and misleading.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, the minority shareholding has greater dollar value for Barbadians than when we had the whole of the bank's shares. It is a greater value. If you have something worth \$100 and your shares...

Sir, I am not even going to go into it. Let them quarrel about it. The reality is that we were vilified then but now we are about to lose all the shares.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: On a point of order. Mr. President, the Honourable Senator is misleading this Honourable Senate. Sir, to suggest that we are losing the shares, I just pointed out so that there is clarity and no misunderstanding, deliberate or otherwise as Barbadians listen, the Government has identified that it will sell those shares to Barbadians. I believe I will have to explain, so that it is understood exactly where the misleading comes from, perhaps, out of a lack of understanding of the matter of shareholding.

The Government, with a minority shareholding, cannot make strategic decisions. It has to determine whether it will simply hold those shares to collect interest or transfer ownership on behalf of the public to the public who will collect that interest. As it stands now, those funds, when converted, can be put to other uses, while allowing Barbadians to hold those shares. Therefore, in the situation of a minority shareholding, it is a win-win situation.

Mr. President, I thank you.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, Government has to have assets. When you sell those assets so that you are left with nothing, there comes a point when there is nothing more to sell. That is all I am going to say. Mr. President, people can now spin it however they wish, in relation to what happened before, what is happening now and what is going to happen in the future.

Mr. President, we made the point that it was necessary to have Public/Private Sector Partnerships to execute certain kinds of investment activities because of financing issues.

3.40 p.m.

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SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Again, we were vilified for that, but the present Administration has adopted the same policy that they have criticised us for.

The former Prime Minister made a statement that Barbadians should try to grow some more crops given the challenges which were appearing on the horizon. We were vilified for that, but I am hearing the current Administration tell people the same thing. We were vilified for our land policy, for saying that you have to let land have its economic value for investment purposes. Sir, that had nothing to do with agriculture, nothing to do with housing and nothing to do with Barbadians owning land because the Government did not pick up any of its land and sell off to non-nationals.

Sir, one of these days, we have to have a debate in this country about land and land ownership because one of the things about which I am really concerned is the fact that while it may suit political parties to quarrel with Government about policy over land, the reality is that Barbadians choose to sell their land and they are at liberty to do so, but we do not ever make that point in the debate when we are talking about land ownership.

Mr. President, I am speaking to some of the issues not touched on by the Honourable Leader of Government Business. I am speaking to some of the issues about which Barbadians are concerned, as I indicated at the beginning,

and I am going to tell you whether you like what you hear or not, the things that I am hearing Barbadians, not the Barbados Labour Party supporters, but Bajans express concern about.

Mr. President, during the No Confidence Motion on CLICO, I heard the Attorney-General say that he would become concerned if people were lining up for their money and could not get it. I simply want to ask the question, if the Administration is yet concerned.

It cannot be a response that other insurance companies collapsed in the past and there were difficulties. The reality is that there have been Bajans now lining up for well over a year trying to get pension and other monies that they have in CLICO and cannot get it.

We know of the nature of the friendship but what is the policy of the Administration relative to CLICO that would seek to allow us to feel a sense of comfort and assist Barbadians who have their pensions caught up with CLICO to know what their future is going to be, whether that investment will flounder, whether they will go into their senior years without the pension funds that they had hoped to have access to?

Mr. President, while all of this is going on, how is the Government spending money? We were given the impression that any time there is a cost overrun, it means they had steel in there. I heard one Senator get up, I think it was in the first Estimates and repeat the expression, "Steel in there, steel in there," and threw it out in relation to the project.

Yet we had the present Administration coming back to the House for an additional \$750 000 on a project overrun within the last month - should I now ask if there is steel in there - for matters which should have been budgetted for but it was sheer overruns of \$750 000. I have not heard the present Administration talked about that.

Mr. President, in a time when there are serious economic challenges, we cannot have equipment that was brought in and is not working in the National Conservation Commission's yard sitting down because it cannot get a licence at the Ministry of Public Works.

We are spending money on snow in Queen's Park. We are spending money on Community Councils at a time when we are cutting critical sectors of the economy. We are giving financial support to some of the wealthiest citizens of Barbados to hold social events for well-off people. Sir, this really is a poor use of the money.

Mr. President, we have heard, during the course of the Estimates, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition made the point by reading word for word what the IMF

was saying what its strategy for Barbados was and then repeating the language straight out of our own policy document. In some instances, there was not even an attempt to amend the language, verbatim it was copied.

Mr. President, we are given the impression, and this is why I said the Administration is running on PR. We are given the impression that there is this vigorous housing programme, now there has been an admission that in the two years less than 200 houses have been built.

We had a big fete to give away keys to 15 people, three of whom do not have mortgages at all yet. Were they on the list from before? How were they selected? What percentage of the people who were on the list before are getting houses now? Are we going to have a housing product for low-income earners because the housing product being built by the current Administration is middle-income earning, \$3 000 and up? There is no low-income product.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I rise reluctantly on a point of order. I know that in the context of this debate, it is necessary to try to make a case where one does not exist, but to suggest that there is no low-income product would suggest that the Honourable Senator has either closed her eyes to what is obtaining or, perhaps, she has a different definition to low-income product.

I would ask, so that we understand that there is no misrepresentation of fact that the Honourable Senator, after she leaves this debate, go across to the junction of Country Road and Bank Hall to an area where there was some rusted BRC for some time and where there are now three units for rental property. I cannot, off the top of my head, say how much there are.

She can also take a visit to Carrington's Village and she will see similar accommodation. I know that the Honourable Senator was Minister of Housing in a previous dispensation and would want to compare, but please compare facts with facts.

I thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: One of the facts is that I can tell you that the housing at Carrington Village that the acquisition for that, I brought it in the Parliament and, indeed, some of the houses that are going up on lands now, are on lands where the acquisition and the infrastructural work were done by the Barbados Labour Party and it is good that they are continuing our projects.

Sir, when I say there are no low-income housing solutions, I reiterate it, because the product being sold within the National Housing Corporation is a middle-

income product. It is not for low-income earners. Sir, that cannot be contested because the income has to be \$3 500 and up. If \$3 500 is now low income salary then, perhaps, I do have the incorrect definition.

Mr. President, we are here in these Estimates still concerned about the cost of living that the Democratic Labour Party promised would be their first order of business. We are still concerned about the fact that the Democratic Labour Party committed to taking VAT off and lowering the prices on a large basket of goods, but we have not heard anything more about that.

The last Administration committed to taking VAT off electricity bills but we have not heard anything more about that.

S/A28/15:50 Sequence 23

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SENATOR J. INCE: On a point of order. Senator Thompson is misleading the Chamber.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Just one moment. I want to establish for the Senate today, I am not Chairman of anything. I have never been Chairman of anything and I do not wish to be addressed as Chairman again by any Senator, please. You may proceed.

SENATOR J. INCE: Mr. President, Senator Thompson is misleading this Upper Chamber. I have never heard, I have never read, I have never seen any document of the Democratic Labour Party that said that we were going to remove VAT from electricity bills. That is misleading this Upper Chamber. I would like Senator Thompson to produce the evidence where the Democratic Labour Party categorically stated, electronically or otherwise that we were going to remove the VAT from electricity bills.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, I continue. They also promised - well things like the tax-free vehicles for civil servants and so on. I never really took that seriously, and the civil servants have not got it. They promised, I heard with my own ears, Ambassador Kellman say that there would have been a fishing agreement by July 2009. We are nearly at July again. We have not had it. I have heard that there is going to be some large chain, and their solution now to cost of living and food prices is to bring in one of the bigger chains and introduce competition into the market.

Sir, I merely wish to caution. Already small businesses, in shops, because of the fall in sales, are under pressure; because of the increase in utility bills are under pressure; because of the increases in things like liquor

licences are under pressure. Please do not bring in one of these mega chains to shut them down all together. I only want to appeal to the Democratic Labour Party not to shut them down.

SENATOR J. INCE: On a point of order. Senator Thompson is misleading this Upper Chamber. The present Government stated that they were having discussions. That is totally different from bringing in. She stated that the Government is bringing in. The Government said that they are having preliminary discussions with an international food chain, so I would like Senator Thompson to get her statements correct, not bringing, having preliminary discussions.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: I thank Senator Ince for the correction, but I want to say to Senator Ince that I am not entirely foolish. Sir, when one has preliminary discussions, go away we do not want you is not a discussion. It is a dismissal, so if they are having discussions, what are the discussions for, if not to bring them in?

I have heard the Prime Minister say with my own ears, that is part of the policy to introduce competition by bringing in these mega chains, that is a norm. It is also all over Barbados as well, who are going to be the large Democratic Labour Party investors in this mega store.

I am saying that it will have an impact on small farmers, small businesses and small shops, so whenever you introduce mega chains that can have large economies of scale, et cetera, whereas one or two people who shop there may get cheaper prices, at the end of the day, there is an overall detrimental effect, because they have the capacity to force smaller businesses out of business.

What are the discussions about if they are not coming? Why are you having discussions if they are not coming? Courtship is not marriage. I agree with that, but when you do not want who is courting you, you tell them not to come back. You do not entertain them with discussions, especially at a time when you should be busy dealing with other matters of great importance. If you were not going to have them, then tell them so. Do not be in discussions.

Sir, I have pointed out some of the Democratic Labour Party's promises that the public of Barbados is still waiting for the Democratic Labour Party to act on.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: I am not the one who has been demoting him all day. I would not do it, Sir.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Sir, I do not demote you. I do not understand why the Other Side is so anxious to reduce you to a Chairman. Mr. President, please.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, an offshore drilling programme is a long-term programme, not a short-term programme. That point was always made. I really do not want persons who have no depth, in terms of the issues to be addressed, to try not to come with the Democratic Labour Party's smoke screens and PR, because that is what we are going to hear.

I was making the point about housing, and in all this time they committed to doing 2 500 houses a year, or something; 2 000 lots and 2 500 houses over a year or term, or something of that sort. It has not happened. It is not happening and if in two years they have built less than 200, in a five-year term they cannot and will not build the 2 500 to which they committed. That is basic.

Equally, I am deeply concerned about the fact that a large number of people within the housing areas in this country who were given the impression that they were going to get title deeds quickly and would be owning their own homes. It has not happened. I made the point that there are going to- It is not enough to try to pass it over on the lawyers who are involved in the process. The reality is, that is yet another failed promise from the Democratic Labour Party, another unfulfilled promise.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Yes. I am not accustomed reading Nursery Rhymes. I read serious stuff.

Sir, just by the way, for those, I know there are one or two who read, I would really wish to recommend two very interesting books that have been written, I think there are interesting, on the market crash. One is actually called "Crash", by John Kenneth Galbraith, when he looks at the 1929 and 1930 market crash.

Another one, I do not remember the author, called "Laws of Finance" that looks at the whole issue of what brought down the international financial markets, as they existed before. There are very interesting lessons. Just by the way as we were talking about books and reading.

Asides.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, please.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: All I am suggesting is, the author has an Indian name. I do not recall it. Well at least I read. The Senator who is hassling me, I know that he does not read. It is clear from the quality of his speeches.

Sir, with that I turn to the issue of energy. There is no ...

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: I am not attempting to tell the Administration what energy policy to pursue.

SA28 16.00 p.m. Sequences 24

Monday, March 22, 2010

Estimates - Senate A28, Sequence 25, 4.00 p.m.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: I am simply going to make the point that where you have an energy price that is floating constantly in a small economy, it drives up the price of goods and doing business.

Let me use a simple example. If you call a freighter, and ask him what is the price of dropping a load of goods from St. Peter to St. Philip, he would set his price at the highest level and tell you what that price is, simply because from day to day, he does not know what his input or petroleum price is going to be and it is happening with all goods and services.

With the increase of the price of water, with the increase in the price of electricity, with the increase in the prices of oil and these are prices that the Democratic Labour Party has passed on to the consumer - The increase in water prices is not the international economy. The increase in electricity prices, the increase in prices in the Budget of 2008 was not the international economy. The increase in taxation or every sector of the economy in 2008 was not the international economy. These are the decisions of the present Administration.

In its Budget, the Government promised that it would take certain bold steps in relation to energy. Nobody could have imagined that it was to increase the price. In last year's Estimates or the year before, there was an alternative fuel project that we had left there. The money for it was in the Budget. It has not been done. The Prime Minister promised, in his Budget of last year that we would set up Independent Power Producers (IPPs) from green or renewable sources that would be allowed to sell to BL&P and feed into the national grid. Sir, that came straight out of the Barbados Labour Party's energy policy, laid in Parliament in either September or October of 2007 and was

on page 36 of the Barbados Labour Party's Manifesto, but nothing has happened, even though the Prime Minister committed to it in his last Budget, as part of his energy strategy.

In addition to that, Sir, the IDB has a country programme. It says in the country programme under energy that the energy policy would be four things, renewables, energy efficiency and it lays out that strategy. Do you know, Mr. President, that was the exact same strategy already laid out in the Barbados National Energy Policy of 2007, and that we are paying IDB a loan of \$1.3 million, to come back and tell us the same things, to write down the same things that were already written in the National Policy three years ago.

Sir, that is what we talked about, how we spend money. We are not to trust ourselves? Sir, that energy policy was written here in Barbados by Barbadians. It has stood the test of evaluation. We do not have to spend money to get the same thing done, to repeat the same things and, in some cases, in the same words that have already been determined.

The Democratic Labour Party Administration is reaping a windfall of taxes on energy products and I say that, Mr. President, because the higher the price is, the more VAT is collected. Customs and Excise collected, so the higher the price is at the pump, the more taxes the Administration is getting. There must be a mechanism that the Administration...

SENATOR J. INCE: Mr. President, on a point of order. Senator Thompson is misleading this Upper Chamber. If the price of petroleum products were fixed, Senator Thompson may have used the argument that this Administration is getting unlimited revenue from energy products.

The price of the product fluctuates and is driven by external market forces that this present Administration has no control over, but if we had used her method, we would have been \$180 million in debt, six months, based on her method where the former Administration was subsidising diesel through debt. That is why we are now facing a bill of \$180 million.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, diesel was not subsidised through debt. The policy pursued by the last Administration on energy, stemmed from the fact that energy is at the base of every activity, human development, your commercial activity, your competitiveness.

We quarrel about subsidies. To me, that is foolishness and I will tell you why. The American Government subsidised it as agricultural industry, and

apologised to anybody for it, so they could sell a hamburger at McDonalds for \$0.50 or \$1 or a drink for \$.10 whatever it sells at. Sir, the point I am making is that if we want to find a certain level of competitiveness and support for our industries, we have to give support mechanisms.

Sir, the BNOC is a Government company. It does not have to make huge profits all the time. When the prices are down, based on what they purchase or sell at, they may make some losses. I can also say that there is a cyclical activity that causes BNOC to reap windfalls and they do not ever tell the Government when they are reaping those windfalls on the prices.

Sir, the \$180 million could have been dealt with quickly without putting the cost on everybody in the country, suppressing activity, reducing competitiveness, causing hardship. It did not have to be like that, Sir.

Mr. President, when the price went up, in order to make it more cheaply available to the public, we would reduce the level of Excise Tax so that the price to the consumer when it went up on the international market, the level of Excise Tax was reduced to the price that passed through to the consumer was not the full burden of the international price. These burdens have a cascading effect, in terms of wider pricing in the economy.

