
THE SENATE DEBATES

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2013 – 2018

THE SENATE

Wednesday, February 1, 2017

The Senate met in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings on Wednesday the February 01, 2017 at 11.15 a.m.

PRESENT

Her Honour Senator Miss K. F. IFILL, B.Sc. (Hons.), M.B.A., (President)

His Honour Senator the Very Reverend H. E. CRICHLLOW, G.C.M., B.A. (Hons.) Dunelm, (Deputy President)

Senator the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN, B.Sc. (Hons.) M.A., M.B.A., (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade) (Leader of the Senate)

Senator Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO, M.B., B.S., (Minister of Labour, Social Security and Human Resource Development) (Minister of Commerce and Trade)

Senator the Hon. D. W. BOYCE, B.Sc. (Econ.), M.B.A. (Fin.), CMA, F.C.A., (Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister with responsibility for Energy, Immigration, Telecommunications and Invest Barbados)

Senator the Hon. P. M. T. TODD, B.Sc., (Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister)

Senator Mrs. V. I. SANDIFORD-GARNER, CIM, Dip. Mng., M.B.A., (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Tourism and International Transport)

Senator H. A. HUSBANDS, M.L.I.R., B.Sc., (Public Administration) (Hons), Ed. Cert. (U.W.I.), (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation)

Senator J. INCE, J.P., BB.A., M.B.A., Dip. (Mgmt.), (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs)

Senator R. A. HUNTE, J.P.

Senator A. R. WORRELL, B.A. (Hons.)

Senator Miss V. A. G. DE PEIZA, B.Sc. (Hons.), LL.M. (Merit)

Senator Dr. J. X. WALCOTT, J.P., M.B., B.S., F.R.C.S

(Edin.)

Senator W. A. ABRAHAM, LL.B. (Hons).

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

Senator Professor Emeritus Sir Henry FRASER, K.A., G.C.M., C.M., B.Sc., M.B.B.S., Ph.D., F.A.C.P., F.R.C.P.

Senator Dr. Sir Trevor CARMICHAEL, K.A., L.V.O., Q.C., B.Sc., (Econ.), M.A., Ph.D.

Senator A. A. ADAMS, J.P., B.A., Ed. Cert., M.Sc. Ed.

Senator J. A. WATSON

Senator Carol Lady HAYNES, M.B.B.S.

Prayers were led by Senator the Very Reverend H. E. CRICHLLOW.

MADAM PRESIDENT: This Senate is in Session.

MESSAGES FROM HIS EXCELLENCY THE
GOVERNOR-GENERAL

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HER HONOUR THE
PRESIDENTS

MADAM PRESIDENT: I am in receipt of an excuse for Senator Rev. Dr. D. L. DURANT who will be unable to join us today because he is out of the country.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS

Senator M. P. O. McCLEAN: Madam President, I am commanded to lay:

(1) the Fair Trading Commission Annual Report 2016

(2) the Enterprise Growth Fund Limited Annual Report 2016

(3) the Barbados Fire Service 2015 Annual Report

(4) the Barbados Prison Service Annual Report 2015, and

(5) the Barbados Agricultural Management Company Limited 22nd Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended June 30, 2015.

MOTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO you have the floor.

Senator Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO: Thank you very much, Madam President.

This morning we are here to do yet another Labour Bill and this is in keeping with the trend that we have started. Certainly when the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) came to office in 2008 and we have been working assiduously to ensure that labour legislation is on the books with some old ones being update and some new ones being put in place, all in keeping with the realities that we face today to ensure that our workers and our workplaces are protected, safe and that our workers can be comfortable, therefore perform in optimal conditions and hopefully to their optimal as well.

Madam President, today we have before us the Minimum Wages Bill. This Minimum Wages Bill is actually to repeal the Wages Council Act which is a 1955 legislation which is the 1955 Wages Council Act which is CAP 362 of the Laws of Barbados.

Madam President, as you can imagine, so much has changed since 1955 and so this is another one of the bits of labour legislation that we have had to look at. As with all of the others, it has gone through the usual process of tripartite dialogue and has been also some time in the works because we took our time with this to ensure that we satisfy the needs and not just of the Labour Department who would be the administrator but also the stakeholders, the employers and indeed the workers.

Minimum wage discussion is a very topical discussion today. Of course, there are workers who can protest for increase wages and indeed they do from time-to-time. There are those workers who when their collective agreements are up for discussion they can negotiate to have an increase in wages and we do, from time-to-time, see some pretty lofty wage increase. Of course, there are times

that you may have a 0 or just a 1 per cent wage increase but then there are other times when you may see some larger wage increases but the truth is, Madam President, as I pointed out last week, there are only about 30 per cent of our workers in Barbados who are unionised and maybe a few more than that with collective bargaining agreements. If you were to add to that the collective bargaining agreements who may not be unionised, but it means that for only those persons they are in a position to negotiate what is for them a decent wage. For the majority of the workers, therefore, there wages are set arbitrarily and while they may be uncomfortable with those wages, while they may not be satisfied that those wages may actually allow them to meet at less a minimum standard of living, there is very little that they can do. That is why we are here today to establish this Minimum Wage Board and just for the record at the outset, I will probably refer to it again, what we are doing here today is not setting a minimum wage, we are establishing a Minimum Wage Board, that is all we are doing today and the terms and conditions for the Minimum Wage Board are outlined in the legislation.

This Minimum Wage Board however will be authorised to advise the Minister on what a minimum wage should be and the Board will take into consideration several social and economic factors, and I will go into that in a little more detail shortly, but they will examine these factors and the conditions and make a recommendation to the Minister on a minimum wage. The options are for either a national minimum wage where you can declare that this amount is the floor and only a floor, it is a minimum wage. We can establish a floor for all workers but, of course, the sky is the limit, employers are free. There is no ceiling when it comes to wages but we certainly want to establish a floor for some of these workers. As I said, after this legislation allows us to appoint them and authorise them and so on, they can determine if they want to recommend to the Minister a national minimum wage or they can do so by sector. They can determine that for a given sector this is an appropriate wage. They may not see the need to articulate a minimum wage for every sector either so they can go through by sector because the idea, as articulated in the legislation, it is also spoken to in International Labour Organisation Conventions, is that you would look especially at those sectors for which there was no appropriate machinery for examining wages and setting wages. As I said, where in some sectors you have a collective bargaining agreement, that may be considered appropriate and a relevant, responsive and adequate mechanism for establishing a wage or a minimum wage in that sector and so the Board may decide they do not need to look at that particular sector at this time, so they have the option of a national minimum wage or a minimum wage by sector. What they would do is signal to the Minister this is our recommendation and then the Minister will make the Order. Madam President, I will go through the process for you very shortly.

Madam President, as I said, we now have on our books the 1955 Wages Council Act. The first Labour Minimum Wage Act that we had was in 1938 and that had required us to appoint advisory boards to advise the then Governor in executive committee who had the power then to fix minimum rates of wages in respect of certain areas of occupations. That Act was repealed in 1943 when we then had a Wages Board Act and then that 1943 Act was repealed and we now have the 1955 Wages Council Act which established for us a Wages Council. Again, it provided for setting up the machinery to regulate wages as well as other conditions in those particular fields of endeavour where it was opined that there was no adequate machinery to regulate the wages.

Specifically coming out of that 1955 legislation was the establishment of the Shops Wages Council, and the Wages Council (Shops) Order was made in 1958. We also had the Shop Assistants Order. The latest one that was done in 2012 increased the wages to \$250 for a 40-hour week or to \$6.25 per hour. We have also had a Shirt and Garment Wages Council. We also have on our books the Sugar Workers (Minimum Wage and Guaranteed Employment) Act of 1968. There is also a Domestic Employees (Hours of Duty) Act of 1982. We have the Sugar Workers (Minimum Wage and Guaranteed Employment) Act of 1968, so you can imagine that is also quite outdated, we had the Shirt and Garment Wages Council, we have a Shops Order and Shop Assistants Order of 2012 and the Domestic Employees Act, which according to the 1982 Order prescribed \$1.50 per hour for minimum wages, so you see there is a whole lot that has to be done to bring labour legislation up to date because as far as the Domestic Employees Act from 1982 recommends \$1.50 an hour, we know that nobody is even considering that. The only ones that are on the books now are the Shop Assistants at \$6.50 an hour and the Domestic Employees Act.

Some people have used the Shop Assistants Act as a guideline as to what they would use as a minimum wage but the truth is there are many who would recognise that unless they have a shop and they are dealing with Shop Assistants, that figure does not apply to them and so they have no minimum that is prescribed and they can do whatever they want and so we are concerned, especially in certain sectors, that there needs to be set a minimum wage for workers.

We have to do something with the domestic workers because as I said the Act that is on the books now is the 1982 Order but then there are certain groups that from time to time come to the attention of the Labour Department such as workers in small laundries. The bigger establishments may have other mechanisms, they may be unionised and they may have collective agreements and so on so but it is not so in the smaller establishments so the

workers in the small laundries and small bakeries are the ones we know. I am sure that after our discussion here today the Labour Department and the Board that we established would probably be made aware of other groups that want to have their wages revised.

There are also the persons working with janitorial services as well. We have heard some cries coming from that sector that their wages are also below what they think is a living wage. Persons in nursing homes, daycare centres, security guards and security officers and even workers in some nursery schools is another group of people that comes to our attention from time to time. Madam President, as we brought this legislation to Parliament and now to the Senate and as we prepare to be able to establish the Minimum Wage Board these are the ones that are top of mind, but as I said I anticipate that once we have done this and it is noised abroad that there is this mechanism now established we would probably be getting some requests from other sectors to have their legislation look at as well.

Madam President, what we are doing here today as I said repeals the 1955 legislation. That 1955 legislation while it does establish a machinery, the machinery that is established in that legislation is not seen as being adequate or responsive in today's society because the way that particular one works an interested group, a board, a joint council or whatever would make an application to the Minister that this particular sector needs to have an Order for a minimum wage. Once that application comes before the Minister the Minister would look at the application and decide if it is something that needs to be pursued and then he or she has to give notice that this is being referred to a Commission of Inquiry and then that Commission of Inquiry would meet and then make a recommendation to the Minister and then the Minister would publish an intention if the Minister accepts that recommendation. First of all, if the Commission of Inquiry thinks that there needs to be a new minimum wage, the recommendation is made to the Minister, the Minister then publishes the intention to increase the minimum wage and allows for objections in a given time-frame before the minimum wage can be established.

It is a little cumbersome, it is a long process, it is not responsive and we thought that we need a machinery that is more in keeping with what we have seen working in other countries. For example, Trinidad and Tobago has a machinery that has cut out a lot of those steps and - I will describe what the new legislation prescribes -- and allows for the making of an Order for a minimum wage. Grenada now has as well legislation for that. Antigua and Barbuda has a Minimum Wage Advisory Committee. St. Lucia now has an Equal Wages Commission. Trinidad and Tobago have a Minimum Wage Act which provides for a national board to advise on minimum wages, and Grenada's Labour Code provides for the establishment of a wages advisory

committee. Madam President, what we are doing here and the steps that are outlined here are actually more in keeping with what we have seen in similar countries including CARICOM countries. We have seen it around the world as well and in other Commonwealth nations. We tend to look specifically at the Commonwealth countries when we are looking at our legislation and our systems so we are moving in a similar direction that they have moved towards and that has been shown to work. It is definitely a more responsive system.

Madam President, what will happen in the new system is that the new Board can decide on its own to look at a sector or to determine a national minimum wage, they do not need to have a recommendation coming to them from a particular group, they will look at certain economic factors and making recommendation to the Minister. If the Minister accepts those recommendations and deems it appropriate to set the order, then it the intention is published and a period of time is allowed for an objection before that order is made, so it is a lot simpler, there is no establishing a Commission of Inquiry to look at that, et cetera as a number of steps are now cut out. Madam President, all of this is in keeping with what we see to be appropriate for our workers. Of course, we are signatory to the International Labour Organisation and in particular we have ratified Convention No.26 just after we became Independent, almost 50 years ago, in May, 1967, the minimum wage fixing machinery. Ma'am, having ratified that convention it is important that we continue to review our minimum wage fixing machinery to ensure that it is up to par.

Madam President, the International Labour Organisation also has a Convention No. 131 which looks at minimum wage fixing, with special reference to developing countries and what we are doing here actually fits quite squarely in the provision set out in Convention No. 131. Madam President, I believe that we are on good ground and our partners have supported us as we dialogue with them in establishing this process which would allow for a minimum wage board to be able to look at setting a new wage. As I said, you can do either a national wage or a minimum wage by sector.

Madam President, I mentioned that the Minimum Wage Board would take into consideration certain factors of the day and I direct you to Section (5) of the Bill where it says:

‘The Board to make recommendations to the Minister

The Board may, where it is of the opinion that the Minister should fix

(a) a minimum wage or make specific provision regarding the minimum terms and conditions of service in respect of employees generally or in respect of a specified group or sector of employees, forward a recommendation to the Minister and the recommendation may include the proposed minimum wage;

(b) the proposed change in the minimum terms and conditions of service of employees generally or in relation to a specified group or sector of employees; and

(c) any other related matter.

(2) Before making a recommendation under subsection the Board shall consider

(a) the rate of inflation, cost of living and general level of wages in Barbados; (b) contributions payable and benefits provided under the National Insurance Act, Cap. 47; (c) the taxes to be deducted in accordance with the provisions of the Income Tax Act, Cap. 73;

(d) economic factors, including the requirements of

Economic development, level of productivity and the desirability of attaining and maintaining high levels of employment; (e) payment for similar jobs or tasks in other countries in CARICOM, the Commonwealth or similar jurisdictions; and

(f) any other relevant or related factors.

Madam President, that is what the Board has to consider in arriving at this minimum wage, it is not going to be arbitrary and the persons who are sitting on the Board will be persons of some intelligence, obviously, and some experience in these matters.

Madam President, I will be a 9-Member Board, with three persons representing employers, three representing employees and three persons who will be appointed by the Minister. It will likely be persons who are trained in this particularly area or in some other related areas. Madam President, it is important that we consider this that they will look at the social and economic factors. I talked about the fact that in 2012 we increased the minimum wage for shop assistance. When we did that we also had to look at these factors. For example, it says here that they have to look at the desirability of attaining and maintaining high levels of employment. When we looked at increasing the minimum wage the proposal was actually higher. we had agreed to a step-wise approach, let us do raise this to \$250 per week and then we will look at increasing it to something that is even more in keeping with the standard of living in our climate today because \$250 today is still not a lot of money and we think that they could stand to get a little more, but of course as we consulted the discussion of productivity

arose and also of employment levels. for example, some employers said that if they had to increase their labour cost they were going to see themselves having to send home persons and that is one of the reasons we agree not to give the increase that we were looking at at the time but that we would do it step-wise so that it would become easier to adjust to the \$250 per week. We were looking at, for example, \$300-\$325 a week and eventually getting to that level. We considered that, especially given that this was 2012 and we were still very much experiencing the effects of the recession and so on, we said that we will go to \$250 per week, then we will take it from there. We agreed that we did not want, on the one hand, to have an increase wage but then on the other hand to see an increase in the unemployment levels.

Madam President, as I have researched this and I have looked at the experiences of countries all across the globe, there are some who would argue that if you increase the minimum wage that you are always going to see a drop in the employment levels, but as I have been looking at it, that has not been the case in the main. you may see like a knee-jerk reaction, you would see that increase in unemployment because it was as a result of the knee-jerk response of the employer about getting their overheads under control and may cut some workers, but over the medium term they would see that that is not sustainable and would bring back on persons because they have realised that their operations actually needed to have those people on board.

Madam President, that brings us to a discussion that we have to have on productivity. Madam President, we start talking about wages increase, about safety and health, about upgrades in the work systems then immediately you hear concerns and you can understand the concerns, concerns of employers about their input costs and how is it going to affect their productivity. There are some who would argue, for example, that you do not need to set a minimum wage. There was one school of thought that said that the best policy is to leave wage setting entirely to the market and to collective bargaining or to whatever factors there are, with no recourse to any regulatory measures. That school of thought was to let market forces drive whatever happened. the other school of thought though was that having a judiciously set minimum wage can make a modest contribution to meeting the social goals that we want -- employment, standard of living for persons, et cetera - without much distortion of the employment patterns as I have just described, where persons have set a minimum wage they may see at first a drop in employment levels but over the medium terms there is not much distortion to the employment levels and so that is the way that a lot of countries are going. Ma'am, we have seen the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Canada moving in that direction, along with some of our neighbours in the Caribbean region.

Madam President, we have seen where it had been decided not to set a minimum wage but to let the market take its course, we have seen where that does not work out necessarily so well for the employees in the long run, that the wages continue to be low. We have seen that unless there is some regulatory measure or some pressure brought to bear that, very often, those wages are not brought up to what is considered a reasonable standard. This discussion, as I said, becomes one of productivity for employers especially; their input costs will drop. We have seen it over the past several years during the recession as employers have tried other means to reduce that particular cost; the labour cost, because in many countries the labour cost is the largest of the overheads. They have tried a number of things, and some of them we have monitored very carefully because we have realised that while the employer may make a reasonable case for it, it does not necessarily work out so well for the employee. For example, one thing you have seen is the misuse of apprenticeships. This was something I know for sure that the Barbados Workers' Union, then headed by Sir Roy Trotman, dealt with, and I remember having a discussion with him about the apprenticeship scheme. One of the things we have been doing and which my Ministry is responsible for is the Vocational Training Board and looking to expand the apprenticeship programme so that trainees are better prepared for the workplace. We hear from employers all the time that students and trainees come out of these establishments and are not really ready for the world of work; so one way to eliminate that problem is to have apprenticeships and let them go into the world of work, understand the current practices, the new machinery and the new technology which they may not have been exposed to while at the Polytechnic and the Vocational Training Board. It would help them to understand work ethic and work culture and so on, so that when they are ready to work they would actually be better prepared. We know that sometimes we see, coming out of apprenticeships, persons actually being offered full-time employment.

Madam President, one of the things which I will always remember from that conversation with Senator Trotman was that, at that time around 2010 or 2011 there was a concern that employers may have wanted to use more apprentices to do the work which they had to get done and take on less staff, or give their staff less time. It has happened. We have seen that it has happened here and across the world. Remember, if you are taking an apprentice from the Barbados Vocational Training Board, for example, the Training Board pays a stipend; so that is a cost which the employer does not have to bear. Therefore, you bring on an apprentice, the Vocational Training Board pays the stipend, and whereas in some sectors a worker may come every week to see if there is work, those workers may be told "There is nothing for you this week" because the employer has his or her hands full with apprentices and they are doing the work. The employees who are attached

to that establishment cannot then find work for that week, that month or whatever because of the apprentices. While we want the apprentices to have the experience, we were also cautious that this is a situation which we had to look out for.

We have also seen across the world, and I am told it is happening here, this concept of the zero-hour contract where persons are engaged on contract but there is no time specified in the contract. It is a zero-hour contract. In a nutshell, essentially, you work for whatever we give you, and if you work for an hour this week, that is it; if you work for two hours next week, that is fine. There is no minimum that says you will work 40 hours, or that says if you are part-time you will work 20 hours, or whatever. It is a zero-hour contract and we can call you any time, and whatever you get, that is it, and you are not going to make noise because that is the contract which you have been engaged on. Again, that is something which, while useful for persons who want to supplement their income and have such a job on the side or who may be a student and wants a little part-time job to give them extra money, is cause for concern where that kind of arrangement replaces the proper contract of employment that we are all used to. It may be useful in some circumstances but, again, we have to monitor that situation. I know our unions are looking at that as well; they are looking very closely. We want to ensure that even as we stand here today and look at legislation for the Minimum Wage, as we did last week with the Holidays with Pay and as we did Employment Rights and all of those things to protect workers, we are not allowing this practice to slip in without being monitored. As I said, it may have value for students, for persons who just want a little part-time work and that kind of thing, but it is not to replace the proper contracts that we know; the full-time or part-time contracts which allow Social Security benefits and those things. As a zero-hour contract, there is not attached to it anything about National Insurance, Social Security and those provisions which we have worked long and hard to preserve and protect for our workers here in Barbados.

There is another concept which you would find if you looked on the Internet, for example, and it is called micro-jobbing. This is similar to the zero-hour contract, where you would just get a little job, a micro job to do a little piece work, and that would be it until they call you again. Again, this may be appropriate for certain groups of persons, but over the long term it is not something which we want to see, and it is certainly not something we want to replace the normal conditions which we have worked so hard to protect. Those are things we have seen and are hearing about, and we are continuing to monitor them because we want to ensure the protection of our workers. All of this happens in the name of productivity; this being our Year of Productivity. I am glad that the Productivity Council, which is an organisation established through our Social Partnership, has this year established the Year of

Productivity. The Council was established back in the 1990s but when the economy was as it was then, everybody looked at what they could do differently and what they could do better; so we had this Productivity Council established and so on. However, as things got better, in the minds of many people you put that on the backburner. People told themselves, "There is no need to fix it right now" and "if it ain't broke, don't fix it", leave it alone, or that there was no need to change how you did things because things were looking good and everything was fine so why trouble it.

We have found ourselves now in the recession which started in 2008, and everybody realises and says, "Hold on, there is a need to transform and reform some of our ways of doing things. We need to look at productivity." Our Productivity Council now is at the top of everybody's mind; the word "productivity" is at the top of their minds, and everybody is looking to see how their systems can be improved in the private and public sectors. There are other things people are looking at as well. We have been looking across the board in the private and public sectors at how we can do things differently to make us a little more shock-resistant and a little more resilient, because we know the nature of economies and that this is not going to be the last recession which Barbados or the globe will face. There will be these things again. I am not putting my mouth on anybody but that is just the nature of these things, indeed, so we want to be able to ensure that we are more resilient; shock-resistant, if you will. Therefore, we are focusing this year on productivity. What I find whenever we talk about productivity is that you hear in the main concerns from employers that the workers are not productive, and that the workers are not showing up to work. We hear about absenteeism; we referred to it a bit last week. We hear about workers who are taking too much time off, whether it is to do their own thing or because they are ill. Studies looking at absenteeism actually suggest that 30 per cent of absenteeism is because of illness. The other 70 per cent include a day off, personal things which you have to do, not liking the work environment, not being able to manage or deal with the workplace on a particular day, and that kind of thing. Seventy per cent is that, according to one study which I saw from the Productivity Council, and 30 per cent is actually due to ill health. Those are things we have to address. We know that as a nation we have been looking at the impact of Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases on productivity and on our ability to work. We know people lose a lot of time going to the doctor, as a consequence of their chronic non communicable disease whether it is a side effect of the medication, treatment, or they are just not feeling well because of this disease, we know there is a significant amount of time lost in the workplace because of chronic non communicable diseases. In another forum that is being addressed, this absenteeism because of illness, in particular the chronic non communicable diseases.

Another complaint you hear from workers is 'presentism' where a worker will show up for work and be there in body only, but not in mind and not in spirit. They are doing other things. They are not engaged. We have seen studies that suggest that the percentage of engaged workers average about 30 or 35% in the public and private sectors. We had those figures done for Barbados and we have seen they are comparable with figures in other countries as well as around the world. In the United States for example it is pretty similar. You have 30% of workers who are not engaged. They are there to work, they are there but do not ask them what they have done for the day. Their minds are somewhere else or they may be Youtubing, Face Booking...

Asides.

Sen. Dr. Hon. E. BYER-SUCKOO: Well, some workplaces have to block those things in order to get some work done. Some are just sitting there playing solitaire. Sometimes you go into workplaces and you happen to peep back at the computer screen of a person who is at work and there it is, the games and all the different things. So they are there in body but they are not actually contributing. So a lot of blame is ascribed to the worker for this low productivity. In Barbados we have realized productivity is something that needs to be addressed.