Equally, Sir, although one got the impression in here there were serious issues in health that they would have sorted out within weeks, we now have the situation, where the Health Ministry is already reduced by a quarter of what it used to be.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Sir, the Health Ministry that you may have been familiar with, in terms of the breadth and scope, is no longer the Health Ministry today. It is a minor entity by comparison.

Sir, the problem is, and I do not want to say because I feel that the country feels that if mechanisms are to work, they would be supportive of them, but we have elevators boarded up, dialysis patients crying out, the number of negligence cases and complaints are rising. There is a situation where you have a Minister, you have a CEO at the hospital and another person has been put in, Sir, and from what I heard the Prime Minister say during the Press Conference, that individual is to be responsible for a future development project and, again, we are into uncertainty with the Administration because, at one time, you heard they are to build a new hospital, then you heard they are to refurbish the hospital.

Estimates - Senate A28, Sequence 25, 16:10:14

Monday, March 22, 2010

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: You do not know which they are doing. I just want to say that I support the construction of a new hospital.

SENATOR Mrs. V. I. SANDIFORD-GARNER: On a point of order. Mr. President, I would have to say that the Senator is misleading this Chamber on the basis that only on Friday of this week and on Saturday of this week, the Government of Barbados made it clear where we were as regard the negotiations whether we would be building a new hospital or enhancing the hospital.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: I would wish to thank the Senator for her intervention. I really did not hear what the announcement was, but the fact that an announcement was made by this Administration does not mean that it is going to happen because there have been many announcements by this Administration that we are still waiting to see happen. The truth is that the Government is virtually at half term...

SENATOR Mrs. V. I. SANDIFORD-GARNER: On a point of clarification.

Asides.

SENATOR Mrs. V. I. SANDIFORD-GARNER: Mr. President, I said, and I am saying it on a point of clarification...

Asides.

SENATOR Mrs. V. I. SANDIFORD-GARNER: Sir, a point of order to clarify my position.

Asides.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I understand. Wait just a moment, please. I do not expect any Senator to tell the Chair what to do. The Chair understood that the Honourable Senator was elucidating a point of order. The Chair understood that. You cannot tell the Chair what the Chair understood. You may question the Chair's capacity to understand but not what the Chair understood. I trust you would not endeavour to go down that road again. Senator, you have the Floor.

SENATOR Mrs. V. I. SANDIFORD-GARNER: Sir, I said that in the media on Friday and on Saturday just past, the Government stated its position where we were with discussions whether we were having a new hospital or an enhanced hospital.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, that was merely a repetition. I may not know the Rules as

well as you but it seems to me that the Rules do not allow for you to elucidate your own point of order.

Mr. President, let me say this. I am not attempting to misquote or to mislead. I simply said I thank the Senator for what she said because I did not hear the announcement on Friday. I repeat now that the fact the Government made an announcement or a pronouncement on Friday or Thursday has no meaning because it does not mean that whatever they said is going to happen. I did not hear it, whatever it was, but it has no meaning.

I am making the point that we are at mid-term. It takes a long time for certain projects and certain activities to take place. In June, the Government will be at the half-way mark of five years. What really has happened in the last two and a half years? After the halfway point, the Prime Minister can call an election at three years, at four years or at four and a half years. After the halfway point you could be facing an election at any time. I am not even going to ask what the Government, but what does the public have to show for the last two and a half years? I imagine that some of them might attempt to answer that.

I would like to hear what is really the relationship between the new post, or the person who has been imposed on the hospital, the role versus the role of the CEO, versus the Board, versus the Minister. In a structure that is established, I would like to see this defined and how it is going to work.

In our first Estimates, since we were constituted as a Senate in this way, I made the point, when people were talking about they were going to do this and they were going to do that and so on, that the problems at the hospital are longstanding, that you are dealing with a lot of systemic issues that have been there for a long time in different guises because of many, many underlying currents, many existing structures, entrenched cultures and all kinds of things.

I am not saying that they should not be battled with or that you do not have to address them, I was simply saying then that it is not as easy to deal with the problems at the hospital as one would have thought.

Mr. President, clearly the fact that there is now a new structure for dealing with the hospital suggests that the Prime Minister has come to the same conclusion. When I said that the problems were systemic and not easily addressed, some Senators would recall how I was laughed at and poohed-poohed by a certain Honourable Senator who has now departed from this Chamber as if there is no such thing as a systemic problem.

I am going to say this. I have just highlighted some of the concerns in relation to the hospital. I am not going to

attempt to speak to the future in whether there would be success or not. We have one tertiary hospital. It is the only thing that stands between morbidity, mortality, good health and the public, so everybody wishes that the system would work.

Estimates are not about people and expenditure only but about the generation of revenues to carry to the people policies, to build the social capital, to help with social growth, to do the physical development and to deal with the hospital and other areas, so in terms of generating revenues, how are revenues to be earned relative to the tourism sector?

We are in the winter season with the numbers down. Cruise numbers are slightly up, but the dollar spend by the tourist is significantly down. British Airways brings in 42 per cent of our tourists, so yes we must grow new markets like Canada and so on, but you have to protect what is your cash cow.

How are these Estimates dealing with the drop in the tourism spend? I make this point against the fact that last year the Government extended a stimulus facility of \$25 million in support to the tourism sector. There were \$79 million in claims. This year no money at all has been put in a tourism stimulus package or a tourism support package, so the sector is down. In winter, we are in trouble. Last year, \$25 million went in, \$79 million in claims, and nothing on it this year.

Last year in the first Estimates of 2008, I made a point relative to the Estimates. I remember that when the Honourable Senator Boyce spoke in one of his four speeches, he said that when X Ministry came, they got what they wanted and when Y Ministry came they got what they wanted and agency Z got what it wanted, and there was a loud thumping on the desk, a lot of self congratulatory rubbish and I wondered...

Senate A28 Sequence 26

4.20 p.m.

Monday, March 22, 2010

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Thompson, I think you are fully seized of Rule 34 of this Honourable Senate about debate, that we are not to cast aspersions or make insulting language in either House. I wish you would continue in a different vein.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, I apologise. That definitely was a breach. If people want to talk about rubbish, yes, I did a garbage route. I do not apologise for it. I do not regret it. Sir, I did not take any

photographers or anybody with me. People who saw me on the route called the Press but I, certainly, did not.

Mr. President, that was perhaps about 12 years ago. It certainly has no relevance for anything.

Asides.

SeENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Well, I was elected three times. How many times were you elected?

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Not you, Mr. President.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Yes, Sir. I know that but there are others who are heckling me, who were elected zero times but who are telling me what came off for me and what did not come off.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Honourable Senator, I not having heckled you, I expect you to continue to address the Chair. Ignore those who "heckle" you.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Then I crave for the protection of the Chair.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I promise you that you will continue to get the protection of the Chair.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: The Chair must exert itself more strongly. Mr. President, I know you are capable of vigorous exertion, exert yourself on my behalf.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I am not even going to ask you how you know these matters.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, I would not attempt to answer you here. Sir, I was making the point that there was vigorous thumping of the Table when in making the speech, the Honourable Senator was saying that people got what they came for. Can the Honourable Senator say that now? At the time I could not understand what the thumping was about because the reality is that an agency that got what it came for means nothing, relative to their capacity to spend it, whether they really needed it or what it had to do with the overall financing.

What I want to hear the others not thump the Table but speak to Barbadians about now is the fact that there has

been a cut in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital budget of \$15 million. Sir, even with that cut, what the Queen Elizabeth Hospital came and asked for was \$25 million, more than they have been given. Please tell the public how healthcare is to be delivered in the context of that cut. Do not mind me picking up garbage, deal with that cut. Deal with the fact that Welfare has been cut by \$3 million and by \$7 million from the previous year. Talk to me and to the public, those who are charged with responsibility. Do not sit mute and silent. Do not mind trying to mock me. Deal with the fact that Housing has been cut by \$10 million. Tell me about how people who are ill and dying would deal with the fact that the Barbados Drug Service was cut by \$14 million.

Let us hear how you plan to deal with the Prison Vote which was cut by \$3 million. Talk to me about the Police who were promised all kinds of things and now the Police Vote has been cut by \$5 million. Tell me about the National Assistance Board that has been cut by \$1.2 million. Tell me about the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) that has been cut by \$1 million. Tell me about the Special Technical Assistance Programme for small businesses that has been cut by \$2 million.

Sir, those are the things the Honourable Senator must talk about. The public accepts that you made criticisms of the Barbados Labour Party. We are no longer the Government. People wanted change. They have gotten shortchanged. Talk to them about how you are going to take them into the future. Make people comfortable. Tell them that the night is not dark and long and that you are, in fact, providing illumination.

These are the cuts that the public must hear about because of the nature of the programme and service delivery, that could and will be compromised as a result of these changes. While you are talking about that, talk to me about the \$46 million that has been cut from the University of the West Indies budget. Sir, I share Senator McClean's concerns about the improvement of quality, et cetera.

Meanwhile, there are people in the programme and it costs "X" dollars. It is a mathematical formula. It is not like a projection for if you are going to win Elections or not. That is speculation. It is a mathematical formula. It costs "X" dollars to keep a student in university. If you have "Y" students, "X" by "Y" equals "Z". Therefore, if you cut by \$46 million, please tell me what is the plan to deal with the university?

Mr. President, the Honourable Senator must talk to me about the fact that in 2007 there were 12 441 people unemployed, costing us \$27 million in outlay from the National Insurance Scheme and that at the end of 2008, after you all had been there for only one year, the number grew to 13 400, costing \$33 million. At the end of 2009, the figure was 17 000, costing \$46 million. Let the Prime

Minister tell the unemployed where he is going, where he is taking them. Let the Prime Minister tell us how the economy is going to be made to work in the context of all the downturns and in the context of the cuts. Tell me how people are going to get support when they turn to the Government and they are facing all these cuts.

Meanwhile, we are in a position where small businesses are under pressure. That Special Technical Assistance Fund was established to give grants to small businesses. Sir, when I talk about silence and talking the country through the problems and so on, it cannot be comforting to a small business person to hear the Minister responsible say, as I heard the Minister responsible say on the radio, well, he does not know what to tell the people to do in the present circumstances, except, perhaps, to try to see if they could gain some efficiencies and improve productivity.

Mr. President, that is the most lame, hapless, helpless expression to come from a Minister who has responsibility for a subject area and the Press is saying, businesses are collapsing, small businesses are under pressure, you have now cut the Special Technical Assistant Fund, what is your response, and that was the expression from the Minister with responsibility.

Mr. President, the Honourable Senator must talk to me about the fact that there is a consolidation among white contractors, that all the business of the National Housing Corporation and the Government is going only to two or three large firms, but small contractors are being left out.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: On a point of order. Mr. President, the Honourable Senator is misleading this Honourable Chamber. Sir, the Honourable Senator has misled this Honourable Senate on several occasions and I let them slip, but for the Honourable Senator to suggest that the Minister of Housing and Lands is giving contracts to a few white contractors and leave it at that, is totally incorrect. Mr. President, it is very offensive.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I would not reflect on the Honourable Senator's tenure as Minister of Housing and Lands. That is not why I am on my feet, but I think that we have to be correct in our statements, even when we want to play to an audience. We are speaking to bigger audience, when we speak to them we should not get carried away by the reach of our voices.

In fact, there is a greater burden of responsibility on our shoulders to tell the facts as they are. Therefore, for the Honourable Senator to make that statement is misleading and offensive.

It also denies the fact that a number of contractors have been involved in the housing programmes that have been undertaken by this Government. It is true that some of those contractors are white, and they should get business. Sir, even though they are white, they are Barbadians like all of us. Therefore, to make those kinds of statement is to suggest that something is wrong. Sir, I am very disappointed that these misrepresentations of the fact continue.

4.30 p.m.

Monday, March 22, 2010

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, let me state this. We have white Barbadians, black Barbadians, Indian Barbadians and Barbadians of all kinds of mixed heritage now.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I am not going to be allowing discussion of the racial stock of Barbados. I am not going to allow it, so could we veer off of this and move on.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: The point I am making, Sir, is that all contractors have to live, not just big ones and they are too many small contractors, invariably they are black, whose businesses are going under. They are too many who are losing equipment and having to sell out. Sir, in the last few months you had some who lost their homes.

Mr. President, the problem with these firms, the ones about which I was speaking - and there are three, in particular, to whom all the work is going. I do not have anything against them personally...

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I rise on a point of order. The Honourable Senator just said there are three to whom all the work is going and that is to repeat the misinformation again.

I think that in order to ensure that there is understanding, perhaps, I should explain briefly what has taken place so that the Honourable Senator does not, through her ignorance or lack of knowledge of the facts, mislead Barbadians.

Mr. President, in an effort to pursue the housing policy of this Administration, in the context of the financial constraints that we would have inherited, Sir, and in order not to negatively affect or impact the balance of payment situation, the deficit and all those things that people like to roll out, one of the strategies of starting the housing would have been to identify business persons who had access to capital to get projects going, as a start, and that has been part of the process.

Mr. President, even though that has been happening, some of these large contractors, to whom the Honourable Senator referred, are also subcontracting. We have seen some houses which have been completed and handed over to Barbadians contracted by persons other than those contractors to whom she has referred. Sir, to persist in making references to two people or three persons getting all the work is to misrepresent the facts, Mr. President.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Point made.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Sir, I will correct. They are not getting all the work they are getting the vast majority of it. I am saying that we have to find a way because construction was one of the drivers of the economy of employment. If you look at the Central Bank Report, you are seeing that aspects of the industry are down by 33 per cent and I am simply asking, Sir, that they would be corrected and that the work should be spread. Sir, that is all that I am asking for. Mr. President, it is being made out as if I am attacking certain people. Sir, on the contrary, I am saying that I am very happy for them, but spread it so that other people can get. I imagine that I will hear all kinds of things about myself here, the usual untruths repeated.

Mr. President, I want also to make the point that a similar kind of consolidation is affecting taxi drivers who work in the Port. Sir, a lot of them are complaining that they are getting no business and big vehicles are coming in and taking out all of the tourists.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I rise on a point of order. Again, the Honourable Senator is misleading the Senate and, again, I need to clarify.

As a former director of Bridgetown Cruise Terminal from its inception until January 16, 2008, I can say that the problems in relation to the distribution at the Port have very little to do with this Administration and very much to do with the failure of the previous Administration to intervene in a constructive way to assist individual taxi drivers in understanding and accessing business at the Port, given the way in which cruise lines do business and to make a suggestion about large vehicles coming in, is to misrepresent the situation.

Mr. President, you had a situation where the majority of business in terms of transport occurs before a passenger even sets his foot on a cruise, and to enter into that business there are special arrangements that taxi drivers would have to be assisted in entering. Sir, for the 15 years that I was a director of that organisation which facilitates cruise tourism, nothing of major significance was done by the previous Administration. Sir, to try to create that situation with one of housing, is obviously misleading this Chamber and the people of Barbados, Mr. President.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Thank you for helping me because I was very concerned, and my colleague on my left was very concerned, because we thought for one moment they were white taxi drivers at the Port.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: No, Sir. There are black taxi drivers that are being affected. I heard the Honourable Senators' explanation but do not give it to me. If there was a problem explain to the taxi drivers why after two years and a quarter they are feeling affected that they are not getting a fair share of the business.

Like I have said, quarrel with me, but I am only repeating some of the complaints that I am hearing, but if it is not true then they have no reason to complain, but those who are earning a living as taxi drivers would know what they are and what they are not encountering.