There is a feeling that workers - they say Barbadian workers, but I have been reading the same thing in newspapers and magazines from around the world - they say Barbadian workers see work as a right. It is my God given right to have a job. Therefore I will have a job but I do not necessarily have that responsibility to work when I am at the job. You hear employers complain about that in Barbados.

I think I am pleased to see, although it is not quite a pleasing statistic, that it is not a Barbadian phenomenon, that around the world, you read newspapers and magazines you see the same thing. They say the workers see employment and a wage as their right. So I am entitled to this. Give me a job so I can get money to achieve what I need to achieve, with my finances and my material procession, but I am not responsible for working in the work place.

We hear on the productivity discussion a lot of blame being thrown at the worker. It may be rightly so. This year as we look at the Year of Productivity, I know there will be opportunities for engagement in a number of fora so we can dissect these things, but not only to find the cause. In this the Year of Productivity we need to find and apply solutions, because you will hear a lot of suggestions about what the causes are, but we need, this year, to find solutions.

On the other hand while we hear about the workers, we know that employers also have a significant responsibility when increasing or maintaining productivity. It is not something you hear a lot about. It is something when I engage with employers here and

I realise that many of them, I cannot say how many, have not taken the step to do what has to be done to increase productivity. So they will hear us today increasing the minimum wage, then you will hear a discussion that productivity is going to be affected, because our input cost is going to go up. Of course productivity being defined as the output achieved per unit input. So when the input goes up immediately you will here, Oh our productivity is going to be affected.

Do you know what Barbadian employers need to do in the private as well as the public sector when we talk about employers, all employers need for example to dialogue more with workers, to set clear objectives. Many times, and I have seen it in the Private and the Public Sector, there is no clear setting of goals. A worker comes to work today and there is something on his desk, he starts to work on it, maybe tomorrow he will continue working on it and you are lucky if by the end of the week he has finished it, but nobody has said to him you need to finish that in two hours, and then there is something else for you to do.

You show up and you work at your pace.

There is a definite need to define what the expectations are and then to revisit the expectations. When you come into my employment I may say I need you to do this in two hours, but then I may realise that, as a good Manager, you can do that in half an hour. You are not engaged, you do it in half an hour, and the boss did not give me anything else to do because he expected me to do it in two hours, so you just sit there. There is a need to constantly revisit workers to ensure they are operating at their optimum..., they are operating at their capacity.

You also have to help workers to build their capacity. Something we have been talking about a little more. We have in the Human Resource Development Strategy, under my Ministry that has been trying to promote that as well. Helping workers to improve their capacity. Train the workers. Have them identify what their particular skills are. A worker in a particular area, may not be engaged because he has no interest at all in that particular area of the work, but you may realise that he is probably good with numbers. So put him into an area where he deals with the numbers, or she is better off with the telephone, so put her where she can handle the phone calls. Or somebody is better at keying in stuff so put them there. Find where their niche is. Find what they are good at. Put them in an area where they can thrive and then you will see productivity increase, but that is the role of the

employer. It is not for the employee to say, well I do not like it here, put me there. That could work sometimes, but the employer has to be doing that as well, and you have to listen to workers. If I say nothing else before I wrap up, I want to encourage our employers, as we talk about productivity, to listen to the workers.

I hear coming out of the NISE 100 Improvements in 100 DAYS. The National Initiative for Service Excellence (NISE) has done that project a couple of times. They have done this 100 improvement in 100 days. You hear all of these glowing stories about how things have improved, but very often those improvements have not come from the top. Those hundred improvements, out of those hundred you may find 3 or 4 that have actually turned around the organization, and they came in that hundred where people actually listened to the suggestions of the lower level staff. For those hundred days they had a voice. There was an ear, which may not always be there. In some organisations you do not want to know what the maid thinks, because the maid's job is to clean and after she has cleaned she disappears somewhere, and you do not see her again. You do not call for her unless there is a spill somewhere. Once you find that these persons are engaged... we have heard stories out of the 100 days Improvement where the maids have made suggestions. The receptionists have made suggestions that not only affected their own particular area of work, but things where from their vantage point they have been able to see if something is done a certain way it could lead to an improvement, and when implemented has worked. That is one of the things we need to inculcate as our culture in our workplace, listening to workers.

Madam, when you listen to workers you allow them to be more engaged, and they feel they are a part of the organisation. Sometimes you would overhear the maid say, "You know how long I told them they should do that? Nobody 'aint' listening to me so let them go long. I don't have anything to say." It does not concern them. They sit back and they watch the thing go on, knowing in their minds that there is a better way of doing things, but nobody is going to listen to them, so let them go along. I do not have anything to say. When we can build that culture, the maid whose suggestion will be listened to becomes more than the maid. The maid becomes an integral part of this organization, becomes engaged in the workplace, becomes more productive, gives more and does the task with a little more flourish, ensures the task is done better and just put that little embellishment on what they do, because we have engaged them.

Madam, things like employee recognition. Employee recognition goes a long way in improving productivity because you say to a worker, I recognise you are a valuable part of this organization. I recognise the contribution you have made, whether it is a contribution this week or this

past month, or during the year, 20 years or whatever, recognising that worker.

Also, something Barbadians do not like to do, I have realised, is to resolve an unsatisfactory performance. If we are going to talk about productivity, let us not just sit back to talk about the cost that has gone up. They may be some taxes added to your business, you may not have receive your VAT returns, the minimum wage has gone up, all these calculations and other things may have increased your labour cost. I am not telling you not to pay your VAT and not to pay your taxes, but render unto Caesars what are Caesars'. I am saying you have these legal obligations in your business you have to meet. You cannot just sit down and say we will never be productive because my overheads now include the increased VAT, taxes, wages or whatever. We need to look at productivity. In the face of all this Barbados still needs to improve its productivity. We have to compete on a global stage. We have to compete with our neighbours for a market share around the world. We have to take our goods and services to the world. We have to tap into Europe. We have to tap into Africa. We have to tap into places beyond. Productivity is important for us. It is not just about labour costs. We have to start looking seriously at how we do business, at our productivity, at managers in the role of managers, not just assigning a task but doing your role as a manager, ensuring the worker is producing.

Madam, this thing about resolving unsatisfactory performance that is something we have to address. As Bajans we say it is because we live in a small society so nobody whether in the public or private sector, I have seen it in both, nobody wants to call a spade a spade and say to a person what they have done is wrong, or you are not coming to work on time, you need to show up on time or else. Or even for example our Employment Rights Act says if a worker does something wrong, you notify them, you put it in writing and you write it may be three times if that is your policy, and with three stripes you are out. You sit in offices in the Private and Public Sector where you hear managers and supervisors bemoaning the quality of work of a worker, bemoaned how often they come into work late and so on, but ask to see it on the file, have you put it in writing? "Not me, I aint taking bread out of anybody's mouth. I do not want to be responsible for doing that." So your job as a manager, your job as a supervisor, you know the person under you is not putting in a full day's work, you know the person under you is slacking off and instead of calling their attention to it, trying to address it, going through the process where you call their attention to it in the first instance, you put it in writing in the second instance, you go through the process and then when enough is enough you say, it is documented here X amount of times. You have to leave our employ. Nobody wants to do it because we are a small society and we are all related. I may write you up and then somebody is going to call to

say, "But you know he is my uncle?" My good friend may call me up to say, "That is my uncle. How you could do that to my uncle?" All of a sudden the page is gone from the file. These things happen in Barbados, but if we are to talk productivity we have to put our country ahead of these personal things.

I understand wanting to give a person a second chance, but you need as a manager to say this is what it is. You have attempted the first time and I understand you are my good friend's auntie, so I am just talking to you now, but if you do it again it is going down. We have to deal with these things. You do not deal with them and what happens then, an employer gets up one morning and decides ... they come into the work, the employer gets up, has a bad day, got up somebody took all the wheels off the car ...

Asides.

Sen. Dr. Hon. E. BYER-SUCKOO: An employer gets up, has a bad day and gets into work late and then realise, "Hold on, where is John Brown?" "He is not in yet." "Again? But this is the fourth time this month he has been in late. When he comes in sends him to me." So enough is enough he is gone. Of course he will go to Sir Roy who would tell him that cannot happen because for 20 years you worked there and nobody ever wrote anything against you that you showed up to work late and so on, and they can make a case because nobody ever put it in writing that you were showing up to work late, that you were slacking off and not doing your job. It is important if we are to tighten up on how we do things in the Public Sector and Private Sector, managers have to take their responsibility seriously, and employers have to take their responsibility seriously. The worker does have a responsibility, I have touched on that. The employer has a responsibility.

I have opted to spend a few minutes on this issue today of productivity, because I know that coming out of our discussion on minimum wage, I am going to have to entertain discussions on what is this going to do to productivity and I needed to ensure that today that I articulated productivity is about more than just the labour cost. It is more than just the function of a labour cost. It is not just how much you pay your workers, but it is about how you engage your workers as well, how you manage your workforce, how you treat to your workforce, the conditions you provide for them but also the management and the supervision that you give to them. When you are doing all those things then you can talk about your productivity is down and so forth, but there is more to it than just our increasing the minimum wage.

So coming out of this debate -- it has been passed in the Other Place- I anticipate that we will before the day is

ended, be able to see this legislation passed and we can then establish our Minimum Wage Counsel, which will look at the various sectors in Barbados. I highlighted some that are more in need than others of assistance in the area of a minimum wage. I mentioned domestic workers, nursery schools, security officers and guards, day care centers, nursing homes, janitorial services and workers in small establishments like small laundries, small bakeries and so on. I anticipate that once I am able to do so, once I am empowered by the legislation I will be able to establish the Board who will get to work to advice on a minimum wage. Section 5 also articulates the minimum terms and conditions. It is the Minimum Wage Bill but it also speaks to other terms and conditions that may also need to be addressed in the process. Once that is done we can look at the minimum wage. As I said earlier, it is because we believe that leaving the minimum wage to market forces has not been shown to be a good model, and it certainly is not the way we want to go, because we want to ensure our workers can continue to achieve their goals, and that they have a wage that can do that for them. We know there is a lot of discussion on increasing wages in the Private and Public Sector. There is a lot of discussion on increasing our wages as well, but the concern we are discussing today is the minimum wage for those persons whose wage is way below, let me not just say way, but whose wage is below what is enough to allow them to meet their basic needs and allow them to support their families and do the basic things that we would want to do. We are setting a flooring and not setting a ceiling. I say to employers that the sky is the limit, you can determine what you have to do. One of the provisions of the legislation I do want to mention before I sit down, Madam President, is that in this legislation too, the Chief Labour Officer, as we did last week, can actually institute proceedings in his own name against any employer who is failing to comply with this legislation, but the area I wanted to highlight is Section 8:

"An employer to whom this Act applies shall not pay to any employee any sum which is less than stipulated in the Minimum Wage Order ..."

whenever that order is made. Whenever the recommendation comes to the Minister the process is followed and the order is made an employer shall not pay less than the sum stipulated in the order,

"... and shall not retain or withhold any sum therefrom other than an amount to be deducted under the provisions of the Protection of Wages Act or in accordance with the provisions of any other enactment."

so they can without the PAYE and the National Insurance but that is to be sent on to the relevant agency.

"AND WHERE an employer pays and employee and incentive based payment or commission, a monetary

allowance, a payment for overtime work or any other additional sums, the payment of these sums shall not be discontinued but shall, where the terms and conditions of the employees contract and the duties performed so require continued to be paid in addition to the sum prescribed in the Minimum Wage Order.”

I wanted to highlight that because what we know can happen is that somebody can say well alright your wage was \$200 and we have no articulated, for argument's sake, that the minimum wage was \$200 and we have now said by Order, it should have been \$300 and somebody will say but when we add in X, Y and Z and all of that, it comes to more. If the minimum wage is increased it is increased and you have to comply with that and not say if I increase that now I am going to stop giving you overtime. Or if I increase that now, I am going to stop your commission, allowance or whatever. You still have to pay if the contract said that you were getting overtime and that you were getting an allowance and so on, you still have to get those. The basic wage is to be increased in accordance with any Order that is passed.

Madam President, so you understand what we have before us today, what we are doing and why we are setting about to ensure that we have this new mechanism in place for establishing a minimum wage. As I said, we have one in place under the 1955 Wages Council Act which we will repeal once this has passed but that process was cumbersome and not responsive and so I am sure that having heard what I had to say, the Honourable Senators and you Madam President, would agree with me that we need to have this more responsive mechanism in place to ensure that our workers get a satisfactory minimum wage at least. All of this can happen in the context of us ensuring that workers are well provided for but they can be engaged and all of this happening in a context where you would continue to see employment continue to rise as it has been doing because as I said, employment does not have to go down. We may see a little blip, it may drop for a little bit but in the main, this does not lead to an increase in unemployment so we will continue to see employment rise, we would continue to see growth and we will continue to see productivity as employers and employees are more engaged and carrying out the roles that they have to carry out in their various workplaces.

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

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Trotman, you have the floor.

Senator Roy TROTMAN: Madam President, I rise to speak to this Bill before the Chamber. We should thank the lead spokesman of the Opposition for giving me the opportunity to be the first to speak after the Minister. I

want to indicate upfront that I support this Bill that is before the Senate and that is the Bill as it is now set out but I have a number of questions and a number of challenges which I would like for the Minister and the Government to think about very carefully and to be satisfied that we are achieving the purposes for which this discussion, in my view, originally took place.

Way back in 2007, Professor Andrew Downes who, in responding to a request from the National Productivity Council, delivered a Report and a Paper on this matter which has been the subject of discussion ever since then. I understood then when we, and I would have to say, in the Productivity Council, thought about having this matter dealt with that we were very concerned in urging that we would seek to protect the most vulnerable within our workforce. It is always easy for persons who have special skills or whose occupations are in short supply. It is always easy for those persons to name the conditions and the rates for which they were worth but there are the vast majority of people in any country, in any community, who will tell you fall among the ranks of those who are most vulnerable and who need to be protected by the authorities.

In this case, we have had the good fortune to have a tripartite body that has been managing to look at some of these issues. We, the Labour Movement, have been concerned as the Government has been concerned by the thought that there are some areas where the minimum has not risen by any dicta from the Government itself but has only moved as individual employers have seen the need to make those changes, particularly in areas like domestic workers. In short, we are still very concerned that we only have \$1.50 per hour. We know that it does not apply generally but it is on the books and it was there ever since 1982 as the hourly rate for domestic workers. While very few people would work for that and very few people would offer it, it is still the fact that it acts as a driver and it acts as a driver to drive down the rate. When it drives down the rate for the domestic and the only other rate that one begins to see is a rate of \$6.25 for Shop Assistants, then you would recognise that in many areas in the workforce in Barbados employers, not because employment would be adversely impacted but rather because that is the level that they will tell us that the Government and the people of Barbados are ready to gear their expectations. They will try to put people who are working for them within that wage range. The Minister has spoken about a host of people like home helpers and people who are guiding the nurseries, but in other commercial areas as in security guards where you have a negotiated rate and where the employer as in G4S will try to move from the negotiated rate and call workers doing the same work by a different job title and pay them three-quarters of the rate, 60, 65 or 70 per cent, is something that trade unions in the area is fighting against constantly, but where the legislation will be able to help because in my view the Bill that is before us speaks to the

question of having a minimum not merely for shop assistants but to having an agreement, and I hope that this will be the thrust of this discussion, where sectorial minima are looked at and are approved. If we limit this only to those on the very bottom rung of the ladder then what we would be doing is maintaining the same exploitation cycle and we would be grinding the workforce in a manner for which there is no justification.

We have to take care of the most vulnerable. We have to move beyond the domestic worker. We have to be able as well to bear in mind that the presumption we have arrived at in thinking of a minimum wage is a presumption that says that people work 40 hours a week. That is the amount of hours that people are supposed to work as a maximum but there are people who are down to these hourly rates and who are found within the ranks of the most vulnerable who will tell you, or if you, like we have done, try to research the matter, you will find that most of them are working less than 40 hours. Indeed, many of them are being kept somewhere in the region of 24 hours, so you work 24 hours or 32 hours and do not get the benefit of what we in our wisdom have decided should be the minimum wage for a week, and I am going to speak a bit more to that in a few minutes, Madam President.

As I gather from the Bill, one of the reasons why the organisation that I used to have the honour to work with, and that is what I was doing when I spoke to the Minister some weeks ago...

Asides.

Senator Sir Roy TROTMAN: She said years ago. Well if it is years ago, time flies when you are having fun. One of the things that I think this legislation will also deal with, and I was very pleased to see that was part of one of the changes made in the revision of the Act that we looked at last time we were here, is the matter of the Holidays With Pay Bill in which we also amended the Employment Rights Act because the conditions of employment ought to be a critical part of any examination which this legislation and legislation like it should be treating with.

In my estimation the title of the Bill, and if it is passed in this way, the title of the Act, is a misnomer and misleads and ought to be relooked because this is not a Minimum Wages Act that we are looking at, it is something much more comprehensive and something which should tell whoever looks at it that we are in fact transforming the labour development and that we are treating with much more than \$2 an hour or \$2.50 an hour or whatever other figure there has to be, and I would love to suggest that we would not be doing any violence to the intention of the parties if we were to look again at the title and make it properly represent what it is that we are trying to do.

I am saying that in this particular piece of legislation we are recognising that there are some conditions that need to be looked at. The Bill itself having been passed will give more support to the conditions where reference is made in the Employment Rights Act but it will also reinforce the hands of whoever the Board will be for this particular body which will see after the Act. I look at conditions like those where people are required to do work standing for the entire period of their shift at work or their tour of duty like some security officers. Shop assistants now get seats but some employers do not want to see them using those seats and so people are being forced to be on their feet all through their shift and some, as in the same security areas, are made to stand in the sun and the rain and the dew throughout their shifts, and in the case of security people it is not an 8-hour shift, it is a 12-hour shift, and some of them in those same areas have no access to any facilities where the calls of nature as there may from time to time would put them in positions where they need to have rest facilities. This particular legislation should be dealing in issues of this sort and therefore I do not see it as a Minimum Wages Act.

The question of the Shops Wages Council only dealt with the matter of money and a few other related matters but I am pleased to see that this matter will in fact go much further. When I look at what it treats with then I am recognising that we have to look at a particular matter before us that is of some grave significance, and I want therefore to revert to my comment regarding the Paper what was done by Professor Andrew Downes submitted around February 2007. It was delivered to the Productivity Council. The title of it is "The Impact of a Minimum Wage Policy on the Economy of Barbados". I will be making copious reference to it, Madam President, and therefore I am ready to make it a document of the House.

It is instructive for us to note that in making this presentation Professor Downes, as Minister Byer did just now, made reference to the International Labour Organisation because if we are dealing in labour management issues then the very foundation stone of what we are going to be treating with should be the International Labour Organisation. In fact, we may also have from time to time to reference the United Nations because there are certain human rights issues that crisscross or sometimes run parallel with the standards of the International Labour Organisation.

What Professor Downes was at pains to draw attention to were the factors listed by the International Labour Organisation in Convention 131, which was adopted by the International Labour Organisation in 1970. That Convention indicated that there should be two sets of factors that should drive and govern the minimum wage of a community: One should relate to basic needs and the other one should relate to the economic factors. When we

speak to the matter of basic needs, what is being referred to here is the general level of wages in the country, the cost of living and changes in that country, the Social Security and non-wage benefits for the country, and the relative living standards of other social groups within the country which may not be party to that particular minimum wage, Madam President. The economic factors would relate to the requirement of economic growth and development, the levels of productivity and the desire for a high level of employment. Those are issues which I believe have to be discussed at some considerable length before we are going to be in a position to have this Board or indeed any Board make a determination regarding a minimum wage. The very critical question that has to be addressed here is whether at this point in our life we are going to treat only with those limited number of people whom the Bill does not speak to but whom the Minister made reference to as she was delivering on the subject.

Professor Downes, in the presentation to the Productivity Council, spoke to a number of other issues, and he posited that the objectives of a Minimum Wage Policy should be very clear. In Section 2 of the Document he says that the clear identification of the objectives of a Minimum Wage Policy is critical to the design and implementation of such a policy.

“A Minimum Wage Policy can be designed to achieve several objectives, some of which can be in conflict,” he said.

I pause here to say that it is because I am conscious that, in dealing with this subject, we have different agendas in the country, and people have different interests to satisfy. I therefore pause to say that it is because there may be conflict that I am of the view that the consultation should not be a mere consultation where we deliver a speech as now but where there is a consultation exercise that allows for wider discussion before a final decision is taken. It would be an exercise like this, and except for the Honourable Member or person who leads the item, the rest of us would be limited to one presentation of half-an-hour. I am of the view that in a discussion which treats to an issue that is so critical, persons may want to have second and even third opportunities to speak to issues, and therefore to make sure they are treating to the subject of the alleviation of the needs of the working class in such a manner that they are not limited by a half-hour or any other limited time sequence.

Professor Downes also spoke to a second objective for minimum wages, and he said that it is to reduce poverty in the country. I do not want to develop that because I am limited in my own time, but I repeat that the aim is to reduce poverty and we will understand that if we endeavour to take a country forward by keeping people at the lowest possible wage, then what we do is stifle

economic activity and no progress can in fact take place. Those of us who are of the view that you raise what you sell but you maintain or reduce the wage, or as some companies to which I made reference to, you seek to reduce the wage by whatever subterfuge you may be able to exercise, those persons are in fact reducing the capacity of our country to move forward, especially in times like these.

A third objective relates to the elimination of unfair competition in the market, because those who are sensitive to the nature of the work and what has to be required, those who have a social conscience and who believe in fair work and fair pay, will want to go with the market and beyond the market. Those who are interested in exploiting the market will want to reduce the wage to the lowest possible levels. A minimum wage, especially where there is not the possibility for negotiation, now would remove that. I want to make the point that we must not believe that where there are negotiations and where there are collective agreements arrived at, that there is not deliberate departure from the collective agreement by employers who find other means of reducing the wage from what is understood to be the wage for the job in that particular occupation. We have to look very carefully in areas like this, and construction is one area which we will very much find we can look at. Last week I stopped short of naming a company because I had not given you notice, Madam President. That company will look for ways, for instance, where it will have several other companies and they will employ people in the other companies at a rate that is lower than the company where it has the collective agreement, and then transfer them from one to the other and reduce their labour. Then, as in one case last week, the company will tell people who want to be represented that even though those persons pay union dues and the company deducts those dues, their union cannot represent them in an issue where there are to be dismissed.

A fourth objective is the resolution of industrial relations problems. A fifth one is based on the tenet that there should be an efficient wage hypothesis, and that hypothesis has different variants but it relates to the relevance of a minimum wage to a nutritional wage. That would have to be examined by us in that wider debate which I speak about. The sixth objective is the promotion of social justice, economic growth and stability. As I said before, I am quite happy to make this document a Document of the House.

When this matter was discussed, because it was discussed and we had some sessions at the University of the West Indies where Professor Downes delivered the Paper, the exchanges towards a National Minimum Wage were examined. It should be noted that, based on a summary position from the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2007, we govern ourselves partly by what WHO

says when we look at the minimum wage for shop assistants. We have done that over all the years of my experience. In 2007, what the WHO were looking at was what they called a minimum wage, and according to them, a minimum wage should be a wage that is able to take care of one adult and two school-age children. Then in 2007 on the basis of what was being examined at the time, we looked at this report and we saw that figure as \$7.50 an hour for a 40-hour week and not for a 24-hour or 30-hour week. Seven dollars and fifty cents in 2007, and now in the only area where we have a minimum wage, that wage is \$6.25 an hour. I say that, not to discourage the effort that we made to get it up to that in 2012 or 2013, but I say it to make the point that there are those persons who will continue to make the argument that a minimum wage is going to prevent employment opportunities from being available and who will argue regarding issues like productivity and several other issues and I would wish upfront to make the point that, speaking for the organisation for which I was speaking when we first had the discussion on that between the Ministry of Labour and I speaking for the Barbados Workers Union, that we always, then and now, support the view that productivity is the lifeblood of our country's progress. We argued however that productivity is not going to suddenly fall from heaven as manner did for the children who had left Egypt and were travelling towards the Promised Land and had to be helped out. Productivity is something which has to start at home and at school but particularly has to be nurtured and guided by the management at the workplace. A lot of people will leave home and go to work with every intention to be fully productive and then they would see examples, starting with the boss. They would see examples of slackness and inefficiency and see attitudes to training or of doing the right thing that caused them to lose all the high hopes and great respect that they had for the world of work when they left home the first morning.