Equally, persons who have small businesses like nail technicians, hairdressers and so on, who are affected by the downturn in the economy by people not having disposable income, by the increase in utility prices and so on, are really having a difficult time carrying on business.

I would want to urge the Administration, do not mind attacking me on necessarily my language, look to the fundamental problem which is underlying that about which people are complaining and address that. There needs to be a support mechanism for small businesses to stop them from collapsing under the weight of the present economic conditions. Sir, that is all I am saying.

Mr. President, I do not know what the situation is on salary freezing and I am not going to speak to that. I would want to make the point, however, that if every aspect of cost in the economy goes up, if your bottled gas goes up, your electricity goes up, your water goes up...

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: You are talking about increases of 75 per cent and then a drop of 2 per cent or 5 per cent. You are still up 73 per cent depending on the overall amount. The initial increase in fuel prices was, at least, 70 per cent. The increase in water rates was 60 per cent or 66 per cent.

Sir, if you tinker with it, yes, there may be a variation of two cents at the pump next week or this Friday, but the reality is that the product is still up by 70 per cent, or 75 per cent, so satisfy yourself that you have done a little tinkering and that all is well because it went down by 0.2 cents yesterday, because I do not know whose tank that fills up.

Mr. President, the point I am making is that everything is going up. If you are running a business all

your inputs have gone up. You are paying increased taxes on your motor vehicle. You are paying increases on your land tax and on every aspect. If you are paying all these increases, and these are increases imposed by the Government, they have given you a salary cut by another name because your salary cannot go as far. It cannot buy the goods and services in the economy.

S/A28/16:40 Sequence 28

Monday, March 22, 2010

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: In essence, we have come full circle from 1994 back to 1994 again, International Monetary Fund intervention, bus fare solutions...

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Sir, I must rise on a point of order. The Honourable Senator said that we have come full circle from 1994 to 1994, International Monetary Fund interventions. Again, that boogey man of the International Monetary Fund and the way it is said misleads the Chamber and the public. Can she tell us how the International Monetary Fund has intervened in the last two years in a way that it has not "intervened in the past?"

I took great pains to explain the relationship of this country with the International Monetary Fund in anticipation of exactly what we heard just now. Therefore, I would want, in the interest of clarity and correctness, that the Honourable Senator explains International Monetary Fund interventions and we have come full circle from 1994 to 1994.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: We are back to bus fare solutions and nobody is angry at young people getting free bus rides. The challenge is this. When you are putting deep cuts in critical services like health and the other sectors, where is the money to pay for these other elements? Somebody has to pay for them.

I am making the point that our position, after solid growth, has been and is now being eroded as a result of the decisions being taken by the current Administration as a result of the increases, as a result of the policies being pursued.

I explained, during the course of my comments, that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, who in terms of projecting what our deficit would be, was exactly on mark. She was much more accurate in projecting what the outcome and the implications of the Budgetary Proposals of last year were, what the financial consequences would be. I am making the point that what we are seeing is a lack of creativity, because social policy at the...

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I really hesitate to rise on a point of order. I specifically indicated before the long comments that were made after I sat, that the Honourable Senator has misled this Chamber by speaking of International Monetary Fund interventions. In the interest of clarity I asked for that to be explained, and for the record. I heard nothing or no response directly, or indirectly, to my request for clarification, the matter on which I rose on a point of order.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Thompson, do you wish to explain International Monetary Fund intervention?

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, the Honourable Senator can tell her Side what to do, but not me. I do not have to explain it, because the public now knows when we were initially making the point that we were getting loans, that conditionalities were going to be imposed, that there were certain things that we would have to follow.

The Prime Minister has said in a Press Conference that he knows what the International Monetary Fund wants of us and there are certain things that we have to do and he has already given certain directives commensurate with that to civil servants. I heard that in a Press Conference given by the Prime Minister.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, on a point of order. The Honourable Senator is misleading this Chamber. She is attributing statements to the Honourable Prime Minister which I would ask that she can substantiate, because they certainly sound like nothing that Honourable Members on This Side can recall, or have seen or heard.

It is difficult for us to proceed in a manner where things are thrown like that loosely, and then suggesting that I cannot tell her what to do. I am not attempting to tell anybody what to do. I am simply trying to abide by the Rules of this Honourable Senate Chamber.

Where statements are made that are misleading or inaccurate, they are drawn through you, Sir, to that person and they are asked to either clarify or substantiate. That is what I have requested before, and this is what I request now. We need to take this process seriously.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Thompson.

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

Sir, I want, therefore, to ask the Administration rather than spending time attacking me, to indicate how these issues that I have been raising are going to be addressed. I am not going to worry to attempt to answer the

Honourable Senator McClean, because we had this discussion in here before. Since then, the International Monetary Fund's Country Report was made public. The Honourable Senator cannot tell me what I heard with my own ears.

Asides.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, please.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: There are issues which the Government needs to address, not for me, for the country, and poohing me and throwing off your hands all evening and saying I doing this and I doing that...

Mr. PRESIDENT: I wish to draw to your attention that I have not poohed-poohed you, nor have I thrown off my hands. I would like you to address the Chair.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: I apologise, Sir.

Mr. PRESIDENT: One of the things I would like you to do is, if you are going to make statements and there is a request for an explanation, please explain it. That would make the debate go a lot different from how it has been going. I am not happy with the way the debate has been going. Perhaps, my happiness is not important.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, the public is equally unhappy with the performance of the Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I wish to believe that when the public listens to the presentations in the Senate, that the public will be happy with the quality of the presentation from the Senate. Since it is my responsibility to keep those presentations within a certain ambit, I wish to be able to say to the public, as I drive along and pass along, that all is well.

If, therefore, a Senator rises on a point of order and asks for an explanation, and there is no explanation, the debate becomes truncated. I am sure the Senator knows. I am positive the Senator knows.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, the one thing I am not going to do is to use up the remaining time that I have, which is very short, attempting to give explanations to the Honourable Leader of Government Business on a matter which I already spoke on in here, and the public is at liberty to make a judgment, because they will see the events unfold over time.

Mr. PRESIDENT: You have to make the President comfortable when you use language in here and subsequently refuse to explain what you mean. I draw to

your attention, Senator, that you said, "IMF interventions". International Monetary Fund interventions have a certain meaning in the community, and you were asked to explain what you meant by International Monetary Fund interventions. You have not done so. Instead you are taking umbrage at the rulings of the Chair.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, I take no umbrage at the ruling of the Chair.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I apologise to you. The President does make the odd error, and I thought you had taken umbrage. I apologise.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: There is no reason for you to do so, Sir. You have a role and I have one, so I do not take any umbrage at the Chair.

Sir, my point is, the Government has borrowed money from the IMF. The International Monetary Fund's money comes invariably with some kind of conditionalities that we have been having discussions with the IMF, that we are seeing a policy formula adopted, which is an International Monetary Fund policy formula.

SA28 16.50 p.m. Sequence 29

Monday, March 22, 2010

Estimates - Senate A28, Sequence 30, 4.50 p.m.

SENATOR J.INCE: Mr. President, on a point of order. Senator Thompson is misleading this Upper Chamber. The Government of Barbados has not borrowed any money from the IMF, and I would like Senator Thompson to produce the evidence that this Government has borrowed money from the IMF.

I can state, categorically, the Government of Barbados has never, and has no intentions of borrowing monies from the IMF. Senator Thompson should read our MediumTerm Development Strategy and she would see what is going to be the result. Sir, I would like her to produce the evidence. I tell you we are going to have a long evening.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The President does not intend to have a long evening.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, I have read the Medium-Term Strategy. I also said what I heard the Prime Minister say with my own ears. I do not have any time left to deal with it.

Sir, let me say that in 22 months, we have seen the complexion in here changed - and I am not here talking about racial or any other complexion except in terms of sheer numbers - by nearly 50 per cent on That Side.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: No. Mr. President, where there are only two, any of the two can go.

Asides.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order please, order please, order please.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Sir, when you have such large numbers, you do not expect to be down on your numbers so significantly in a two-year period. We have seen several Board Chairs get changed and re changed. We have seen the resignation of several Board Members and it is relevant because what is happening is that the Government is not settling down to business.

Sir, you now have some Ministers that have had three portfolios in the 21 months. A Minister cannot find his feet, develop policy, settle in and do business. After many years, you now have a tinkering with the structure and the largest structure of Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries, Directors and Executive Directors that this country has ever seen but we are not getting value for money.

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I need to rise on a point of order. While the Honourable Senator is waxing warm, I hope she recognises that no one was fired, first of all. Mr. President, the whole notion of value for money is a judgment call on her part and to suggest that, she misleads.

The Honourable Member may understand changes as it relates to firing, but in relation to changes, it also speaks about versatility, it also speaks about being able to be proactive in the light of the changes and directions in which we want to go. I really would want that when the Honourable Member speaks to recognise that she misleads by making some of those statements about lack of value for money.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, it is a judgment of the public, Sir, that I am repeating. The truth is, it is the public that is saying that in shuffling and in tinkering, shuffling and reshuffling, the Prime Minister is only shuffling dead weight, light weight and overweight and in the process, Bajans are getting obliterated. Mr. President, that is the judgment of the public, Sir.

I am much obliged to you, Sir.

SUSPENSION

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended for 20 minutes until 5.20 p.m.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Honourable Senators, the motion before the Senate is to facilitate a matter that has been discussed with the Chair, prior to the motion.

The question that the Senate be now suspended for 20 minutes until 5:20 was put to the Senate and agreed to and Mr. PRESIDENT suspended the Sitting accordingly.

Estimates - Senate A28, Sequence 30, 16:55:54

Monday, March 22, 2010

RESUMPTION

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

SENATOR Dr. F. L. CHANDLER: Mr. President, I would like to make a number of comments on topics related to the Appropriation Bill. I would leave the detailed discussion and analysis of the actual figures to the Economists and those qualified in these matters.

Mr. President, although I agree with budget cuts in the present condition, these need to be sensible. For example, there is no point having enough just to pay salaries if there is nothing to work with. I certainly do not agree that Government should increase staff. This has been claimed by some. I do know if it is so, but if it is so, I would not agree with Government increasing staff at this time.

With regard to the Ministry of Agriculture, I was wondering why almost half of the budget goes to the Head, Policy Formulation, General Management and Coordination. With all this emphasis on coordinating and management, I look forward to some very positive output from this Ministry.

I have always wondered why the Estimates cannot be presented in a more straight-forward format. Some people asked me if items are in the Estimates and I find it difficult to tell, it is like looking for a needle in a haystack.

There are so many possible ways in which an item could be couched that one is never really sure if it is there and one item seems to appear in many different places, so it is difficult to tell what the total spent on that item is. Of course, it is easy to hide things, things that might not be too popular, using this format.

I have heard Ministries bragging about how they were the first to get their Estimates in and how they finished their Estimates on time as if it is some great achievement. I do not think that this is important at all. What is important is the way the monies are spent and what return the taxpayer gets for his dollar, which, in my estimation, is ridiculously low in some instances.

Senator McClean spoke about the need to maximise the use of resources and I, certainly, agree with her and hope that this would be done. At the first Sitting of this session of the Senate in 2008, one Honourable Senator noted that the Other Place was for entertainment and this Honourable Chamber was for education. Well, Mr. President, we were entertained last week. Now I hope that we would seek to educate, try to assess problems in a meaningful way and work together as a team to find solutions for the country.

We hear a lot about Team Barbados, but we must turn these words into a reality and real positive action. The whole country must be involved. I think Senator McClean mentioned this too.

Senate A28 Sequence 31

5.10 p.m.

Monday, March 22, 2010

SENATOR Dr. F. L. CHANDLER: Mr. President, the attitude must change from one of why it cannot be done to one of how it can be done and how it must be done. I believe Sir Winston Churchill referred to this as a facilitative attitude.

Mr. President, I agree that our skills have to improve, and a lot of emphasis has been placed on having a graduate in every household, but I do not think that this in itself is the answer. As I said many times before, there is no degree in attitude and attitude is one of the most important factors in bringing about positive change. I think we must try to encourage this facilitative attitude from the level of primary school.

Mr. President, Barbadians have received so-called free education at all levels, which is a good thing, but I think that at the tertiary training which is funded by taxpayers, must fit the disciplines that are required by the country. We do not need hundreds of social scientists, and this seems to be the chosen field of the majority of students at the moment.

I understand too that there are students who go from Faculty to Faculty getting First Degree after First Degree before entering into the world of work. I think this should be stopped because professional students are not what we

need. Sir, I believe some incentive should be given to students for completing degrees in a reasonable time. There needs to be more control over this process, in my opinion, maybe giving funding for a certain number of credits and anything after this must be funded by the student.

Mr. President, I certainly agree with Senator McClean about the acceptance of the low matriculation students, comparing this versus their going back to school. At this time, I would like to connect it with the University of the West Indies, I would like to congratulate the Principal on the way he is improving the infrastructure of the University of the West Indies and I hope that Government Departments would emulate this and maintain their buildings in a similar way.

Mr. President, we also have to look at the quality of students coming out not only from the University of the West Indies but from the Barbados Community College and Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic. It is difficult to understand how we have these two technical institutions, as well as the Skills Training Programme, yet it is almost impossible to find an electrician, carpenter or mason. If you do get them to come, they do not always seem to know what they are doing. They often leave the job unfinished. What I have to do usually is to wait for the annual visit of my brother, who is about to come. He is an engineer and lives in Canada, or a visit from my brother-in-law, who is a farmer, who can right the wrongs that have been wrought on me by these people.

Mr. President, recently I asked someone who is an agricultural graduate of both the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic and Barbados Community College to spray some "love vines" for me and he did not know what they looked like, so he asked me what it looked like before he sprayed. I found that to be extremely worrying.

Mr. President, another thing I have never understood, and I believe that it still stands, is that Barbadian scholars have to return to Barbados after completing their education, if not, they have to repay their scholarship for the number of years that they had the scholarship, but Cave Hill graduates, who are funded by the Government, by the same taxpayers, can go overseas and they do not have to stay in Barbados. I find that situation needs to be made equitable.

Mr. President, I think that rather than concentrating all of our efforts on one graduate in every household, we should be looking more at the primary level, so that a good foundation is built for the secondary and tertiary education. There are many schools which I know are extremely overcrowded, with two or even more classes in one classroom.

Sir, that is an impossible situation. It creates chaos and I cannot see how children could receive a good grounding with all of that distraction. Mr. President, if this takes too long to correct, we would have lost a whole generation of primary school children who would not have had a good grounding before going on to their secondary and tertiary education.

Mr. President, I also feel that teachers need to administer discipline - I agree with discipline - but in a kind way if it is to achieve the best results, rough treatment will not have a positive effect on children. Mr. President, over a number of years, I have been involved in projects, which means that I have to go and visit schools. I have seen some very good treatment of children and also some fairly rough treatment.

I was glad to hear the Honourable Prime Minister speaking recently at an event about family life. I think a lot more emphasis needs to be placed here since there is no point in trying to improve the treatment or behaviour of children at school, if they are to return home to brutality and indiscipline parents.

I agree with the Honourable Leader of Government Business that family is the cornerstone of the society and I think we have to pay a lot more attention here. Mr. President, I feel that Community Councils will help with family life, but I must say that I doubt whether the Constituency Councils, in their present form, will achieve this objective.