Madam President, employers keep fooling themselves that by having a half-day seminar a year for the workforce -- so 12 get half-day a year this week, while another get a half-day a few hours and by the time who is assigned has completed saying his ahs and ahms and sipping the proverbial glass of water with whomever at the class counting the number of times that the ahms and ahs are repeated and the number of sips, by the time that is finished the person has gone back from the four hours of training completely disoriented and completely turned off from what training is supposed to be.

Madam President, we have to be careful for us to understand that you cannot believe that you can take anybody straight out of a school environment and put that person into a work environment that you have not properly prepared for him or for her and then to make claims when you are setting bad examples yourself that you have a problem with productivity. It is as bad as the claim that you

should fire the managers at the Barbados Water Authority when they do not have any opportunity even to give somebody the instruction to receive a glass of water. You have to fire the directors, you cannot fire the people.

MADAM PRESIDENT: The Honourable Member has two minutes left in which to conclude.

Senator Sir ROY TROTMAN: Madam President, I would say in the two minutes that I have left that though I support this Bill and the Act when it is finally determined, that there is a major question with which the country has to country. That major question relates to the thought that there cannot be a mere minimum wage for a few but that the question of a sectorial minimum wage has got to be looked. If we are going to look at that, then the question will be, should the State encourage investment where the State can see that the effect will be indecent work, meaning work which perpetuates poverty.

Madam President, some countries that we can list, but it is not decent to make reference to other people's countries in a derogatory manner and so I will not mention them, only to say that there are some countries that have pursued a policy which says jobs first and standards afterwards, give the jobs even though the conditions may be as near as you can conceive as slavery is in another set of circumstances and then later on we can work out how people can come back on their own.

My question really is, in addition to that one, the question as to whether the debate that governs a sectorial minimum wage, because we cannot have one minimum wage that will cover all the workers in all of the occupations in the country, so that there would have to be sectorial minimum wages. Should a debate on that be left to the many persons chosen through by employers, by workers and by the Minister or should there be a debate at a wider level regarding the underpinnings of a minimum wage that we would hold first? Whether there will be a Select Committee or do we do the same thing we did when we were dealing with the Employment Rights Act, bringing a tripartite body and other interested parties together to examine the issue, the question still is, when does that debate take place? Madam President, this is not a partisan issue, the future direction of Barbados depends on our decision today. I thank you.

SUSPENSION

Senator the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Madam President, I beg to move that this Sitting be now suspended for Lunch, until 2.30 p.m.

The question was put to the Honourable the Senate and was resolved in the affirmative, without division and Madam President suspended the Sitting accordingly.

RESUMPTION

MADAM PRESIDENT: This Sitting is resumed. Senator Hunte, you have the Floor.

Senator R. A. HUNTE: Thank you very much, Madam President.

I rise to support this Minimum Wage Bill 2017 and to say that no matter what piece of legislation comes to the legislature it would always be satisfactory for some and not satisfactory for others. Of course, we live in a dynamic world and over a period of time there will always be changes to laws on the statute books as they govern the people of a country. For too long, there has been a sort of an exploitation of workers in the country and more so in the private sector. People sometimes only see the Government or Government employees as ones at a disadvantage when, of course, we all know that Government employees from top to bottom and they do enjoy a lot of privileges, not necessarily rights, but privileges, and it is said that the more changes they more they remain the same.

I remember in this Chamber I said some time ago that if some of the young lawyers in Barbados, rather than trying to enter Parliament which they feel that the only place they could make a contribution, is that they can look at an area even pertain to legislation of this type that governs certain categories of work. I said that in my early stages in this Parliament to see if they can work towards the betterment of people and people who may be unfortunate not to have anybody to speak to them in a direct way because they feel because of their status in this country and knowing that this is a kind of class country, that they are afraid to approach persons who they think can help them and more so, legal persons because the first thing that would come to their heads is that they do not have any money. Coincidentally, having to debate this Bill today, this morning as I entered a store on Broad Street and went to pay my utility bills and as I came downstairs a lady approached me. I knew her for a long time but did not know really who she was. First of all, she mistook me for Mr. Kellman.

Asides.

"Are you Mr. Kellman?" she asked and I replied, "No." She said, "You look like him." Then I said that no, I am so-and-so, but he is a Member of one area and I am a Member of another area as far as the Parliament is concerned. I can say that she was not in for all of that explanation, she had a problem. She said, "Look, I am here and I do not know what to do." She took out this letter and she showed it to me. There were quite a few pieces of correspondence and so on that she had there. She showed them all to me and I read them and I was taken aback to see the heading of that letter and who it came from. Surprising

from the point of view of the category of which the person holds, the professional position of the persons in the country because it was a wife and a husband who signed that letter and under the letterhead of the person who is a professional. I read the letter and it was thanking her for her services for 41 years as a domestic in those two persons home and signed by husband and wife after she claimed she had not gotten anything but I also read that they can offer her back a position to work with them, the position is only domestic anyhow and they would give her \$100 per week. For certain days a week she could work and of course, it would be reviewed over a period of time. I asked her: "Did you go to the Labour Office?" She said, "Yes, but the officer there told me to get a lawyer." Well I could not go into really questioning her in the store on matters I would question people on because sometimes before you reach a conclusion you like to question people throughout to find out from them what steps they have taken. She asked, "but can you handle it for me?" To which I said, "but I am not a lawyer. I am not one of those." I gave her the number of an attorney-at-law, a close associate of mine who do things for small people and get through successfully. I gave her the number and so on and she said, "but I do not even know out there." I said, "you got to know out there. You went 'bout here a long time, you are 65" and I am sure that the Labour Officer would have taken her through because she said that she does not have any wages slip, she does not know if any deductions were made for her, all of those things. I am sure before the Labour Officer had recommended an attorney-at-law, he would have gone through the steps with here asking did you do this, did you get this, did you receive that, et cetera.

As I said, it was a real coincidence because even down in the back of my mind, I knew what was in the Order Paper, which is under debate now, but I did not have it upfront in my mind, I knew what was on the Order Paper. I have her number and I wanted to ask her one question and I went to call her but, of course, she did not answer the phone. It is things like this that do occur in a society like ours and even though a lot has been done for our people over the years, there are still people who are suffering at the hands of exploiters in this country. Those are the same people who would be "pompassetting" about what they have and what they do not have but hope to get. To work in somebodies place for 41-42 years and to be written a letter like what I saw, I am going to get a copy of that too. It is really heart-breaking. She does not know what to do now.

When I see legislation like this come to the Chamber, I readily support it, not because it came from the Side of which I sit, but because I know what has been taking place in this society over the years as far as exploiting people goes. Some people have absolutely no conscience. I made one phone call to her and when I send her to the attorney-at-law I know that he will listen to her based on my recommendation and will do the necessary

things as an attorney-at-law would be expected to do, because all of them do not do it, on behalf of that lady.

Madam President, I am very happy and satisfied that the side on which I sit has brought very important legislation to this Parliament over the years for the upliftment of workers in this country. Madam President, even though that we might be classed at times in the same mould as mercenaries because we support legislation that is necessary and legislation that is legally and morally bound for the upliftment of our people including parliamentarians, it is referred to in some cases as blood money. I take an offence, Madam President, to that term blood money because blood money is associated with mercenaries and people who do things... That money that all of those persons who worked in the coal mines in South Africa in the days of apartheid and elsewhere that the owners and operators of those mines gathered over the years at the expense of blood, sweat and tears in those pits is what you call blood money, but it is being referred in here as any money but the framework legally is set out to refer to it as blood money. I feel offended by that because I am a Member of this legislature as indeed all others and to use those remarks we were put in the same category as mercenaries. Those things do not usually follow you. Whoever wish to make those remarks can stand by them. Take it from me, I have seen it happened so many times down through the years that people lived to regret a lot of the things that they said. I like to accumulate information and as long as I am alive I will have those remarks in my record books and I make that with all the seriousness there is within me.

Madam President, there are a number of categories of workers, gas station workers, persons who are groundsmen, gardeners, cleaners with some of these firms, security guards and laundry workers. The former General Secretary of the Barbados Workers' Union, Senator Leroy Trotman spoke about persons standing on their feet for long hours. Well, a day is 24 hours so it may not necessarily be 24 hours so I will not say all day, I will say for long hours. I worked with a laundry as a youngster and one of the areas that I know that people stand on their feet once there is work to be done is those pressers who operate the steel press and those who operate the flat iron. We refer to it as the flat iron because it presses sheets, pillow cases and things of that nature. Those persons once there is work because sometimes there may not be a lot of work coming through... I have not been into the back of a laundry now for over 30-something years but I know the system has to be the same because you cannot take an iron and press a sheet unless you do it in a home but at the commercial level there must be machinery that is referred to as a flat iron, one girl at one end and one girl at the other end and you pass that sheet and two girls at the other end take it out and fold it up. I worked in a laundry for about three or so years. It is these kinds of conditions that workers will be

undergoing for years. I know that sometimes we refer to what people were getting then and what it could have bought and all of that. Those girls sometimes used to get \$10 and \$11 a week, and that was up to about 1966/1967. With overtime they probably would get about \$18, so when a Bill such as this comes to Parliament...

Madam President, I wish to express my thanks as a Barbadian and to compliment the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Human Resource Development for doing what they have been doing over the last months or so in bringing certain legislation to this Chamber for its passage, and that is why even though that the welfare state of which we have sort of developed in Barbados cannot continue maybe at the level at which it had been going on so far, it cannot stop because we will always have people in this country who will need to be lifted up. Madam President, that is why over the years I can look back at the kind of legislation that was introduced in this Chamber even by the previous Administration, the Barbados Labour Party, between 1951 and 1955. Of course, in those years too we still had people associated with the Barbados Labour Party, the same Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow and Sir Cameron Tudor who were really fighters for the people. I do not know what kind of hand they would have had in that kind of legislation in those early years in the 50s that came to the assistance and upliftment of the people in our country but I can certainly talk about what had been advocated between 1956 and 1961 had those measures been implemented. I can look at the debates now of Hansard and I can see J. E. T. Branker and Sir Frank Walcott who in those days called for certain types of legislation to go on the statue books for the upliftment of people and that is the reason why the Democratic Labour Party was formed because a lot of what they suggested in those days were not taken on. I have already spoken in here about the credit that has to be given to J.E.T. Branker as far as School Meals is concerned, because he said that St. Lucy is a dry parish and that if we can give a hot meal to the children of those parents that that would go a long way, because after the crop season of two or three days a week and even though things were cheap there certainly was not any money around to sustain big families, because there were some big families in those days. Also, Mr. T. T. Lewis who only had one term in Parliament must be credited for the introduction of free secondary education in Barbados. Madam President, people make reference to the Princess Margaret School, St. Leonard's and so on, yes, do not let us fool ourselves, as far as the free secondary education is concerned we have been talking about Harrison College, Combermere, Lodge, Queen's College, St. Michaels' those were the institutions that people could not go to and could not pay the fees, even if it was as bright as a 10-cent piece in some cases.

I have spoken about my brothers' experience at Combermere School when Major Luke looked at my

mother and said, your son is a very bright boy but I cannot give him his scholarship. My brother said to me that he understands the son of a teacher was who got that free scholarship so that when we look at the transformation that took place in this country over the years under the Democratic Labour Party that people now wish crucify, the record is there, so that when members of this Honourable Chamber or members of the Democratic Labour Party could be placed in the same category as a mercenary when we know what mercenaries do and how they get paid, it is insulting and there are some things in politics for which I do not forgive people.

Madam President, I keep saying it is not for me, it is disrespectful. When I look around this Honourable Chamber from being and there back when I was young I see people who have made a contribution to this society, people whose intelligence level is there or is thereabout and to refer to us as supporting blood money I think is offensive. We did not come here to make friends, I come here to speak what I know and to express the knowledge of which I have gained as far as the political situation in this country is concerned and not to tell lies, I do not have to do so, or not to speak to anything that I do not know about because I do not have to.

Madam President, here we are again to debate an important piece of legislation and I said already that you are not going to find everything in a Bill you are not going to find a Resolution that will support everything that we support, the point is that there are checks and balances in the system such as amendments whereby all of what we do here today can be amended for the good of tomorrow as far as our people are concerned.

Madam President, we know that there were a number of Acts that came on the Statute book, for example, the Sugar Workers Act, all of these attracted and will continue to attract changes over the years. There is no reason for anybody to come here, if you want to introduce something then introduce it. If you want to take a position then let the record show that you have voted against it. Let your conscience be your guide, but anybody who comes to this Honourable Chamber here or elsewhere and use remarks that I consider to be offensive and then walk away, rather than letting the record show where your position is, that is where you call letting your conscience be your guide. Madam President, those things are not strategies, that are not facing up to the music, that is not being honest with yourself, here, there or anyway.

Madam President, I do not wish to be very long. I think that what we are debating here today that again I wish to express thanks to the Minister of Labour for leading the charge as far as recent labour legislation is concerned. I belong to the Parliamentary Group to which the Honourable Member belongs and I can say that whatever

the Honourable Member brings here to be discussed, if the Honourable Member needs to be advised to go back and come again, she would do it. Madam President, on these recent two pieces of legislation that we have passed here, I wish from the bottom of my heart to congratulate the Honourable Member. Ma'am, that is what is supposed to be done if you think persons have done the right thing, not to condemn. If you look at labour legislation that has been amended for the first time since 1955 and people saying it is not important, that there are other important things. Ma'am, everything is important, some things are more important than others.

MADAM PRESIDENT: The Honourable Member has two minutes left in which to conclude.

Senator R. A. HUNTE: Madam President, I wish to say that I wholeheartedly support this Bill and I sincerely hope that it will go a long way in helping those workers who because of circumstances find it extremely difficult to help themselves. Ma'am, this is what the Government is for, the Government is there to protect its people and I say I feel very sad when I see politicians who are their worse enemies in some cases. It is not anything that I admire or feel good about, because you confuse the people's mind, that is why you get this hands-off kind of situation by persons, as far as politics are concerned Barbados. Ma'am, I can say in my lifetime that I know what was done by the politicians on both sides of the fence, even though you might see some departures. Madam President, I am happy to support this Bill and sincerely hope that we continue to bring legislation to this Chamber for the betterment of some of the most unfortunate people in this country. With those few words, I thank you, Madam President.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Fraser, you have the Floor.

Senator SIR HENRY H.S. FRASER: Thank you, Madam President. It is difficult to imagine that anyone could oppose this Bill, although I think many of us probably feel that it may not go quite far enough. My only concern about the Bill is how it is carried out and how long it will take to carry it out. If it is decided to make decisions about minimum wages based on different sectors, I am concerned that this could take some years, because we have seen a lot of things in Barbados which many of us had expected to be solved and resolved within a matter of weeks, if not days, extend into months if not years. I am concerned about the debate that could wage on endlessly about the different sectors, the different merits of the different sectors, the skills related to the sectors, the expenses that might be associated with different sectors, and other things which might make the sectoral approach much lengthier than the blanket minimum wage.

Madam President, my other point is where we should set our sights. I have had a look at minimum wages across the world and across the Caribbean, and it makes for very interesting reading. When we look at the Caribbean data, we find that the Bahamas has the highest minimum wage per hour of US\$5.25 and Barbados comes in second at US\$3.13 which is BDS\$6.26 per hour, leading to a monthly salary of around US\$500. Trinidad is way below at US\$2.35 an hour, Jamaica at US\$1.33 an hour, and the wealthy United States of America is only US\$7.25, a bit above the Bahamas. People always note the extent to which the Bahamas looks towards the United States of America, which is only 40 miles away from the nearest Bahamian island of Bimini. The United Kingdom is up at US\$11 an hour, and most of the Western European countries are in that category of US\$10 to US\$13 per hour. We can therefore see that with the larger and more affluent economies of Western Europe and Great Britain, US\$10 to US\$13 is the norm, and in the Caribbean the Bahamas leads the way. We have always heard the maxim that it is better in the Bahamas. It is also bigger in the Bahamas, as Dr. Byer and the other medics would know, and if you go there you have to be very careful because some of the Bahamians really are quite mountainous in size, and this is related to their lifestyle. They are a hospitality industry, where half of the population works in the hospitality industry and where you tend to eat a lot while you are either standing, stooping or sitting.

What is the situation then in Barbados compared to the others? Let us look at the hourly rate as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita because this is exceedingly revealing. Again, the Western European countries and Britain and many other countries, including the Bahamas, have an hourly rate as a percentage of GDP per capita of between 40 and 50 per cent, and that is fairly uniform across the board of the Western developed countries. Australia fits into that pattern, and so do Britain, Belgium, France, Germany; all between 40 to 50 per cent of the GDP per capita. They are getting up there towards that average, although incomes are so irregularly distributed, with small numbers of huge incomes and large numbers closer to the bottom. In the Caribbean, however, you see enormous differences. Jamaica has devalued so horrendously and the devaluation process has completely destroyed the Jamaican economy, the Jamaican standard of living, the Jamaican lifestyle, its morale, its level of criminality and everything else; and that could be a lesson for us all and for those who want to talk about devaluation as if it was something to think about. It is absolute ruination. Madam President, I promise not to stray down too many side alleys and not talk too much about the historical past or too many things which are not relevant to this Debate, but I do feel that I have to take that opportunity of pointing out that devaluation is no longer a priority when looking at economies. It is an endgame. It

has ruined Jamaica and Guyana, and we must not allow it to be considered or even talked about, I think.

Madam President, coming back to this proportion -- the Jamaican situation -- the Jamaican minimum wage is only US\$1.33 per hour but it is 45 per cent of their GDP, and that expresses very clearly the very low level of wages which the vast majority of people in Jamaica earn. Trinidad, with all of its oil, has a minimum wage which is only 17 per cent of GDP per capita; and the Trinidadian minimum wage is US\$2.35. I am relatively proud, therefore, that Barbados is up there at US\$3.13 but I would like to set my sights higher. I would really like to set my sights higher because I am not sure how many people can be supported with one single parent, perhaps, looking after more than one child or even themselves on US\$500 a month. It is really a huge challenge.

Madam President, I relate these situations to my own existence in Britain because I was one of five Barbados Scholars back in 1962, and because I came at the top of my class in 1964 I was recommended to go on a special degree course in London. I was told by the university that if the Barbados Government would not extend my Scholarship by a year, then the university would fund it. The Barbados Government did not extend it, and the university did not fund it, and with my parents being very poor civil servants, I had to exist. I had to borrow money. I could not come home unless I earned or borrowed the money to come home; and having a certain pride, I decided I had to earn the money. I spent the last summer in Britain after my degree looking for jobs, and I had three different temporary jobs. I worked in the post office, I worked as some kind of funny salesman, and I worked as a security guard. The training as a security guard was very interesting. It lasted about 20 minutes, several others were taken on by the company at the same time, and we were each given a cosh and we were told that was the weapon we would use to defend ourselves if necessary, but to make sure that the cosh was only used to hit the attacker on the kneecaps, which would bring him down, and make sure you never hit an attacker on the head. If you killed the attacker, you would go to jail and perhaps end up hanging. This was 1966. Madam President, the point I am making is that each of those three temporary jobs I had was at the minimum wage in Britain, and the minimum wage was nine pounds, ten shillings. I got a job for £9, ten shillings; one for £10, and one for £10, ten shillings. I was living in a flat which a friend, colleague and classmate, who was much better off than me, had left me in as he had gone off for six weeks in Europe. I spent those six weeks in his flat with free accommodation, and all that those £10 could do for me was to pay my tube fares which was about £3, and buy my food at less than £1 a day. Ten pounds in Britain for working a full week. It was 40 hours in one case, and I remember the night job was more than 40 hours. It was a night security job for 12 hours a night for five nights; 60 hours.

Madam President, the point I am making is that I was working on the British minimum wage in 1966 and all I could do was keep myself alive. Luckily, I loved sardines; it is the healthiest food you can think of. I loved boiled eggs which were very healthy too, and cheap vegetables which had been about two or three days old and were at a cheaper price than the very fresh vegetables. I survived, but in the final analysis I had to borrow money. I could barely survive. I was one person, with no children, no rent and no additional expenses. Minimum wage simply allows you to stay alive. Madam President, what I am really saying is that we have a serious problem in Barbados, because if we want to provide a liveable wage, a minimum wage and a liveable wage should be the same thing. A minimum wage is the wage on which you should be able to live in reasonable health so our target, the heights that we should set for our minimum wage should be at least that of 40 per cent of the GDP per capita, we should be at least approaching that of our colleagues over in The Bahamas, I do not think there is much difference in the cost of living and our cost of living is not much different from that of Western Europe either yet we are one quarter of what the minimum wage is there so we have to set our sights higher. How can we set our sights higher? Only by following what the Honourable Leader of the Resolution has been saying and that is we have to look very carefully at productivity. I do believe that as other wages like minimum wages go up, productivity will increase therefore, we need a great deal of education in relation to both our workers, employers, supervisors, people at all grades and everyone involved in productivity to understand that wages have to be linked to productivity. There are many ways of doing that. This is not the forum for it, Madam President, so I will not waste the Senate Chamber's time any longer but the issue of productivity is one that we are not paying sufficient attention to. That can be debated on another occasion but I would simply like, Madam President, to close by saying that we should be setting our targets high, the Resolution does not, in fact, provide any details on numbers. It simply says that income and cost of living and these other things will be considered, of course, but we have to set our goals at the highest possible level and in order to achieve that, Madam President, we have to follow the injunctions of our Senator Dr. the Honourable Byer-Suckoo and increase our productivity dramatically. It is something we should be working on and talking about on television, on the radio, in fora like this, everywhere, every day, at all times.

Thank you, Madam President.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Ince, you have the Floor.

Senator J. INCE: Madam President, I rise to support the Bill that is before this Honourable Chamber. It speaks to the Minimum Wage Bill 2017 and it really looks at the establishment of a Minimum Wage Board and that Board

basically is the platform on which we can stand to carry Barbados forward to meet that objective as a society that is socially balanced, environmentally sound and those are some of the principles.

Madam President, 62 years later, we are looking at this Bill and it is ironic that sometimes during my research I would always use a pen. I would always have a pen and a piece of paper in case I come across anything that I think I should note and I would note it and get back to it and as I was on the road this morning thinking about the Senate today, and that was about 4:30 this morning having my little workout, and as I pass by Dodds Prison, I slowed down a little and asked myself what could have gone wrong in this society. The prison was quiet because at 4:30-4:40 in the morning, the lights are on. I slowed down right in front of the prison gate and I asked myself the question: "What could have gone wrong that we could have so many persons in the social dislocation? What could have gone wrong?"

Madam President, when we look at this whole idea of the Minimum Wage Board, and as I said, normally I would note things, it came back to me that I came across some information about Bangladesh and establishing a Minimum Wage Board through the ILO and as I walked and I reached home about 5:45 this morning. I went straight to my files and I pulled the note and went then to research that Bangladesh established a Minimum Wage Board in 1959 and they did it through the ILO.