Mr. President, I have spoken many times before, probably ad nauseam, about the poor attitude of many public officers. The trend seems to be to put every possible hurdle in the way of anyone who is being proactive and trying to do something that would improve the economic growth of the country. It is as if these people just do not want you to succeed.

Sir, this attitude also exists in the private sector, since, of course, we are dealing with the same pool of human resources. As an entrepreneur in the fishing industry said recently, there is a big sea of human resources out there, but the quality is very scarce, just like our flying fish. I enjoyed his metaphors and similes.

Mr. President, there are many businesses, I feel in the private sector, that exist mainly because of their size and not because of their efficiencies. You may have very good policies being introduced at the top but one has to be like a policeman to make sure that the necessary changes are made to carry out these policies.

The famous saying is: "We does don't do it so," and as soon as you turn your back on whatever that was introduced, people go back to doing exactly what they were

doing before. How could we get any further this way? We cannot introduce anything else because you have to keep monitoring what you have introduced before.

Mr. President, I asked a supervisor recently whether the recommendations that had been made were being put in place and he said, "Yes, but under duress". I really do not think that is the correct attitude to get any change in a society. Even in what we call the informal sector, like those selling drinks and snacks from their windows or small carts on the road, seem to lack this facilitative attitude.

Recently I stopped in a minor road - I do not agree with stopping on major roads for wayside vendors - but I stopped and asked a lady if she sold drinks. She did not even make a sound. She just pointed to the cooler. I asked her if I needed to get out to get this drink and she said "yes". In fact, she nodded, and so I proceeded on my way and so she did not really get sale from me. I do not exactly call that a facilitative attitude.

Mr. President, at the moment, it is very difficult to do business in Barbados. I think that technology is being abused. You may have people at their desks but they just do not intend answering the phones because they have Voice Mail.

5.30 p.m.

Monday, March 22, 2010

SENATOR Dr. F.L. CHANDLER: You can see that the Voice Mail is not checked too often either because the message usually gives the date of the day before. I would say there is no real urgency in doing business and it makes life very difficult for someone who is trained to get positive things done.

Then, on the other end of the scale, we have people giving very good service in the tourism industry, not all, but a lot do give good service and they are treated with disdain and in a most unreasonable fashion by some visitors. These visitors' expectations would suggest that they were born with gold spoons in their mouths but I am fairly sure that they were plastic. They want five star accommodation but they only want to pay one star prices.

Mr. President, I would say that tourism can be a most demoralising industry, in some cases, but we seem to be putting most of our eggs in that basket. I think that we should be trying to develop all the sectors equally and I think that the Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance mentioned this recently at a meeting, and I agree with him that the aim is to get all of the sectors working well.

Mr. President, I would say that in the public sector they are being held back by all the Rules, some of which

are very archaic and they also give too much security of tenure to public officers but, Sir, in the private sector, we have the same problem because, in my opinion, the leaders are afraid of the union.

Sir, in order for us to go forward, I think that all the members of the Social Partnership have to come together and cooperate so that we will increase productivity and take the nation forward. I think that politicians need to stop thinking in five-year segments and put the needs of the country ahead of votes.

Mr. President, I think in the public sector too there is too much inflexibility where posts are concerned. In these present conditions, we know we have to change the way we do business so there might be different emphases in various Government Departments.

Sir, some posts may no longer be needed and we may need to strengthen other areas, so you may need to have people being shifted from one place to another and you may even need to retrain these people.

Mr. President, when I suggested these things to those who are in charge of posts, et cetera, I would told it would take a long, long time. Sir, the emphasis was on long. Sir, I want to know why is this cast in stone, these posts and what they are. We even change our Constitution when it is necessary so I do not see why this thing of changing posts so that they make a Ministry work more efficiently should be so difficult.

Mr. President, the Honourable Prime Minister has often said that the price of food must come down, that he would like to see it reduced. Now that we have direct routes from South America, the Miami leg of importation of produce can be eliminated, but this calls for a number of quarantine and regulatory requirements and hurdles to be overcome, so we need special units to deal with these problems.

Sir, you just cannot depend on staff when they have finished their normal work to be able to meet on a committee and decide on these things. We need to set up special units to deal with them and that means creating posts or shifting posts and we should not go on saying that this will take a long, long, time.

Mr. President, we know that we are impacted by forces outside of Barbados, but I think we can do a lot within Barbados to make ourselves more self-sufficient and sustainable, and better able to weather these storms that are caused by these external forces.

Mr. President, we understand that we cannot only depend on cutting back on expenditure, that we must also earn, but the more you cut back, the less you have to earn

and then what you earned can be put to good use rather than paying for unnecessary expenditure. I would say that there is still a lot of wastage in Government and a lot more cutting back to be done without affecting the running of the country.

Mr. President, I am certainly not in favour of all these lavish celebrations and I continue to say that there is too much overseas travel. We know that we have to keep in touch with the world and have a face out there but I think there is too much travel. Sir, people might say these things are small but when you add all the small things together, they add up to a lot.

Mr. President, I also think that the tangible returns from the consulate and embassies abroad should be looked at. In my opinion, these people should be more in touch with Barbadians who live overseas. I have been told that they have a data base of every Barbadian living in their particular country but I doubt that very much and I would like to see it.

I, certainly, have relatives and friends who have lived in North America for 20 years, 30 years and 40 years and I have never been contacted by an embassy. Sir, in many cases, they do not even know who are the personnel at the embassy.

Mr. President, are all of these tourism offices overseas necessary as well? Has anyone ever counted the return on this investment? Ironically, and I say this a little bit facetiously, visitors from Canada have increased now that the Canadian office is short of a Vice President but, of course, the exchange rate and the appearance of WestJet would have had an influence on that.

Mr. President, with regard to encouraging entrepreneurship which contributes to foreign exchange earnings, I must congratulate the Government on setting up the Seed and Venture Capital Fund to assist businesses which have global potential. The emphasis there is on global potential, the ability to earn foreign exchange. At the same time, though, we must make sure that all the legislative and other conditions are fully placed to accommodate these entrepreneurs entering the global market.

Mr. President, some of these companies have already reached the point of receiving venture capital, another six are developing their presentations and another six would be following shortly. I can speak about this because I am the shepherd or mentor for one of these ventures.

Mr. President, I heard the Minister of international Business lamenting recently about a very good product of flying fish pate which has been exhibited at BIMEX by a small entrepreneur and he was indicating that we should be

exporting this type of product to North America, the United Kingdom and the whole EU market. I certainly agreed with him but as far as I know, all the legislative requirements and other requirements have not been put in place, at least for the EU, so we really need to get these things in place.

Mr. President, all these discussions have been going on for years, upgrading of labs and other things. We see in the paper how they are upgrading the fish markets but I think the process has been going on for too many years and I think it needs to be concluded. I understand that there is a lot of infighting for turf within these areas and that it was causing a problem. I hope that it will soon be worked out.

Mr. President, from the point of view of saving foreign exchange, I think that the sectors in Barbados need to support each other. Sir, tourism is a large consumer of foreign exchange. It earns foreign exchange, but it is also a large consumer of it. I think that any support to this industry should be tied to its own support to local producers then, perhaps, you will see local furnishings, more art and, of course, more local food being used.

S/A28/17:40 Sequence 33

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SENATOR Dr. F.L. CHANDLER: I know that at least some farmers need to improve their quality and continuity of supply but, in my opinion, the hotel and restaurant industry can sometimes be very unreasonable in their demands. I was told by a most offensive foreign Chef recently that unless the local industry could supply him with product for 365 days a year, he was not interested. I do not know of too many areas in the world that supply products for 365 days a year.

When I suggested that one day we might not have the foreign exchange to bring in the foreign product, and if we destroy our agricultural industry in the meantime, then we will have a problem. Therefore, we should support agriculture. He said that I was threatening him and he put the phone down in my ear.

Mr. President, I think that the BHTA can do a lot more to promote local products among its members. For example, at the quarterly meeting, they could have little trade exhibits at the back of the room, so that local entrepreneurs can show what they have. Possibly this can be done via the Barbados Manufacturers' Association and other groups, so that you can look at the products in a more intimate setting than is possible at BMEX.

Another issue with the tourism/agricultural linkage, that is always spoken about, is the payment of farmers by hotels. Farmers are expected to pay for their inputs in one month, but hotels take many months, in some cases, to pay

farmers. Small farmers could not certainly survive under those conditions.

I think a scheme was proposed where the Government would pay the farmer and then the hotel pays the Government, but I have tried to find out if this is working and how this is working, and I have not been able to find out anything, but I suspect that it has not really been implemented.

Sir, we have heard over the years that public institutions, like the hospital, have to buy a certain percentage of local products, but I wonder who checks this, because I doubt very much that this is happening.

Mr. President, for those companies like the vehicle importers who are large users of foreign exchange, I think the time has come for them to be encouraged to invest in some other local venture that earns foreign exchange. Perhaps, they could be encouraged to invest in the Venture Capital Fund that I mentioned earlier.

I think that sectors should be allocated foreign exchange according to the real needs and in keeping with their earning of foreign exchange. This could curb the importation of a lot of junk that I see in some retail outlets.

Of course, agriculture is a topic dear to my heart. I repeat what I have said so many times before in this Honourable Chamber about the need for a land use policy. The fact that not one square foot of agricultural land needs to be put into housing or anything else. At the present time there is non arable land available.

It was very comforting to hear the Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance state publicly, a few weeks ago, and I was present at the meeting, that the Government does not intend to see the agricultural sector go, and they are committed to seeing the sector succeed, and seeing the sugar cane industry survive and grow.

I have not heard such comforting words since 2003, when a perfectly good plan for the industry was put forward, but later ignored and followed by a useless plan, which cost, I think, over half a million dollars. We have had plan after plan, indecision after indecision, and all this has created very low morale and further deterioration in the industry. If we had saved all the money that we use for all of these plans and started implementing the first plan, I think we would have been far ahead by now.

However, we all know that radical changes are needed in the Ministry. As the Minister noted, the industry would have to become more dynamic and attractive to young skilled graduates to enterprises. The Minister listed all the reasons why we need the sugar cane industry and

this is, of course, well-known, like its creation of an environment of ambience for locals and visitors.

Senator McClean spoke of the many diplomats that want to live here. Why do they want to live here, because the country has a good ambience? Of course, it has good infrastructure as well, and a number of other reasons, but if it was a land of bush and garbage, I do not think they would want to stay here.

We also have sugar cane protecting the soil from erosion. I do not think that there is another crop that could do that. We have the presence of all the infrastructure, like the cane breeding station, which is known for a while, and which the Minister suggested could be used to assist other industries. We, of course, have the connection of the sugar industry with the lucrative rum industry, and we could go on and on.

Mr. President, this drought is extremely severe and it is even having a bad effect on the canes, but when you look at a field of ratoon canes, which are springing back green, even if the canefield was burnt, I would like to know which other crop could do that.

In my opinion there are too many people with their own agendas which are not in the overall interest of the industries nor of the country, and a lot of them seemed to be getting involved in the decision making. Unfortunately for us, the large agricultural land owners are also the largest land developers. So I question their genuine interest in the industry.

I have been asking for some time for the tax rates on sugar lands which have been allowed to go into bush to be checked, and to ensure that these people are still not getting the agricultural rebates. That is a considerable rebate. Far from getting a rebate, they should be paying exorbitant taxes on these lands which they abandoned, and these taxes could, perhaps, help to support the agricultural industry.

We should never forget that the sugar industry had put aside large sums of money for hard times, and if these had been left to gather interest for all of these years until now, I am sure the sugar industry could have supported itself, but you know that large sums were used to build the Hospital and the Port, which, of course, are of significant benefit to the whole country.

I find now that in spite of all that, the money was used for the country, I always have the feeling that the agricultural industry, or the sugar industry in particular is like a poor relative asking for a crumb, when they are asking for support. Whereas assistance to the tourism industry, which, in fact, lost \$180 million last year, as far as I know, is not seen in this light at all.

I have said in this Honourable Chamber before that a suggestion had been made in the past, actually by a former Prime Minister, that everyone in Barbados should pay a levy to the farmers of Barbados for keeping the environment of this country in such good shape.

I also recently suggested that the environmental levy, which is charged on everything that comes into this country, and that is a considerable sum of money, should help the agricultural industry. I was told that it goes to supporting the NCC and the Ministry of the Environment, but I also think that some of it should go to help all the recycling businesses who are often not in such good waters, but are doing a really good service to the country.

SA28 17.50 p.m. Sequence 34

Monday, March 22, 2010

Estimates - Senate A28, Sequence 35, 5.50 p.m.

SENATOR Dr. F.L. CHANDLER: There is also the 1.2 per cent levy that is put on all sugar production. This is money from the actual farmers. This funding, I understand was about \$3.8 million up to two years ago and it is supposed to be for research and development, in the industry. Apart from its use for the useless study that I talked about, the \$½ million study which was never used, as far as I know, it was never shown to the actual people who paid for it. Where was the money used? Where is the money now? The Committee that is supposed to administer this Fund has not met for years.

After all the money which was spent on CIRP which is the Cane Industry Research Project, which had planned an expensive factory for Buckeley, this plan fortunately has been abandoned and one of the new proposals is to close Andrew's Factory temporarily, in order to strengthen it, so that it will be able to handle the whole sugar cane crop. In the meantime, Portvale alone would be used. I think that would be a disaster.

I have been told by those knowledgeable in the industry that Andrew's in its present state can handle the whole sugar cane crop. It does not need to be improved immediately. It can handle the whole sugar cane crop. During the off season, improvements which might be seen as desirable could be made, but the factory does not need to be closed.

Mr. President, those who know most about these things are the quietest. They are the doers rather than the talkers and I think we need to listen to them, all the ones who have experience in all of this. They know Andrew's Factory from the top to the bottom. They have worked with it for years. They know what it can do. I think that we should seek their wise counsel and I feel very sure that they

have the interest of Barbados at heart and they do not have any selfish and hidden agendas.

Mr. President, there were a number of sensible appeal recommendations made to the industry by relatively young growers many years ago. In fact, it was probably about a decade, but these seem to have fallen on deaf ears. Maybe, it is time to tie the implementation of these recommendations to the support. Sir, if we tie the support to the implementation of these ideas, maybe we might get some efficiency in improvement in the industry.

There are also some farms whose yields have been sustained over the years so obviously these farmers are doing something right, and then they are some farmers who cannot get any yield at all but they are still getting a salary at the end of every month.

I think that the successful farmers should be used as mentors and they should be paid to go and teach these other people what they should be doing and insist that it be done. Maybe some of these funds to pay them could come out of the same Research and Development Fund, which belongs to the sugar industry because I would consider this to be development.

Mr. President, not only the sugar industry needs radical change, the whole agricultural industry needs to be re-engineered and needs some radical changes as well. It needs to be integrated. We need to match the supply lines with the markets and there are a number of nodes along there where this matching needs to be done, with the condiments industry, with the cruise ships, with the hotels, with the supermarkets, with the agro industry but for this to come about, we need a coordinating entity.

As I said before, where you try to introduce change, if you look away for two moments, people go back and do exactly what they were doing before so you need an entity which would monitor all of this and coordinate it, Sir.

I certainly have proof of this in the Import Substitution Project in which I have been involved for quite a few years. If there is no coordination, all falls down. Such a plan was put forward to the National Agricultural Commission since about July last year, but to date, we have had no feedback on it. I trust that we will hear something in the near future.

Another item that seems to have been forgotten since it was first proposed in June 2008, is the reduced diesel price for farmers. Arrangements were made for the PSVs and I think the fishing industry to get duty-free concessions on fuel but the small farmers have not received it, only those farmers who have large tanks on their farms receive this debate and I think even before that proposal, they got the Road Tax off diesel so it is nothing really too new for

them. Only our peaceful Barbadian farmers would allow this to be swept under the carpet and not say anything about it.

Mr. President, I have always spoken out against the change of use of agricultural lands, where it is not necessary. I also feel strongly about the destruction of our natural eco systems by various constructions. They are valuable assets and I think they need to be protected. They are important for our environment.

I am most concerned about the recently proposed Chancery Lane Project. I know there are many others who feel the same way because they have about 500 names, at least, on a petition, up to the moment. I trust that the authorities will listen to these people and that common sense will prevail. I understand that there are about 37 impacts in about six areas to this proposed project. If there are so many impacts, why would you possibly choose to go ahead and ignore these.

On a similar topic, I was wondering if the Town and Country Planning Department was aware of the structure - I do not know how else to describe it - going up adjacent to the boardwalk at Hastings. After building a beautiful boardwalk and refurbishing the whole Hastings Rocks areas with the Bandstand and everything, this awful structure is now being constructed. Not only does it spoil the physical landscape, but there is often extremely loud music emanating from it and I think when you go on the boardwalk, you want to hear the sea. I am not so sure you want to hear loud music. There should be, at least, one place you could go in Barbados and expect to be quiet.

On the matter of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, I assisted with a project some years ago which included a staff audit and it was trying to match the people who actually worked in the hospital with those who were on the payroll. I do not think the report was ever really discussed and I just wonder if it has been used in anyway, and if there was any follow-up because I think there could be a lot of wastage in that area.

I noted an article in the media recently which stated that the previous Administration had borrowed almost US\$15 million to lease the Carnival Destiny during the Cricket World Cup 2007. They borrowed this from a commercial bank and the payment is due now. I think during the next two weeks.

I would be interested to know what steps the bank would take if the loan is not paid on time, considering the fairly harsh treatment that entrepreneurs who have had the courage to embark on projects which would assist Barbados in a tangible way, have to undergo with the commercial banks in this country. I think the operating methods of the commercial banks should be looked into.

From the country's point of view, I would be interested to know what was the return on the lease of the Carnival Destiny.

I could not end my presentation without asking what is the position with the Income Tax refunds. I know that quite a few people have not yet received theirs and it is time for taxes to be paid again.

Estimates - Senate A28, Sequence 35, 18:00:14

Monday, March 22, 2010

SENATOR Dr. F. L. CHANDLER: I was quite puzzled by the fact that cheques could have been written for people who were not due cheques because if the Government writes a cheque I think it has to have money to back up that cheque, so if all of these wrong cheques were written, then there should be some money there to be able to cover the cheques for these people who really deserve these cheques, so I am hoping that these would be paid in the very near future because there are a number of people who are really depending on that.

Mr. President, I would end with this quote from one John Schaar:

"The future is not some place we were going to but one we are creating. The paths to it are not found but they are made."

Mr. President, I encourage all sectors of society to cooperate with each other and create the best possible paths to success for Barbados.

I thank you.

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

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Mr. President, I rise to join the debate and to give my support to this Appropriation Bill for 2010-2011, commonly referred to as the Estimates debate. This obviously is the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure and this exercise should be to debate Government's revenue and spending programme for the year 2010-2011.

Mr. President, I know that the Senator who is not in her seat at this time indicated that my contributions are not very meaningful, but I want to report that when I stand on my feet I do so out of service having been asked by the Prime Minister to serve, I do not play to the Gallery. I know that there is a listening audience out there but I do not speak to get air play either on television or in the newspapers. If it happens, it happens, but I am here to serve.

Mr. President, I am really happy and was really happy to hear the Leader of the Senate this morning articulate the views of the Government. Senator Chandler, you have just given, to my mind, a very rich exposé. I could always sit and learn from persons like yourself in the Senate and I want to thank you for the constructive criticisms for agriculture and for the support you gave to some of the things that we have been asking for as well, and expect as well.

Mr. President, this is my third opportunity since being appointed to this Senate Chamber - we were appointed here in January 2008 - to make a contribution at this level. When most of us as Ministers took responsibility for our Ministries in January, 2008, we would have come at a time when officials in our Ministries would have completed their first drafts and would have had discussions with the Ministry of Finance in the presence of the capable Director of Finance and his professional staff and, perhaps, all we could have done then would have been to do a little tweaking here and a little tweaking there.

In 2009, we were able to add more value to the preparation of the Estimates and focus more on those areas which are considered to be of high priority. During last year, this country was impacted by what was happening globally as everybody I am sure knows. I do not think that the Opposition is aware of what is happening globally, because every time they speak, they try to give themselves, because they are not giving the people of the country, because the people in the country know what is going on globally - the impression that what is happening is happening only in Barbados.

Sir, a lot of things that have happened globally have impacted on this country: the food crisis in 2008, the oil crisis in 2009, and the economic crisis in 2009, which continues. These are three crises that the world was unprepared for that followed in quick succession. When you get these things impacting on an economy...

We did not hide any information. We got up at every opportunity and spoke to the public. The Prime Minister held press conferences and many constituency conferences. He has spoken on the Floor in the Other Place and we have spoken in here. We have been honest with our public.

Mr. President, when you can get your major earner of foreign exchange taking a tremendous downturn, you have to do some adjustments. The Opposition sometimes beat their chest and speak hoping that this country would fall, I get that impression. They get vexed about the unemployment figures. They speak in manners as though they are joyful that visitors from overseas are not coming. When you have your major markets, Canada, the United States of America and the United Kingdom being impacted on...

When this economic downturn first took its place, America was getting up on mornings every month and reporting hundreds of thousands of persons being laid off, 750 000; 644 000; 536 000; 474 000; 398 000 and then the figures were coming down and then when it reached 241 000 they said "wow", it is not as bad as it was.

Last week when I was listening to the debate in the Other Place I heard persons talking about Barbados lost 5 000 jobs but America lost millions of jobs. Mr. President, many of those persons who lost their jobs would have probably come to the Caribbean on a holiday, a small percentage would have probably come to Barbados to enjoy our hospitality here.

Sir, once they lost their job, they would have taken stock and would have looked at their priorities again and would have done some readjustments. Those persons would have found their way in our hotels and guest houses and would have impacted on our services in this country, but they could not come because many of them lost their jobs and once that happened, it impacted negatively on our economy and, therefore, in 2009, we did some adjustments as well.

If you had lost your job, Mr. President, and you had children and you were giving them lunch money every morning, you would have to sit with them and discuss a cut in the lunch money to adjust what revenue you have available. We did just that much to the displeasure of the Opposition, its perspective candidates and supporters, not the general public because the general public understands.

The same yardstick they used to measure the unemployment figures, we used. The same officers and technocrats are in place. Mr. President, do you not know that when we reported what the figures are they say: "No, they cannot be. They have to be 15 or 20 per cent". They speak like that.

It seems as though they would be more people in St. Peter, in St. Michael North East, in St. George North, in Christ Church West and wherever the Barbados Labour Party is represented to be unemployed so that they can beat their chest that the unemployment situation is high. They do not understand that this is Barbados.

Sir, in an effort to better manage our resources, we also did some adjustments. We cut out the fat. It was during that exercise of cutting out the fat that you realise that there are some things and some programmes that were duplicated and some things that we could do without, like vehicles, shutters for buildings, travel and some forms of entertainment.

Senate A28 Sequence 36

5.20 p.m.

Monday, March 22, 2010

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Mr. President, we cut out some of that, but things in the world have not gotten any better. Things in the world, in some cases, have gotten worse. There is a noticeable falloff in our revenue as was estimated, the main earner being tourism. Our sectors which earn foreign exchange for this country were affected as well.

Sir, any good manager would re-evaluate, refocus and make further adjustments, as this Prime Minister did last year. Therefore, heading into the preparation of this year's Estimates, we became more prudent in the areas that were selected as priorities and we channelled those resources at our disposal in those areas.

We have sat with the Prime Minister, with Senator the Honourable Darcy Boyce and discussed the Estimates. We know what we are about, we know where we are and where we want to go, of course, with the overall development of this country and its citizens as our dot on the wall. They are our focus.

Mr. President, along the way, what did we do? We looked at our tourism sector and provided the Minister and his team and this industry with a package that would cause persons in the sector to continue to be employed; some people call it a stimulus package but we provided some assistance.

I heard the Honourable Senator from the Other Side indicate that \$25 million was placed at the disposal of the industry and that there was a request of \$79 million and that these figures are not correct.

Sir, we provided \$25 million and the package was well-accepted. There was no infighting and quarrelling like when we had the stimulus package for September 9, 2000, where there was problem. I am pleased to report that in our stimulus package, there was no fighting among the sector and that all things seemed to have worked well.

Mr. President, we looked at our social programme and as the Honourable Leader of Government Business indicated, it is much more than just an economy. When we provided assistance during last year summer holidays, because we recognised as well that many of our workers who would have loved to travel, and because of the downturn, et cetera, decided not to travel, some decided not to take their holiday, they remained in the island but their children were on holiday.

Sir, the Honourable Prime Minister, recognising that when parents leave home on mornings and leave children

ages 7, 8, 10, 12 and 15-year-old children at home, parents would have to be constantly calling home to find out if everything is all right. Sir, to leave those children home with nothing to do, they get bored very quickly.

Sir, the Prime Minister and Cabinet agreed that we would organise the Summer Camp Programme and that we would provide opportunities for young people at those camps to show off some of their leadership skills. Therefore, we appointed camp directors and other persons.

Sir, this seems to have annoyed the Opposition in this country. They quarrelled about the camps; they quarrelled about the fact that we provided opportunity for parents to come to work and function with a peace of mind, with a peace that surpasseth all understanding, as is recorded in the New Testament. Mr. President, the Opposition was vexed. They called it a waste of money. Sir, I cannot understand that.

Mr. President, we also organised to have free bus fares for school children, recognising that it is something that was impacting on the pockets of parents. We made a decision to offer free bus fares to school children. That also charged up the Opposition. They got blue vexed that the Democratic Labour Party could find an opportunity to empower parents and to enhance their pockets and that that money saved weekly, parents were able to buy extra food and clothing for their children when they returned to school last year.

Mr. President, we also created opportunities for vendors in this country. We looked at our economic development package, we provided entrepreneurial programmes for our people, those who have the skills to be doing jams, jellies and juices, to be able to do things to earn a proper living.

Mr. President, this year's debate of Revenue and Expenditure is now our focus. I heard the Honourable Senator Frances Chandler indicating that she heard entertainment in the Other Place last week. Sir, I am looking forward to good, rich debate in this Senate. I know that the Opposition would criticise, they have to. We on the Government Side will support, we have to and will support but I expect some rich balance to be brought to this Honourable Chamber.

Sir, Senator Chandler has set a heavy pace and expects that at the end of the exercise this country would be richer for the exercise. We are not going to try to tell the public that we are going to white-wash anything. We do not have anything to hide. We will tell the story how we overcome and they will understand better in the bye and bye.

Mr. President, what we do to earn more money and how well we manage that money will also be our focus. We cannot simply sit and cry about the millions of dollars that were wasted in the prison. We cannot cry about the millions of dollars that were spent on the road. We can talk about the overruns that we experienced and we can recap the amount of times that we came to this Honourable Chamber and in the Other Place and sought to give Government comfort in borrowing, to pay the way. Sir, we are going to focus on how well we can earn more money and how we can manage what is available to us.

Mr. President, I would like to ask the Opposition a question. During the 14 years that they managed the resources of this country, have they ever reported a surplus? Was there any time during this period, 1994 to 2007, that you presented figures to these Honourable Chambers which represented a deficit? Have you ever come into any of these Honourable Houses and said that there was a deficit on current account? Sir, every time I am sure there have been deficits.

The deficit on last year might have been higher but we know that countries run on deficits. We are not going to be artificial in showing what are those deficits. We do not have an agenda of underlining this and hiding expenses and doing things that are not in the full view of these Honourable Houses.

Sir, the Prime Minister made a call for greater efficiencies within Government and I share that view with Dr. Chandler. I gave this call my fullest support and Government Ministers will have to continue to review and reprioritise the programme to help reduce cost. We are all on to the programme - state-own enterprises and agencies.

Mr. President, I have one of those programmes. The Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation and I intend to make the "D" more developmental and the "M" more marketing, so that union leaders and other cannot anymore refer to it as "BAD" "MC". We have some good programmes coming on stream.

6.20 p.m.

Monday, March 22, 2010

SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN: Mr. President, I was very pleased last year to be part of the Agropreneurial Programme, where we have embraced a number of young persons and we are in the process of developing that programme for those young people.

Mr. President, we have worked closely with Miss Undene Whittaker with her programme as well, and we have worked very well with the 4-H Programme in

developing the minds of the young people because they are the future of agriculture.

Sir, in addition to that, less than 48 hours ago, I was in Suriname sitting down with people over there at the COTED meeting and discussing with people who have business in Suriname looking at ways in which we can develop our youth in agriculture programme.

Mr. President, we have a programme and the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation will lead the way in that exercise. The Prime Minister has said to us that State-owned agencies will have to improve their level of efficiency and rely less on Government subvention. They have to earn their keep and the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation, an agency under the Ministry of Agriculture, will earn its keep.

Mr. President, one strategy would be to reduce the level of spending on goods and services through more and better use of technology. We do not use the technology that is available to ourselves. Dr. Chandler was correct because I think we should use the teleconferencing a lot more. We should use our technology to talk to young people.

I am told that young people are now having sex by satellite, so if they know how to use the technology to their benefit, I do not know why we cannot talk to young people and use the technology as well. Sir, we have to make better assessment as to the absolute need for the items we are procuring.

Mr. President, the current revenue is estimated at \$2 457 million and a total expenditure of \$3 897 million made up of current expenditure and capital expenditure but Minister Boyce will deal with those figures later. Sir, from the figures available to us, when amortization is excluded, and when all the dust is cleared, a deficit of \$592.9 million is expected, representing just about 7.4 per cent of GDP.

Mr. President, the Prime Minister informed the country how he expects to finance the deficit. The Prime Minister did not run and hide. He told the country how he expects to finance the deficit. He said he would do some by domestic sources and some will be foreign financed by capital projects in goods and borrowings.

Mr. President, the Prime Minister also outlined major spending activities contained in the Estimates. Sir, among these highlighted was the provision of \$145.5 million for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and I am proud to be associated with the fact that we have identified one of our Senators here to champion that. If she were here, I would tell her that she was rich, but the point is, that has been a criticism of the Opposition, when we have made provision of funds for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Mr. President, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is a broad Ministry and it has polyclinics and hospitals. It has the Geriatric Hospital, the Psychiatric Hospital and there is a whole wide spectrum.

Sir, we recognise that we would have specialists to do some stuff. We have identified one of our people who is competent, trained, qualified and experienced to do the job, but rather than laud the Government for its effort in doing it, so that health care in this country could be upgraded, you get the unnecessary and unwanted criticism from the Opposition to what we are doing, calling the substantive Minister, the Minister of Polyclinics, as if we have somebody else as the Minister of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Sir, that is not so. We know what we are doing. We urge them to understand that this is Barbados.