In 1928, Bangladesh carried to the ILO the recommendation to look at minimum wage and the ILO accepted the recommendations. By 1959, Bangladesh had established a Minimum Wage Board but the ILO in 1928 under the recommendation 30 of Convention Number 26. These are some of the notes that I made months ago without even thinking that we would be debating a Minimum Wage Board today. As I said I was doing my research and I came across this little thing and I thought it would be necessary to note it and put it aside. Madam President, as I said, when we look at establishing let us move with haste. We have among us, Sir Roy Trotman, who has years of experience with the ILO. I do not think there is anybody else in Barbados who has the type of experience and knowledge of the ILO labour relations like Sir Roy and I think that it is critical that we move with haste because he has an understanding of what normally should happen, how it should be implemented and I always say that we have to bring labour and capital together. I think that this is the perfect opportunity for us to bring labour and capital because all of us are labourers. I will continue to repeat it. Do not get carried away because we are wearing suits and ties and maybe driving what may be termed as fancy car that we are not labourers. All of us are laborious. Some of us had this idea that when we speak labour we speak to those workers in the drainage unit or the

persons at NCC or MTW, Barbados was built on labour. I said Barbados was built on three principles: honesty, hard work and borrowed money/debt because we had no natural resources in which to carry the country forward.

Madam President, the reason that I feel so strongly about going forward with this Board and things are happening is that my parents came through and I have said it in here before work as, what we call a maid. There have fancy terms for it, either a maid or what we term a “shop attendant” and my father worked in the Mount Quarry as a labourer, a man who I am very proud of, love him to death and then he moved to Carrington Factory as a labourer in the sugar industry. My mother moved to the public service once the Parochial Treasury opened in St. Philip. Sometimes working in a particular area and since she had the experience when they were looking for persons as a maid working in a household then she was given the nod with some other persons to pick up some of the, what we would call to work as a maid in the local treasury.

Madam President, had it not for the mercies of the Barbados Workers’ Union, and I have said it before, that despite we had this legislation, had it not for the mercies of Sir Grantley Adams, the late Sir Frank Walcott and also our current, Sir Roy Trotman, despite having this legislation, workers were still under, I call it “the economic whip” where you work hard but you did not see the benefits. I support this 100 per cent because it helps to minimise those exposures, as I said, that would cause that social dislocation among us and at the end of the day, we are trying to close that dividing line and if we do not what I term “minimise” the space with the haves, because we will always have haves and have nots. We would always have those persons who work hard, honest but would never be able to purchase house nor land. There have those persons who work hard but never would be able to purchase a motorcar but we have to look after those persons. We have to look after what I call those persons who are voiceless, we call them the vulnerable. I want to encourage all Barbadians who are in the hearing of my voice who are not a member of the union to please join the union whether it is the Barbados Workers’ Union or the National Union of Public Workers. It is important that they get an application and talk to their representative because they need a voice. The union, whether it is the Barbados Workers’ Union or the National Union of Public Workers, is the voice of those persons who cannot represent themselves, those persons that are vulnerable, because with all of the legislation that we have and with all of the structures we put in place there are still going to be persons who feel that they can manipulate and abuse the worker, so it is critical and important that persons get unionised. I heard about a certain per cent of members of the unions but that is not a percentage, yes it may sound good, that I am happy with, I think it should be higher.

As I said, the establishment of this Board is a perfect opportunity for us to use the voices of labour and owners of capital to create the type of environment that we want for Barbados. Our children may not be the ones at the gas stations but they are human beings. Our children may not be the ones who may be at the end of what we term the minimum wages but they are also human beings. They are part of us and we must have that social obligation... In all of us there must be a social obligation to society. I always say to myself if I do not use that social obligation to society I have achieved nothing at the end of the day. If we do not use that social obligation to uplift and to help others who are less fortunate or be the voice of those who cannot represent themselves what we have done in here over the years we have achieved nothing, so let us move with haste.

As I said from 1955 until now is 62 years, so let us move with haste and have this Board in place and put the structures in place and create that environment for Barbados where we can speak of a society that is socially balanced, environmentally sound, economically viable and characterised by good governance.

Madam President, with those words I am obliged.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Adams, you have the Floor.

Senator A. A. ADAMS: Madam President, I rise to give my wholehearted support to this important piece of legislation. I could not have helped noticing that as various speakers who have spoken before me made their presentations, stories seemed to have been the order of the day. We had a situation where Senator Fraser spoke from the standpoint of an expatriate from a metropolitan country acting as a migrant worker and struggling to get by, and there were other stories with Senator Ince and others which obviously would catch the attention of the general public even if they do not remember some of the more substantive things that have been said. As a teacher it put me in the mind of the concept of vicarious learning whereby notwithstanding all of the hard facts and figures that we learn, the things that you tend to remember are often of more lasting impact such as the stories that have been told and so I thought that I would perhaps give a little story to put this Minimum Wage Bill in some perspective. It is the story about the quintessential Barbadian character Ossie Moore who was employed by a local magistrate, and we are speaking about the days of the 30s and 40s I presume where the wages that he would have earned would not have allowed him to get a proper roof over his head or to put food on the table or even to send his children to school, so apparently in some frustration he approached Mr. Nurse and said: “Mr. Nurse, I demand a pay rise or else” and Mr. Nurse said: “or else what Ossie” and Ossie said: “I will work for the same thing Sir”. Now, that is a very interesting thing. One of the things it is saying is that Ossie

Moore did not have any bargaining power and he fully understood that but probably as a poker player he tried to bluff. He did not have the Minimum Wage legislation or any labour legislation on which to fall back and therefore having made his point he decided to concede.

I think that what we are trying to say here is that this piece of legislation is sending a clear and unambiguous message that the welfare and the well-being of the Barbadian worker must be respected and assumed centre stage. It is also saying that to the extent that we had periods of blatant exploitation we are trying to make sure through this piece of legislation that we do not fall back into that abyss.

I also want to make the point that the concept of the minimum wage though important in itself assumes even greater import when it is viewed in conjunction with other pieces of labour and social legislation. In other words, yes it can stand on its own but I think it is very important, I think Sir Roy was making this point earlier, that it must be seen in relation to the suite or compendium of other labour and social legislation to see it in its proper context. We speak of things like actual collective bargaining, workmen's compensation, factory Act, Health and Safety standards, sick leave, vacation with pay and we could on and in recent times we speak about decent pay and things like the National Insurance Scheme and things of that nature, and it is when we look at things in that nature that we recognised what has been said by previous speakers, that we owe a debt of gratitude to the labour leaders of yesteryear and so this piece of legislation brings back memory of the generations of exploited workers, not just Ossie Moore but thousands of workers in the cane fields who had been dishonoured and exploited over the years, these along with the actual National Heroes who have been mentioned are the unsung heroes of Barbados.

Madam President, we want to ensure that the rights that have been gained on the workers' behalf that this present generation of young workers and young people do not allow those rights to be whittled away because Madam President, the price of freedom is eternal.

Madam President, there is another point, Barbados has earned a reputation in the sphere of cordial labour relations, the quality of our labour legislation and the fact that though we are a small nation we can be seen, virtually in the bosom of the International Labour Organisation and as a result this is a reputation that we have built up and earned. Ma'am, this debate today and this piece of legislation today is saying that this is a reputation which we want to maintain and which we are prepared to fight for. Therefore I think that the Minister of Labour ought to be commended for the manner in which the Honourable Member has presented this legislation to this Honourable Chamber here today.

Madam President, it is saying that any employer who was bold enough or who thinks that he ought to recoil or revert or in evangelical terms to backslide and go back into the bad old days, this legislation is saying that you will be brought back into line, that this is not what Barbados is about, this is not the way to treat the Barbadian worker. Ma'am, how does the legislation set about to do this? The legislation sets about to do so by setting up what we may want to call a Minimum Wage Board which is made up of the Social Partnership including three members of Government, three members from the various unions and three from the employers. The legislation also sets out that there should be widespread discussions so that at the end of the day, while we do not know all of the details, what we are virtually assured of is that there will be a win-win situation because of the whole concept of the discussion side of it, that there will be a situation where all sides will be represented. Madam President, as far as this debate is concerned the main point, though, is that the workers have now got a permanent place at the table and in discussion about the pay or conditions of work, those workers' representatives are there to have a say in it and even though there may be a compromise, it may be one in which they can live with. It will not be something that will be imposed upon them and so this is particularly important. This Board will advise, not really telling the Minister exactly what to do, it has a discretion but if the Minister is sensible he would be advised by what he has been told by the Board. The Board is advising the Minister on all matters relating to the fixing of the minimum wage. In other words, the fixing of the minimum wage is not to be something that is haphazard, it is not to be capricious, it is not to be just taken out of thin air, it is something that must come as a result of careful and wide-scale discussion and at the end of the day the Minister would be advised as to what that minimum wage ought to be and the minimum wage could as far as the legislation is concerned be on a national scale which is something that some of us might prefer, but because of its complexity it may also be looked at in sectorial form because of the complex nature of our society. Therefore specific groups may have specialised areas to look at and cannot be treated the same way as every other group. However, the concept of the national minimum wage is saying thought that although that is so, there is a floor level below which the wages should not be set and I think that part is very important, that there is that floor level below which you cannot go but where other sections, depending on their peculiarity, will be able to go above that level, but certainly not below.

Madam President, in the area of fixing the minimum wage we find a section of the Bill at Section 5(1) to be very important because it is saying that there are various important things that should be taken into consideration and I note, the rate of inflation, the cost of living, and the general level of wages in the island and perhaps in the Caribbean as a whole, because we talked about the

Bahamas and other places. The whole notion of a National Insurance Act and how it operates in relation to compensation for workers, the various forms of taxes that the Government might be able to get as a result of raising the minimum wage, for example, income tax and most definitely the VAT, because once the minimum wage is increased it is very likely that the VAT, even if not the income tax, would be augmented. The reason for this is that the level of worker, the low paid worker, has a propensity to spend and therefore when he or she gets their pay rise, the likelihood of his purchasing power and spending when put into operation is far greater than the well-off in the society who may tend to buy Bonds or do the various other things with it, maybe even go on a cruise, but the low paid worker is likely to have that propensity to expend some of that money that he has, and in so doing will help to boost the economy. In fact, it will bring what you might call a stimulus to the economy. Therefore, the notion that you should not increase the Minimum Wage does not hold water when we see that argument. In Section D of 5 (1) it speaks about:

“The economic factors, (including) the requirements of economic development, level of productivity, and the desirability of attaining and maintaining high levels of employment.”

We just want to say here that productivity is important because the increased wages, most economists would say, should be tied to productivity. One of the things about increasing the wages of low-paid workers is that the sensible ones -- they are mainly sensible people -- will tend to: (a) Look for work because of their increased pay, and (b) produce more because the more they produce, the more they are able to get.

I think that aspect of the Bill is very important, and we heard earlier from Senator Trotman that Professor Downes had looked into those specific areas, and when he advised Government and unions in his presentation, he particularly made those points. The Minimum Wage, as far as economists are concerned, would tend to reduce poverty. In other words, there will be a tendency of those persons who were below the poverty line to come above the poverty line, and it is something therefore that we ought to be advocating.

The types of workers we are speaking about are several, but I can mention a few: Janitors, persons working in daycare centres, farm hands, shop assistants, domestics. My mother herself was a domestic, so I know what I am talking about. These are people who traditionally would have been exploited in one way or the other. Some years ago, there were instances where farm hands working in Barbados, usually coming from outside of Barbados, were said to be living in accommodation which had been put there for some of the animals. These are things which this

legislation will also look at, because the legislation is not only concerned with the quantum of the pay. It is heavily concerned with the conditions of labour; the conditions under which the workers in Barbados will have to work. Therefore, we are saying that the Board will have the right to visit places of employment. It will have the right to speak to persons who are employing people. It will have the right to look at places where workers are placed to live, and to see if they are up to standard. In all these cases, they will be able to come back to the Minister and say, “These are our findings. These are the recommendations which we are making. These are the things we would like to see when the Minimum Wage has finally been arrived at.”