Mr. President, a subvention of \$92 million for the Barbados Tourism Authority to facilitate marketing and promotion. This is important so that we can go out to those markets we have not touched yet. I want to suggest to them that they can go into the Midwest in Canada and the United States of America because farmers who have earned money in those areas, when winter is setting in, want somewhere to go and we can lure them into our country as well.

We should not look for all the top people but, Sir, farmers are top people too, as a matter of fact. Mr. President, I will urge them to go after that market as well because it is an opportunity for them to bring farmers to this country and let them see what we do here in Barbados.

Mr. President, as I have said, we know that the Opposition will have a different approach, not a better approach, a different approach. I was looking to see if I saw the goodly Senator Thompson in her seat but she is seldom in this Chamber when we on This Side are speaking. She accused the Honourable Senator Boyce for speaking only four times out of 28 times. She has spoken maybe all 28 times, or for most of the times she was here, but as she is finished, she is gone, as she is finished talking, she is gone. We know how to get her back here because we just have to call her name and she is going to run back here on a point of order but, before she sits back down, she is gone again.

The Honourable Senator has spent less time in this Honourable Chamber than anybody else in here has spent. I can tell you that if those new Senators in the Chamber spend four full Sittings within the next few weeks, they would have spent more time in the Chamber than she spent in two years.

Mr. President, that is their way and we are doing it our way because that is what the public has selected us to do. If we had gone along managing the economy in the same way that the Barbados Labour Party managed the

economy, we would not have done justice to what the people expected us to do. Sir, we do it our way and we have not done it a bad way.

Mr. President, we will not be caught spending money that Parliament has not accounted for. Sir, you know we had to come in here last year - Senator Boyce calls it bringing it to book, but I am not an accountant so I have a different term for that. Sir, they did some stuff that we will not do.

Mr. President, I heard the goodly Senator when she was in her seat talking about listening to people out there. Sir, I listen to people out there too, but do you know some of the things people tell me out there? They say we talk about the things that we came and found but that we have not locked anybody up yet.

Sir, we are finding a lot of things but, Mr. President, I will tell you this. Every time that the Barbados Labour Party comes to office, in 1976, they had the Duffus Commission, in 1994, after they came to office they did an inquiry into the hospital. We have come to office and found some bad things, but we never carried out a Commission of Inquiry and we never locked up anybody. It is about time that we carry out a Commission of Inquiry into some of the things we have come and found, particularly, at the Urban Development Commission.

Mr. President, I will say this now. When we find a lot of these problems, we have people who call us and beg us not to carry it any further. I have a friend of mine who worked at the Urban Development Commission...

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN: You do not want me to talk about that. You would like me to talk about the Turf Club and those kinds of things, but I could talk about...

Mr. PRESIDENT: I would not like to talk about anything although if you wish I can speak.

SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN: Mr. President, I am going back to the Urban Development Commission, but you do not like to hear about it. Mr. President, they did some bad things in this country.

S/A28/18:30 Sequence 38

Monday, March 22, 2010

SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN: You can get up and go along too, because you do not like to hear these things. You all did some bad things in this country. Sir,

they did some bad things in this country, and now that we have found out, they are calling, begging for breaks.

I have a friend of mine that works at one of those Commissions and he cried. He said to me that the things he was told to do, many days he would receive a call telling him to prepare a cheque for \$50 000, somebody will be coming for it. You have people in that Party who received funds above the ceiling and recommended by the Board. Those people are calling and begging for a break now - the Barbados Labour Party, a Party that said that it is all this and all that transparent.

Sir, I remember when the former Prime Minister came to office in 1994, in one of his debates in the Budget he said he would never go back to Parliament for a Supplementary. Do you remember that? A lot of you do not remember because we have short memories. Sir, a lot of things are said when you are not in Government, but when you come in here and understand the things that are to be done, you understand that you have to go back for Supplementaries.

I remember when we were in Opposition I used to criticise a number of things because I wondered why these things would happen. You come to Government and you find that you cannot do anything to change them, because of the mindset of a lot of those persons in Government. If we were to stand up and tell the Honourable Senator Holder and Senator Thompson about the things that we came and found, we would spend a whole year telling them about the corrupt practices that obtained in the last Administration.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN: Do not talk about 3S. We will deal with that later.

Mr. President, as I said, the Opposition will oppose. The Opposition cannot add value to how it can be done and not how it should be done, because the Opposition wants to tell this Government how it should be done. They had their time. We welcome any constructive ideas from you about how it can be done, but not how it should be done. If you cannot do that, then keep quiet.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN: The performance of the Barbados economy in 2009 reflected the ongoing downturn in the global economy. As a result of the negative shocks to the performance of key economic sectors, mainly tourism, real growth in 2009 fell by 5.4 per cent, deeper than the 2 per cent in 2008, contributions during 2009, contributing to that economic downturn as an

estimated 6.7 per cent decline in the traded sectors and 4.9 per cent in the non traded sectors.

In the traded sectors, tourism output fell due mainly to an 11 per cent drop in the long stay arrivals. The manufacturing sector fell by 13.7 per cent, and that was significant. There was, however, positive growth in agriculture. Sugar performed, 1.2 per cent and non sugar by 1.6 per cent. That was growth, and if you do not understand growth, keep quiet.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN: I am not rejoicing because this year is likely to see a decline. I do not take any credit for it. All I do is carry out Government's policy. I do not take any credit for it, but my Ministry can take credit for performing at a level that they can report progress during the last year, my Ministry that I manage.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN: Sir, the livestock sector grew very well. The livestock sector showed an increase. We slaughtered more animals. At the slaughter house last year, over 23 000 pigs were slaughtered, as against 21 000, the year before. More cows, goats and sheep were reared last year. If you attended the Agrofest Show, in February this year, you would have seen the quality on display, the quality Black Pole and Red Pole bulls on display. You would have marvelled, Mr. Holder, but you did not go. You were looking after other people, nothing to do with Government.

The point is, we planted more edoes.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN: We planted and harvested more yams, and more cassava.

Sir, Barbadians responded positively to the call from this Minister to plant more food, and we did. I visited farms throughout Barbados where, before there was just the edge row of cassava or two rows, or a boundary, I see a pure strain of cassava. Sir, the BADMC has led the way and a few other small business people have come on. They are processing the cassava.

My Ministry has taken as well the lead in some respect, on the insistence of this Minister, we planted up some of our land. We have planted 42 varieties of sweet potatoes, and we are encouraging Barbadian farmers to collect the planting material. We want to start working more closely with CARDI, and those research institutions to get this place going, because every country in the world

who has had problems with their economy, has suddenly realised how important agriculture is to their development, and this country will not be left behind. This Minister, as long as he is around and breath is in his body, will steer the ship.

I said that I am not beating my chest. I am not glorifying in anything as yet, because with the drought conditions that we are experiencing now, sugar production is likely to fall, onion production is likely to fall and crops like sweet potatoes and yams would probably fall, because the ground is so hard, that even the yams that were in the ground last year are coming out very small, and the potatoes are also coming out small. Sir, one year you have plenty, and another year, because of the drought situation, you might have a little falloff in production.

Sir, I do not want to boast, because next year, please God, I will be in here reporting figures again, and if Senator Holder is not changed next year, he will be able to hold me up and laugh and say that I reported the previous year, but it is likely that he might be changed, so I can afford to say that.

Sir, the non traded sector, mining and quarrying and construction, fell significantly as well.

Sir, unemployment increased slightly to 10.2 per cent at the end of 2009. I now understand that it is below 9.4 per cent. This is commendable in the face of what is going on globally.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: In the US it is 10 per cent.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: It is 9.7 per cent today? Senator Marville has the correct figures. It is .3 per cent below 10.

Sir, do you know that the Opposition is very vexed about that? The Opposition is vexed. They want more people to go home so that they can come to them, as they used to do, and beg them for hand outs and be at their mercy, while we try to empower the people.

Sir, in the face of global economic and financial turbulence, the financial sector activity during 2009, remains fairly strong, as liquidity in the banking system continues to edge upward.

Sir, during 2009, net international reserves registered an increase of \$124.7 million. This followed a \$191.9 million falloff in 2008. The external current account

position has improved as well, despite what the Opposition is trying to say. This improved position as a result of a 22.5 per cent decline in retained import is largely due to the decrease in oil prices.

SA28 18.40 p.m. Sequence 39

Monday, March 22, 2010

Estimates - Senate A28, Sequence 40, 6.40 p.m.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: The Caribbean Region, Mr. President, has not been spared. I just came back from Suriname, where I sat among CARICOM Ministers of Agriculture and heard them lamenting their cuts that ranged from 5 per cent. One guy reported that his estimate was reduced by a whopping 30 per cent. They too, are having problems with drought, as well as Trinidad, St. Lucia and everywhere. In fact, some people are buying water from Dominica.

The Opposition would want the Barbadian public to believe that what is happening in Barbados is a Barbadian thing, but you cannot fool Barbadians. Barbadians listen to the news. Barbadians read newspapers. They have ABC, CNN, NBC and Fox so do not think that because once upon a time they could walk about and tell people it is the Democratic Labour Party that caused it, they cannot do it now, so do not go on that plank anymore, people would laugh at them.

Mr. President, the IMF said that the current global rebound would be sluggish. Now, I want to say a word about the IMF. I do not know a lot about the IMF but the Barbados Labour Party never told the people in 1982 when they went there - we went in 1991/1992, but they made it sound as though the then Administration had created a grave sin. Mr. President, the Barbados Labour Party took us to the IMF in 1982.

Now, I have heard Barbados Labour Party supporters speak, and told the public that when the former Prime Minister came into office in 1994, he chased the IMF out of Barbados. This is absolutely rubbish. Even if they were here, he could not have done it, if you understand the relationship between the International Monetary Fund and the economy of countries. That is like also chasing the World Health Organisation out of Barbados. From time to time, Standard and Poor's carry out assessments, so stop telling Barbadians that the former Administration, headed by Mr. Owen Arthur, chased the IMF out of Barbados. Let me say it slowly. It is not true.

They were around in recent years, when the Barbados Labour Party Administration was in office, because when the Barbados Labour Party was doing what they like to do with figures, the IMF told them to tell the

people the truth, bring all the figures to the table and you would see that what you are reporting about a 5 per cent GDP is not true. It is actually 11 per cent.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: The Barbados Labour Party like to measure in percentage terms that is why when we were telling people the honest truth that the water rate went up from \$20 to \$32, a mere \$12, less than 50 cents a day, the Barbados Labour Party was hounding them down about percentage, 60 per cent.

The same people who, if they have a spoon to wash, turn it on and the water is licking down the spoon out of your hand, but they want to use a lot of water to do it. The water rate went up from \$20 at the lowest level to \$32, \$12 a month, less than 50 cents a day, and they said 60 per cent, which is true. I am not saying they are telling lies, but they feel that Barbadians are foolish. Do not mind what they did.

Sir, what they did, they did not tell the people so stop telling Barbadians foolish lies about the International Monetary Fund. If you had brought to book all of the expenditure that you had, your deficit as it relates to GDP, would not have been 5.4 per cent as reported, it would have been 11 per cent.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Off budget spending. Somebody should get locked up for that.

Mr. President, as I said, the International Monetary Fund has said that the current global rebound will be sluggish and we understand that. As we look forward, we recognise that the recovery will depend on how fast the financial markets can recover and how fast investor confidence can return to this country and the world.

Mr. President, every Minister of Government, all of us, know what we have to do. We are fully in support of what the programmes are, as espoused by the Honourable Prime Minister. We do not have to wait until a minority or a majority leader comes to tell us how to operate.

Mr. President, Senator Chandler, you spoke about some wonderful things you would like to see, improvement in productivity, me too. You talked about export of flying fish...

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: ...and the need to have the Legislation in place.

I just came from Suriname where we did the establishment of CAHFSA, the Caribbean Agriculture Health and Food Safety Agency, established in Suriname, headquartered in Suriname, a wonderful new building with spanking new equipment. The primary objective shall be to provide regional and national support for the community, in the establishment, management and operation of the national agricultural health and food safety systems as they relate to the sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures of the WTO.

We are part of that and I can assure you that this Minister is going to ensure, I have to do it because if I do not do it, I do not want Mr. Holder to be reminding me that I am not doing it, so I am going to do it for his sake as well.

Mr. President, we are going to continue to seek to create greater linkages between agriculture and tourism, agriculture and the manufacturing sector. Later this week or early next week, we will be going to the airport to rebrand the BADMC outlet on the outside. Their mandate is to have that facility taking off the value added produce, the jams, jellies and the drinks and the chuckneys from our local people.

Last year, I went to give an address at the Culinary Arts Exhibition that was sponsored by Carlton. I saw schools, individuals and groups doing a wonderful job with our guavas, and our golden apples. I have never seen so many products made from our golden apple. We have a pledge to have those commodities brought into the BADMC, displayed and sold at the Airport.

We are going a step further. The linkages that we are going to create with the hotel and tourism sector, we are going to be sampling in the hotels, and ensuring that once those visitors have acquired the taste, they would want to buy a gift basket with those commodities to take back to their country, and that may pave the way for future exports. Once we get our things going, so we are going to be creating linkages with the manufacturing sector.

Sir, the manufacturing sector has joined with us and is doing an excellent job. I will be talking with the Minister of Tourism, the BTA and the BHTA in making this a reality. This will pave the way not only for our people to pick their fruit and bring them in and use the money to help pay their taxes, et cetera, and pave the way, but those entrepreneurs will be able to find a market for the products that they produce. The school children will be trained.

We have a wonderful lady at the BADMC called Marion Hart. I am going to publicly say here that she needs to be used more. I am going to pursue with vigour, an opportunity for her to be able to visit our schools and our youth groups across the country, and not be confined to a little 8x4 ft. room at the BADMC.

Estimates - Senate A28, Sequence 40, 18:50:12

Monday, March 22, 2010

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: We have worked closely with the Ministry of Education and Resource Development, the Ministry of Community Development and Culture and wherever her services and her skills can be touched as we produce more cassava and more of these products. She is now doing breadfruit flour, sweet potato flour and cassava flour. We have to teach our youngsters to use those things so that they would not have to run into the fast food outlets and buy the high cholesterol products in there. This Minister, Senator Holder, is working.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I beg your pardon.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Mr. President. I keep looking at him all the time and he smiles.

Mr. PRESIDENT: My recommendation is that you do not look at him at all.

Senator the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Thank you, Sir. I shall stop looking at him.

Mr. President, my duty is to ensure that the BADMC is also in a position, as was said by the Prime Minister, to pay its way. It will do those things to earn revenue. We will continue to build capacity. We will continue to strengthen those institutions. We have embarked on institutional strengthening so that those institutions like the 4H Club, the Barbados Agricultural Society, and the Barbados Agricultural, Development and Marketing Corporation...

You mentioned payments to farmers, Senator. Do you know that last year the BADMC championed a proposal to one or two of those agencies and have agreed to make money available and the Barbados Agricultural Society is going to be responsible for the payment to farmers? I cry shame for those hotels that refuse to pay, for after all, the farmers have to buy the inputs cash.

I would have boasted up to seconds ago before you spoke that the hotels pay well because when we go to spend a night or two weeks up there, we have to pay, not all of us, some of us. Apparently, Mr. President, may not have to pay because he is the President of the Senate but we all have to pay these hotels, so I am a bit concerned.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I have to draw to your attention that you have to be accurate in your presentation.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Thank you very much. I said I supposed. I did not say that you do not have to pay.

Mr. PRESIDENT: You are suggesting that the President should go to these exotic places where you go.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Mr. President, I am putting in a word for you. The next time you get into the hotels, they would say: "Look, are you the President? You do not have to pay".

Mr. PRESIDENT: The President does not need any of those assistances, just continue your speech and let it be fully known to all and sundry that the President does not have any higher level of appreciation than the Members of the Senate.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: I will call and let them know from tomorrow.

Mr. PRESIDENT: He is not a Minister.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Senator Chandler, that urge that you have for the farmers to be paid up front is being addressed. We are going to make sure that it is not just talk but that it would be done. I want to urge you to continue to agitate on behalf of those persons you are agitating for, and with, and wherever you can urge them to have a little more patience, I am sure that you will, and feel free to occasionally give me a shout when you need my attention.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: I sought the President's permission to address Senator Chandler.

The Senator also mentioned Andrew's Factory. I too believe that Andrews Factory can handle all the sugar. I do agree with you that we need a re-engineering in the Ministry of Agriculture and in the sugar sector. Senator Darcy Boyce is also focussing on that and has also sat with the Prime Minister and made that suggestion. We are all on the same page.

Mr. President, before I close, I know I have a few seconds left, I want to say to you quickly that the sugar industry has had some negative impacts over the past few months. We had to start the sugar crop a week early to accommodate the indiscriminate burning of the canes. I cry shame on those persons who went about... I think we should all stand.

Stakeholders in this industry are predicting that, based on the number of cane fires and the drought situation that we have been experiencing so far this year, that less than 300 000 tonnes of canes would be harvested for this year, with an estimated yield of 27 000 tonnes of sugar, a further decline in the price received from the sale of sugar.

This would translate into a significant reduction in returns for the sugar farmers.

Mr. President, I want to say to you that the Agricultural Incentive Scheme has continued to be a leading policy tool employed by the Ministry of Agriculture. I have said every time I stood up in the Senate and addressed this issue of the Incentive Scheme that the previous Administration put in place some wonderful proposals and we have improved on them and have upgraded some of them where necessary and they are working beautifully.

The incentives within the Scheme, which are basically comprised of duty-free concessions on agricultural inputs, rebates and grants, have been designed to lower the cost of production associated with a wide range of agricultural endeavours.

Among the incentives offered by the Government to the farming community include rebates providing for the installation of irrigation systems. This rebate is being widely accessed by registered farmers. At October last year, some 1 779 farmers had utilised the irrigation rebate. Incentives are also available to farmers for the provision of mulch which can help to conserve soil moisture.

In addition, farmers are encouraged to take advantage of the incentives for cleaning, for drainage and the refurbishment of existing wells on farms. This was put in the 2008 Budgetary Proposals by the Honourable Prime Minister, and it is working.

The BADMC operates on an irrigation scheme which provides water for farmers in irrigated districts at concessionary rates. Presently, the Corporation provides irrigation water and drainage to 12 independent districts located in parts of St. Philip, Christ Church, St. George, St. Michael, St. Andrew and St. Lucy. Farmers in the Spring Hall Land Lease Project are charged 33 cents for this service while farmers in the other irrigated service are charged 44 cents.

The Irrigated Scheme serves a total of 1 375 acres of arable land, which is used mainly by small farmers ranging from a quarter acre to 25 acres. Water is provided from 21 wells, of which four are owned by the BADMC and 17 privately.

Mr. President, it is estimated also that farmers are being subsidised approximately 67 per cent of the cost of providing this service, which is estimated at a total expenditure of \$1 522 524. These are incentives that we are providing for the farmers.

Praedial larceny, a scourge, constitutes an enormous disincentive to farmers and agricultural producers in this

country. Mr. President, when the horrendous tale of praedial larceny and the brilliance of those perpetrators are taken into account, in addition to the many risks involved in agricultural production, one can well imagine the discouragement felt by farmers currently engaged in agriculture and those who otherwise would like to do that.

The Ministry of Agriculture has on the cards, it has gone already to the Governance Committee...

Mr. President, earlier, the Honourable Senator Thompson in her presentation spoke about the little time that the Senate meets and the few times that the Cabinet meets. Mr. President, I want to say to you and to the general public who is listening at this time that Cabinet has a number of subcommittees: economic policy; social policy; governance; and infrastructure. Sir, sometimes we meet for an entire day.

The purpose of those Committees of Cabinet is to look at those set of Cabinet Papers that would have gone, discuss them and send them back, some to be sandpapered, so that when we present them to Cabinet, there is no need for any long meeting which would go to 5:00 and 6:00 o'clock.

Senate A28 Sequence 41

7.00 p.m.

Monday, March 22, 2010

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Mr. President, the Barbados Labour Party used to meet for long hours at Cabinet, so that they could have eaten twice a day, but we eat once a day and get through very well with the business of Cabinet.

Mr. President, the Ministry of Agriculture has therefore developed a number of recommendations which will soon be put for consideration. These include:

a. The enactment of stronger legislation to deal with praedial larceny and the strict enforcement of a provision under the Act. This will include the strengthening of penalties for anyone in contravention of the Act and to make them more in line with those applicable to other similar crimes, so that they would be more likely a deterrent.

b. The mandatory issuance of certificate of purchase by all traders; and

c. The re-establishment of the Praedial Larceny Committee, under the chairman of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Sir, many years ago, it used to happen under the other regime. We used to have something called the Crime Prevention Panel, which seems to have fallen through the eddoes. We are bringing it back and will be calling it the Predial Larceny Committee, under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Agriculture, which will comprise representatives of all relevant stakeholders. The role of the committee will be to take a holistic view of the issues or praedial larceny, monitoring the successes and failures encountered and bringing further proposals to the table.

Mr. President, as I wind down, I want to indicate that we will launch an intensive public sensitisation and education programme as it relates to praedial larceny, to advise all farmers and the general public on what affects them in this country.

Mr. President, the Agricultural Protection Act is another piece of legislation that will be brought to this Honourable Chamber in the very near future, and we will have that tabled as soon as we have it gone through its various stages. Sir, there are lots of other things that we are looking to address but I want to say that I am very happy to be part of this debate.

I want to say to the Opposition and to those doubting Thomases that when money was flourishing more than a year ago, you could have done anything you wanted to do with projects. There was no reason to cut back.

Sir, one of the things that concerns me is that I heard the Honourable Senator Thompson speaking about the cuts, about the number of cuts in the various Ministries. Sir, do you know that had we not cut, the same Honourable Senator would be asking where would we get the money? Sir, we recognised that there is a downturn in the economy and money is not coming as freely as we would like, therefore, we cut the cloth to suit.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Mr. President, we cannot do anything to satisfy the Opposition but we are not intent on just doing things to please them. We are doing things because the people of Barbados, who have lost confidence in the Barbados Labour Party to run the affairs of this country, because of a number of reasons, have placed that future, for the time being, in our hands and it is left for us to do justice to that opportunity that is available to us and not to fail our citizens.

Mr. President, I am obliged to you.

Mr. PRRESIDENT: Senator Newton.

SENATOR the Hon. Prof. V. E. NEWTON: Mr. President, I rise today to speak solely on Head 54: Ministry

of Education and Human Resource Development, on tertiary education and the University of the West Indies. Sir, on previous occasions, I tried to cover a number of topics but I think that the situation on this occasion merits a little more attention to the University of the West Indies.

Sir, the University of the West Indies' budget, like that of many Government Departments and other institutions, has been cut fairly drastically. Sir, our position is one of understanding because we realise that the Government is facing serious financial times and that they can only give from what they have. We also view it as an opportunity for us to trim our fat and to be creative in finding ways of funding ourselves.

Mr. President, recently - and it was sparked by a number of items that were carried in the Press - there has been a debate on several matters pertaining to the University of the West Indies, mainly relating to the quality of programmes and the quality of the output. Many persons who know nothing at all about a university, what it is supposed to be and what it does, took the liberty, so to speak, but then you cannot blame them. It is the topic that is being spoken about and everyone wants to have a say.

Mr. President, let us speak first about the need for a university. I spoke about this matter about three years ago when the University College of Barbados was being proposed. Sir, it is to say that a university is not about training people, it is about educating persons. Therefore, when people want to say that university graduates come out and then they have to be trained to do this and that, Sir, let me say that might well be so.

Sir, what the university would have been hoping to do would have been to train these persons to think critically, so that when they go out into the marketplace, they would be easily trainable. Sir, it is a bit unfair for persons to expect that the university is going to be like the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic or some other training institution and when the product does not meet their requirement, then blame it on the university.

Mr. President, in the 1950s, Sir Arthur Lewis, an economist, who was later a Nobel Laureate and Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, wrote that it is possible to send all the students from small countries to England and that it would be cheaper than sending them to the University of the West Indies.

Sir Arthur then concluded that the decision was taken in 1948 to establish a university because of what it meant to the people. It would have been our own institution of higher learning. It would have been a place where our own people would do research which was relevant to our needs. Sir, for that reason, he noted that even though it would have been cheaper to send students overseas - and I

suppose it is still - that you would still need a university for those wider purposes.

Mr. President, similarly, in the late 1960s or early 1970s, the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, Father of Independence, said the same thing. He said that it would be cheaper to send students overseas but like Sir Arthur Lewis, he left the University of the West Indies alone because he realised that for the same reason, you need a local university. Certainly if you have reached a certain stage of development and want to take it further, you need a university that can meet the needs for development. Therefore, a university is not merely to be seen in terms of the students graduated, but its value-added, which is extended beyond the product of graduates.

Mr. President, in the 1950s, Sir Arthur Lewis made a point, which is now being realised in relation to Cave Hill, that student numbers will have to be increased in order to bring costs down. Of course, the facilities would have to be improved and increased as well.

Mr. President, in the 1950s and 1960s, when I went to the Mona Campus at the University of the West Indies, students there, not from Barbados, used to laugh at the Cave Hill Campus and say that it was a sleepy little place, a high school. That was because it was first located at the Deep Water Harbour and it then moved to the Hill, where there were one or two little buildings there and lots of pasture. It reminded people of just a little high school or a place of fun.

Mr. President, those of us who knew what it was then can hardly believe the transformation that has taking place. That transformation has not only taking place in relation to building - the number of purpose buildings, the cricket field, the world-class football field, the attractive student residences, the Creative Arts Centre, known as the Errol Barrow Centre for Creative Imagination; and lots of similar buildings that are all used for specific purposes, the University of the West Indies has become a hive of activity, especially in the evenings when part-time students pour on to the campus.

Mr. President, it is a joy to see the number of Barbadians taking the opportunity to improve themselves. Sir, successive Governments, those that have gone before and this one, have to be given credit for the development at Cave Hill because they have all bought into the idea that higher education had to be democratised. They bought into the university's strategic plan for increasing access to education.

7.10 p.m.

Monday, March 22, 2010

SENATOR the Hon. Prof. V.E. NEWTON: Sir, in 2000, Cave Hill had just over 4 000 students and today the number is over 8 000. The plan is to expand to 12 000 students by 2012/2013. This is keeping with the chain throughout the university. Both Mona and St. Augustine and other university campuses have been expanding. In fact, St. Augustine in Trinidad is growing so rapidly that it has taken over the top spot in terms of numbers of growth from Mona, Jamaica.

What does this rapid growth mean to Cave Hill? In 2002, Cave Hill was rejecting 60 per cent of all eligible Barbadian applications because it did not have the capacity to take them in. Now that the Campus has expanded, the percentage of applicants who cannot find places is down to 15 per cent and most of those who are turned away are the professional Faculties of Law and Medicine, where the entry thresholds have been set fairly high and where, because of the cost of providing education in these two areas, library facilities and so on, it has been necessary to keep numbers limited.

Mr. President, all that is about to change. Sir, the point is that now no Barbadian family sees university education as something that is not for him or her and the phrase "going down to Cave Hill" has almost become a part of national parlance.

Mr. President, as numbers have increased, cost has come down and this means that while in 2002 the capita cost at Cave Hill was over \$20 000, in 2009 it was only about \$12 000 and, Sir, this is remarkable and what about quality, Mr. President. Sir, lots of statements have been made about the quality of the University of the West Indies product during the past several weeks. The first point to be made in relation to quality is that the rules as to qualification of persons who apply to university and are admitted, the matriculation rules are not set by the Principal or any one official at Cave Hill. They are set by the University Senate.

Sir, at present there is no person studying at the Cave Hill Campus who has not met the matriculation standards, not a single one. It is just that people see more numbers going and they immediately say that numbers are up, so standards have fallen. Sir, that is not necessarily so at all.

Mr. President, in addition to students with CXC and CAPE qualifications, every year a small number of persons called "mature students" are admitted. This is to give persons who never had an opportunity to go to university and who have been working in the Civil Service for many years and have acquired a far amount of expertise in what they are doing, they are reliable, have probably done certificates and so on, to be able to go to university. We have people 50, 60, and sometimes we have had older

persons taking degrees at Cave Hill and being very happy for the opportunity to do so.

Mr. President, something we keep forgetting when we are speaking about standards is that a person's education does not begin when you get to university and, for that reason, several persons, including myself, are happy to hear that Government plans to focus or intends to focus more on the quality of education provided at the lower level. Let us face it, if you have people entering university, they have done CXC's, they have done CAPE, they have grades but when they start to write, then you realise that there are lots of defects in their grammar and this is something they have been doing for years. You cannot expect that in three years the university is going to be able to wipe out all those defects, but it is not for lack of trying.

This Campus is one of the most quality control conscious in the entire university system. In fact, our quality control standards are the envy of the other two Campuses. There are courses of all kinds, remedial courses, entry courses for persons who come in, there is Use of English, there is Science and Technology and a number of courses which students have to take, provided they have not taken them before, before they are allowed to graduate. Mr. President, some spread them out over a period of time and others try to get them out of the way during the first year, but all these courses are available to assist people who come into the university with problems.

Mr. President, even for teaching. In previous years people came in as teachers. You had your PhD. and you had some other higher qualifications and that was considered enough, but at Cave Hill, any person coming in now to teach has to do a teaching certificate, if they do not already have one.

They have to do a teaching certificate so that we can ensure that their teaching methods are up to scrap and that they are sensitive to the needs of students and so on. Sir, this is outside of their subject area and quite a number of the new staff are making the most of this opportunity. In fact, they have to, if they want to be promoted.

Mr. President, with regard to student performance, most students end up with a "B". This has been so for decades and as numbers increase, there will be greater levels in all grade levels, including "C", and even "D". Sir, I was told that someone speaking on a call-in programme recently stated that Cave Hill Campus is now passing persons with a "D" Grade.

Mr. President, that is true, but it all depends on what the "D" Grade is. It is not 20 per cent, it is not 30 per cent and, in fact, what we have done at Cave Hill and the University of the West Indies is to align our grading

systems with those of North America and other countries where from "D" to "A" are passing grades.

Sir, what it means is that any of us, or our children graduate from Cave Hill and want to do post graduate work in the United States of America, it is easier for their qualifications to be assessed because they are speaking the same language and the layout of the qualifications is similar to that at other universities and, therefore, it is a lot easier.

Sir, before they would have to write to the Ministry of Education asking if it is equivalent to ours and all that sort of thing. Sir, much of that is now eliminated by the fact that we have moved increasingly to conform to international standards in terms of grading.

Mr. President, I have to say that while several people speak about the alleged fall in the quality of the University of the West Indies students, there is absolutely no empirical evidence to support it.

Mr. President, when I graduated all those many years ago, there were complaints about falling standards then too. Sir, every generation looks back to the good old days and, on reflection, they might never have existed in relation to the matters on which we are speaking.

The Faculty of Social Sciences on the Campus is undertaking a project for tracking students to see how well they do over the period of time they are at Cave Hill, but the project is still being refined and so, for the time being, there is no empirical evidence whatsoever that anyone could use to demonstrate that a Cave Hill student has come out worse or even at the same level as he entered in terms of his general performance, his grammar, his general knowledge, and so on.

All those persons out there, who speak so confidently of lowering or falling standards at Cave Hill should think twice because there is absolutely no data to support such statements.

Mr. President, I made the point earlier that many employers expect that they will have to do no job training once they hire a university graduate and this is not so and for reasons I mentioned earlier because the university's job is not training, it is educating.

Mr. President, there is another point. Many students coming into university are coming at younger and younger ages now. Sir, 20 years ago, a university student might have left school and worked for a couple of years because he could not have access to free education, as the Government of Barbados has provided over all these years. Therefore, he or she was a little bit more mature than some of the students that you find entering university right now.

S/A28/19:20 Sequence 43

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SENATOR the Hon. Prof. V.E. NEWTON: A lot of them are bright. They have gained a lot of CXC's and CAPE results with good grades, but socially they are not well-developed. They are still young. When they graduate they are still also relatively young, some just 21 years old, so you would expect that when they go into the world of work there is still some maturing that they have to do to settle down in their work place, and this is something for which we have to give some allowance.

I heard someone speak earlier about the Faculty of Social Sciences, hundreds graduating from the Faculty, which is true, and the majority of students being in Accounting and Management. Sir, we have to remember that this is not only through the Faculty of Social Sciences in the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill. It is a worldwide phenomena.

A few decades ago, these are the areas where people were needed, in accounting, the accounting profession was small, and in management, as businesses expanded and so on. Therefore, the Faculty of Social Sciences would have responded to that need, and now today there are lots of students coming up in those areas.

It is not only management and accounting that constitutes the Faculty of Social Sciences. The management students are not just necessarily for them to come out today at the Undergraduate level, only having done Management. The Faculty of Social Sciences has a number of Certificate and Higher Degree Programmes that can compliment what they learn at the Undergraduate level. You can do Management, then you can do Project Management, which would land Construction Management and other things, which will better equip you for the world of work.

We have been educating our graduates to think outside of the box to make careers for themselves, to find areas in which services and special skills are needed and to move into those areas. Government, over the years, has been making funds available for small business activity, and there is no reason why some graduates cannot try to access these funds for various activities. This is what many of them are encouraged to do.

Sir, Cave Hill has established a project with the acronym SEED, which is unique. It shows students how to set up their own business, teaches self-reliance and entrepreneurialship. A number of graduates have made sure that they are part of the SEED endeavour. I am sure if some study was done of the progress of some Cave Hill graduates, especially those from the Social Sciences in the

society, you will notice that increasingly they are trying to find ways and areas in which they can set themselves in business instead of being employees. They themselves have become employers and small entrepreneurs.

Sir, there are areas of activity at the University that are little known. Maybe we ourselves are to be blamed for this, and steps are being taken to correct it.

The Cave Hill Campus has produced graduates who have taken high places on the world stage. Our staff is actively researching and publishing, producing Papers which Government and other organisations and individuals find useful for their work. One of our Lecturers, and he is also a University of the West Indies product, and a product of the Government Service, was a part of the team, two years ago, that won a Nobel Prize. I speak of Dr. Leonard Nurse. Another member of staff, from St. Vincent this time, and also a Cave Hill graduate, is now working at the UN doing cutting edge research in relation to agriculture. I speak of Dr. O'garro. Mind you, Cave Hill does not have a Faculty of Agriculture. Yet it is possible when in Faculties such as Applied Science to have persons work together on projects, even within disciplines that are not well-supported on the Campus to produce high quality work.

Many of you may not have had the opportunity to visit the Research Day which the Cave Hill Campus put on about a month ago, because it was during a weekday and we had thousands of school children. They were very excited. They looked at the exhibits and so on, but next time a Research Day is mounted, I am sure we will have to put it on at a time when more adults and people in the workforce can come to see the splendid work being done at the Campus.

Sir, mind you, we do not regret for a moment that children were among our first viewers, so to speak, because they are our future and many of those students who came will be future Cave Hill students, so at least they will get to know what the Campus can offer, or what they can expect, once they choose to go there.

Sir, I said earlier that we are very grateful for the support which the Government has given to the University over the years. It is not at all true for anyone to say that students are allowed to linger on the projects at Cave Hill. Sir, by agreements, with the Government, full-time students can spend up to four years, and part-time students up to seven years. Many try to complete the four, and if they stay on beyond the time, they have to pay for themselves.

The University is extremely rigid in making sure that this is what happens. If you are up there by year eight, and you are still lingering around, you are paying your own. Then you can stay forever. At least we have to let people

know that the Government is not paying for those students who are there all of that time. That is something we look carefully at.

Sir, in addition, the Campus, since 2000 or so, has been relentlessly trying to reduce its dependence on Government and has earned in excess of \$55 million from Consultancies, Project Funds, Contract Research, International Student Fees, all of which are non-government sources.

Indeed, Cave Hill has surpassed all the other Campuses in terms of private sector endowments and private sector funded buildings. I heard someone mention before, much of this credit has to be given to our very dynamic Principal, who in many respects is ahead of his time. You only need to see him in meetings with others and hear him to realise that he is not one of the many sitting around the table, full of ideas and not afraid to voice them.

Sir, all of those new buildings which you see at Cave Hill, and people are constantly referring to them, they are saying that the Principal likes buildings and so on. That may well be so, but they are not there sitting idly by. They are all being used for various projects. As we expand and try to widen the offerings to students, we have to make sure that we have the facilities that they need.

About four years ago when expansion was taking place, many persons, and I must confess I was one, we were very concerned because the student numbers were increasing rapidly and the facilities were not there to match them.

For instance, there were not enough classrooms large enough for the big classes you had in Social Sciences, and which are now fairly universal around the Campus. In no time at all the Principal was able to make arrangements to find funding to put up two new buildings which offered additional classrooms, and this is what has been happening around the Campus.

We have a spanking new medical facility with a large multi-purpose auditorium. What has happened is, the Campus has now been seen as one teaching space, so that you may be a lecturer in Law or Humanities, but if you cannot find space for your classes in your neck of the woods, you could go and have your classes somewhere else.

There is one Assistant Registrar that is managing the facilities, and it has been working quite well, so that over the years the complaints of students not being able to get into the classrooms would have decreased. You may still hear it sometimes, because you cannot exactly tell students what courses they may take. Some are more popular than others. In one year you may have 100 persons registering

for a course and the next year you may have 200, because others liked it and told the others what it was like and so on. By and large I would think that we are coping well in providing space for our students.

SA28 19.30 p.m. Sequence 44

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Estimates - Senate A28, Sequence 45, 7.30 p.m.

SENATOR the Hon. Prof. V.E. NEWTON: Mr. President, we also have to see Cave Hill as a contributor to the tourist industry. I know this is a very nontraditional way of thinking of a university but, in fact, we have attracted more than 10 000 persons to the island, during the last few years, that is the students, families, staff, visitors and we are doing our bit to contribute to the tourist industry.

To that end, there are plans to increase student accommodation so that when there are large international meets in Barbados that we can assist in providing accommodation for visitors. Of course, we have plans in place, largely through our international office, to increase the number of visiting students who are coming to do courses during the Summer or to do degrees at Cave Hill.

Again, the Campus is one of the largest employers on the island and also the Campus, within the UWI system which is the most international, both in terms of student population and staff ratios. Some 24 per cent of our students are from overseas, namely from other Caribbean islands. This will be from the OECS mainly, Trinidad and Jamaica because although there are Campuses in those two countries, the parents of those students opt to send them to Cave Hill for the rich experience that they will gain in studying here and often say, for instance, in a subject like Law, because the parents would have studied here themselves and wanted the students to have the same experience that they did.

I spoke earlier about the quality assurance system of the Campus which is regarded as best-practice within the university system. The public would also wish to know that all departments and programmes are reviewed on a three to five-year basis by external Accessors.

Mr. President, that brings me to the question of accreditation. In 2009, the Barbados Accreditation Council found that the Cave Hill Campus met the requirements for registration for a further three-year period. The exercises are usually conducted every three years and you have to pay your registration fee and so on.

It is my distinct pleasure, Mr. President, to inform you that the team reported that Campus passed all of the 11

criteria which required it to demonstrate its ability to provide students with proper academic supervision, adequate physical and learning resources and appropriate support services.

Furthermore, the report noted that the Campus has all the range of student facilities that would be expected of a major university campus.

Finally, Mr. President, the Cave Hill Campus was cited in Forbes Magazine, which is best known for telling you who are the latest millionaires and who are the best rated in various fields, the Cave Hill Campus was cited in the March edition of Forbes Magazine as a site of excellence.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. Prof. V.E. NEWTON: Mr. President, this is a signal Honour for a campus, which just a few years ago seemed to be behind God's back. It has been transformed into a place of brilliance and vibrance, a place where entrepreneurship is valued and encouraged and where students study hard and also play hard, where the staff is well-treated, their skills and knowledge constantly being upgraded.

I will end by coming closer to home, Mr. President, I am a proud Barbadian, a proud graduate of the Cave Hill Campus and an even prouder part of the management team of that Campus.

I know I am addressing you, Mr. President, but I will take the opportunity to ask any Law graduates among us or who are listening to heed a call which we will be shortly making for their assistance as the Faculty celebrates its 40th Anniversary and beyond because there are indications in the near future that if the Cave Hill Faculty of Law is to survive, we will need all the assistance we can get from our own students.

It is a great place to be and I hope that the graduate, Mr. President, you have been associated with the institution, you know of all the great things that happen up there and that they will assist us as much as they can.

With those words, Mr. President, I end by saying that we must not be too hard on ourselves. It is often that we West Indians do not fully appreciate things that are ours. We allow other people to set standards for us and we are constantly trying to put down what our fellow brothers and sisters are building up. It is self-defeating really because, at the end of the day, we are not harming anyone else but ourselves.

I would urge all Barbadians to support the Cave Hill Campus of the West Indies in whatever way they can and

to remember that it is a shining beacon among us and within the University and the Region.

Thank you, Mr. President.

SUSPENSION

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until tomorrow Tuesday, March 23, 2010 at 10.00 a.m.

The question that the Sitting be suspended until tomorrow, Tuesday, March 12, 2010 at 10:00 a.m. was put to the Senate and agreed to and Mr. PRESIDENT suspended the Sitting accordingly.

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J.INCE, Senator

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PRRESIDENT, Mr.

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THOMPSON, Senator Miss H.E.

WORRELL, Senator A. R.

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

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

EDITORIAL QUERIES

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

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

Q2. PRESENT list. The PRESENT list includes Senators the Hon. A. B. Walters, Miss P. I. Inniss and D. K. A. Griffith, whose seats the Governor-General's Messages declare vacant from 1st and 15th March, 2010, and omits the three new Senators, Husbands, Durant and Worrell, who took their seats at this Sitting. Printed as in the source.

Q3. Messages and tributes. Names are spelt differently between the Messages and the tributes: 'Damien Kerrel Anthony Griffith' and 'Damian Carl Anthony Griffith', 'Andre Ralston Worrell' and 'Andre Rawlston Worrell', 'Arni' and 'Arnie' Walters. The Deputy President calls 'Senator Hholder'. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Order No. 2, Senator McClean. One of the Leader's speech headings is followed only by ' . . . ' (after the take-slip at 1.10 p.m.). Printed as in the source.

Q5. Order No. 2, Senator the Hon. H. LaV. Benn. Senator Benn says that unemployment 'increased slighted to 10.2 per cent at the end of 2009. I now understand that it is below 9.4 per cent', and then accepts '9.7 per cent 3 per cent below 10'. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Suspension. Senator McClean moves the suspension until 'tomorrow Tuesday, March 23, 2010', but the question as recorded is to suspend 'until tomorrow, Tuesday, March 12, 2010'. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The Senate met on Monday, 22nd March, 2010 at 11.10 a.m., with the Deputy President, Senator K. F. Ifill, presiding at the opening; prayers were led by Rev. Father Errington Massiah. The Deputy President read two Messages from the Governor-General declaring vacant the seats of Mr. Arni Bernato Walters, Ms. Patricia Irene Inniss and Mr. Damien Griffith and appointing Mr. Andre Ralston Worrell, Mr. Harcourt Allan Husbands and Rev. Dr. David Livingstone Durant as Senators. The three new Senators took their seats and were welcomed by the Leader of the Senate, Senator the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McClean, by

Senator A. E. Holder for the Barbados Labour Party and by Senator the Very Rev. H. E. Crichlow for the Independent Senators, who also paid tribute to the former Senators. Senator McClean congratulated Senator J. Ince on his appointment as Parliamentary Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office.

Senator McClean laid the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure 2010-2011, the Medium Term Development and Fiscal Strategies 2010-2014 and A National Policy for Cultural Industries in Barbados, among other papers. Standing Orders Nos. 22(1) and 45(2) were suspended, and the Appropriation Bill, 2010 and the National Insurance and Social Security (Amendment) Bill, 2010 were read a first time.

Under Order No. 2, Senator McClean opened the debate on the Appropriation Bill, 2010, describing it as an occasion to account for the Government's stewardship. She spoke on the shaping of young people, the work of the Ministry of Youth, Family and Sports, the allocation of about \$271 million for Health under Head 23, the second largest in the budget, the admission of 45 to 50 per cent of students at one UWI faculty on low matriculation, and a rise of about 30 per cent in tourist arrivals from the United States; the President took the Chair during her speech.

After the luncheon suspension, Senator Miss H. E. Thompson said the Barbados Labour Party had left foreign reserves of \$2.9 billion, reduced in fourteen months to \$1.2 billion, and criticised cuts of \$15 million to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, \$3 million to the Prison and \$5 million to the Police, the response to falling tourism spend and the Government's fuel pricing. Her speech drew repeated points of order: Senator J. Ince gave figures on the economy and reserves and on fuel subsidies, saying her approach would have left \$180 million in debt, and Senator McClean challenged her statements on housing, contracts, taxi drivers and bus fares. The President reminded Senators of his responsibility to keep the debate within its ambit.

After a further suspension, Senator Dr. F. L. Chandler spoke at length on agriculture and the sugar industry, including the 1.2 per cent levy on sugar production of about \$3.8 million and the borrowing of almost US\$15 million by the previous Administration to lease the Carnival Destiny in 2007. The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Senator the Hon. H. LaV. Benn, supported the Bill, giving current revenue of \$2 457 million against expenditure of \$3 897 million, a \$92 million subvention for the Barbados Tourism Authority, growth in livestock and root crops, and an increase of \$124.7 million in net international reserves in 2009, and defended the rise in the water rate from \$20 to \$32.

Senator the Hon. Prof. V. E. Newton spoke on Head 54, tertiary education and the Cave Hill Campus, which had grown from just over 4 000 students in 2000 to over 8 000 and had earned in excess of \$55 million from its own

sources. On the motion of Senator McClean, the Sitting was suspended until Tuesday, 23rd March, 2010 at 10.00 a.m.

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