We therefore find that this legislation will be representing the Barbadian worker, and it will be saying to all and sundry that you are not going to be left any longer in the hands of unscrupulous employers. The legislation attempts to rein in, to call out, as the Americans would say, and to give protection to the worker, and indeed to punish those persons who take it upon themselves to exploit our Barbadian workers. Madam President, we are therefore saying that this legislation is of the utmost importance in relation to the social and economic development of Barbados. When we look, for example, at some of the arguments which have been made against Minimum Wage, we do not want to dismiss them but we find that they ought to be countered. In other words, it has been said, for example, that the Minimum Wage will prevent young people from getting into the job market. It has been said that if you have a Minimum Wage, it will cause the employers to lay people off, et cetera. They go on and on. This is particularly strong in the United States, where there is a right wing lobby there which would like to see workers get nothing at all. While it is true that these things must be considered and that the Minimum Wage ought not to be increased willy-nilly, there is another side to the picture. In the United States, for example, the Congressional Budget Office found that if the Minimum Wage was increased to \$9 in states where it is not that amount at the moment, it would increase jobs in the United States by 300 000 workers. Madam President, if it were to be increased to \$10.10, some 900 000 workers would be added to the labour market; which is almost a million persons. That is the Congressional Budget Office.

We are saying that we believe that the Minimum Wage will have a stimulating impact on the economy in Barbados, provided that we take time and do it the right way. We ought not to look at the naysayers and come up with the idea that we ought to just let the marketplace take over and not pay any attention to our low-paid workers, but what we ought to do is look and see what has been happening in other countries. We find that it reduces poverty, which I mentioned before. It provides a stimulus to the economy. It cuts back on entitlements; a word which the Americans like to use a lot, Madam President. We are

talking here about welfare, grants and things of that nature. The more people are allowed to stand on their own two feet, given a proper wage, the less likely they are to be a burden on the State and the welfare of State. It also increases the tax take, which we mentioned, whether it be the Value-Added Tax (VAT) or Income Tax, and in the case of the United States they talk about food stamps which is a big bill in that country. In the United Kingdom they have found since 1999 that the Minimum Wage has in fact risen faster than inflation, which means that it has helped those persons who received it, and it has done that without harming unemployment; which is extremely important. We need to look at the positive aspects of these things. That has happened because of the nature of the research and the amount of work which went into the recommendations, and therefore when all of the things were taken into consideration and you came to that balancing point, you got to a situation which was actually a win-win one. The Government wins because it does not have to pay out the same quantum in welfare. It gets additional taxes. The low-paid workers win; they get a little more money, they have more self-respect, they are able to put food on the table, and they are able to support their children. The employers will also benefit because they will get increased productivity. It is for these kinds of reasons that I believe we ought to pay special attention to how we implement our Minimum Wage, and make sure we do it right, not only that we pass the legislation. The legislation by itself is not going to bring Heaven on earth but it is how we implement the legislation that will be important. It will provide the notion of a living wage, not just a minimum wage. The minimum wage is sometimes not the living wage but the minimum wage is a step towards the living wage and if we can get a situation where our workers in Barbados are employed and are being paid a living wage, it means that the Standard of living in Barbados will generally rise.

MADAM PRESIDENT: The Honourable Member has three more minutes.

Senator A. A. ADAMS: Thank you, Madam President.

If we can do that without seriously or negatively affecting the business environment that is the kind of situation that we would be looking for in this country. We want to say that we have gone a long way in relation to the concept of the minimum wage that we are not or should not be looking at it in isolation and that we need to view it from the standpoint of the whole suite of labour legislation and social legislation about which this country is famous and that as far as this piece of legislation is concerned, that we ought to pay particular attention in how we implement it. In other words, we pay attention to the advice of Professor Downes, look at the key areas that are important and make sure that in arriving at the decisions we do not take rash steps, in other words, make the minimum wage to

be too high initially that sometimes we may be need to do it piece by piece. In order words, we can say that if this is 2017 that by 2020 we should want to reach a certain stage rather than move from \$6.75 or whatever it is now and say that we want to go to \$15.00 next week. What we would need to do is to look to see how we can actually gauge that and moderate it so that you would not put the economy into a tailspin.

I believe that the higher wage rates would provide more spending power, it would give more disposable income to our lower paid workers and generally speaking, I am convinced that this is the way that we ought to go. Let me end by saying that if there are any Ossie Moores still available, when they do go to ask for a pay rise they will not have to say: "I will work for the same thing, Sir" they will want to say that the Minimum Wage Bill says that I ought to be getting more money than that.

With those few words, Madam President, I am obliged.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Worrell, you have the Floor.

Senator A. R. WORRELL: Thank you, Madam President.

I rise to support the Bill before the Chamber, the Second Reading of the Minimum Wage Bill and I want to say that it is important that we take the opportunity when we have legislation that impact on helping to reinforce the social fabric of this country and this piece of legislation would do that so I think that if we are hasty to rise to our feet to give our contributions in debate which are dealing with economic matters we should also be hasty to rise to our feet to give our contributions on debates in this Chamber on matters which impact on the lives of our people. Even though my voice may not be strong enough for me to make it through this debate today, I think it would be remise of me if I did not participate so I am very happy for the opportunity to participate in this very worthwhile debate in this Senate Chamber.

I want to commend Senator Byer-Suckoo who led of the debate for giving us a wide ambit in terms of looking also at productivity when we consider the establishment of the Minimum Wage Board. What the legislation today puts into effect would be the Minimum Wage Board who would have the responsibility of looking at identifying a suitable minimum wage across various sectors in Barbados but we cannot bury our heads in the sand and not take into consideration that we would have to look at the level of productivity if we are to justify the payment of minimum wages in Barbados. Barbados is already considered to have a very high cost of living and a very high unit labour cost and I would want to put on the record that even though you

have a high unit labour cost it does not mean that you are uncompetitive or that you cannot compete but we have to remodel our society that even with that high unit labour cost that we can still become very competitive. A good example of this would be a tradesman who delivers good quality service. A good craftsman would always be able to find avenues to ply his trade, to sell his craft or to utilise his services. We have to focus on that within our country in terms of that culture that we have to improve on the quality of the service that we provide and the quality of the produces that we produce and that would justify the payment of the minimum wage which would be, in most cases, above the average in the rest of the Caribbean. When you compare the minimum wage that is paid in Barbados to the rest of the Caribbean, and I think that Senator Fraser did a pretty good job of that so we would not need to go over his figures but in order for us to be able to justify a high minimum wage in Barbados we must be able to deliver on equality and that is where this legislation becomes important and that is where contribution in this debate becomes pivotal so that we can focus on way at increasing the productivity in Barbados. I will admit that the functioning of the Minimum Wage Board will not be an easy task but their function is going to be critical. It is not going to be an easy task because you have to be able to provide the judicious mix and a harmonious blend in terms of a justification for the minimum wage, which in most cases, would be relatively high in comparison to our Caribbean neighbours. In addition, the level of productivity and at the same time, making sure that the company remains competitive and profitable as well. The job of the Minimum Wage Board is not going to be an easy task so I want to commend the Government for taking the step to establish the Board. I am hoping that with the composition of the Board that the right persons would serve on the Board that would be able to do the right analysis and provide the useful information to the Minister of Labour in making recommendation for a minimum wage.

I would want to draw attention to one area or the legislation which I have noticed and perhaps the Minister could explain in her wrap up in that, I noticed that whether or not this Board would have some sort of secretariat component, how that would be done because I imagine, that even though it is a Board which may not function on a day-to-day basis, it would have to do quite a bit of research in order for it to do its work. I noticed that the Secretary of the Board comes from among the nine members who are nominated on the Board, and I am wondering if it may not have been better to have some sort of Secretariat possibly within the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Human Resource Development who would be able to handle that function and responsibility in terms of the compilation of the research because once you meet at these Board meetings to make a decision you would have to go back to do quite a bit of research and make sure that you provide the Board and the Minister with the appropriate

information. I know that you would probably be able to draw on the services of organisations such as the Productivity Council to help you in terms of the collection of data as well as the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Human Resource Development who already provides that function, but I am just asking the Minister if that is an area that they would want to consider and to possibly explain whether or not this Board would have some sort of Secretariat and how the day-to-day function and the research component that would be necessary to making decisions in terms of a wider and appropriate minimum wage would be done. I am asking who will be responsible because we do not want to have a Board in place and at the end of the day they are not able to complete their function within an adequate time-frame because of the demand that the functions of the Board would have on them because we can recognise that it is not going to be an easy task to arrive at a minimum wage across the sectors in Barbados. It will call for a lot of negotiations between the employees and the employers and a considerable amount of research which would need to be done as well.

I wanted to say that despite the fact that it is not going to be easy it is something that is necessary because in Barbados we have tried our best to develop labour legislation which to the most extent is fair and just and we can pride ourselves in doing that. We recently would have passed the Employment Rights Act which would have helped to bridge a gap in our labour legislation. We have harmonious practices over the years and we also have the various agreements between the workers, the employers and the State as well but even with that there are still some vulnerable groups within our society who have become victims to working in situations where the wage they receive does not give them an opportunity to appropriately provide for themselves or their families. Some persons may very well have a job but are not necessarily able to provide for themselves because the pay which they receive is often just enough to get them to and from work on a weekly basis, so they are employed for the sake of having a job and not necessarily in the right environment. We hear this sometimes when we talk about persons working in gas stations. The security guards were also mentioned in terms of the number of hours which they may have to work in order to come home at the end of the week with a decent salary.

I think that Senator Sir Roy Trotman also gave a good example of something that we need to look out for in that when we look at the minimum wage, we consider the minimum wage for a 40-hour week but we do know that there are some situations where a lot of persons are deprived of an opportunity to work that 40-hour week so therefore they are not given the opportunity to earn what would be considered the minimum wage, so these are things that we need to look out for and that we need, in the best way possible, to bring to an end.

Madam President, that is why I am glad to see that the Minimum Wage Board also has the remit for determining the terms and conditions of services and the minimum work conditions of the employee to whom the minimum wage applies, so it goes a step beyond just identifying the salary that should be paid to ensuring that persons are working in conditions which are appropriate.

Madam President, I would want to laud the Minister and the persons who drafted the legislation for making sure that we identify that persons must work in appropriate conditions because that too impacts on the level of productivity and the output that you can expect from such persons.

Madam President, when we consider the productivity, we have to look at how do we tackle productivity. I think we can move beyond the stage where we continue to blame only the workers for the low level of productivity which we have in Barbados or in any workplace. Employers need to accept that they contribute to the level of service and the level of productivity which they receive from their workers which is all linked to the conditions of service that the employees face. Even though it is not the right thing to do, persons will react and work based on the way they are treated and the conditions under which they are working under because some persons would say that they do an honest day job for an honest day pay but at the end of the day people would respond or react to the way how they are treated by their employers. We need to take those things into consideration and not only place the burden of productivity on the back of the workers. Employers need to recognise that they have something to do and to contribute as well to making sure that their employees are productive.

Madam President, some of the things that you can look at are: Is the working conditions appropriate for the persons in your workforce, and how do you expect a guard to be productive and vigilant if they have to work 10 or 12 hours a day in order to come home with an adequate salary. I do not necessarily think that is fair on that person because just like everyone else they need rest. Any guard is supposed to be vigilant and patrol the area they are supposed to be working in but I am just using this as an example which proves the point that we need to make sure that we have adequate conditions. If you have a guard working 12 or more hours in a day in order to earn a decent salary at the end of the week, can you really say that that person is going to be vigilant and active for the entire 12 hours that they are on that job? Would it not be more reasonable for them to work the normal eight hours work day with the appropriate break? If that is done I think you would get a bit more out of them than if you force them to work extended hours just so that they can earn a suitable wage. This is not only for guards but also for persons working in the service industries as well. The condition of

service has to match the level of output that you want to receive from your employees, and the way how you treat them and the way how you motivate them has to match the quality of service.

Another area that we must focus on is that your workplace must have some standard and you as the employer must be the person who emphasizes what that standard is and constantly look out to make sure that standard is reached and attained consistently throughout the day because if your workplace has a minimum standard in terms of if you determine that punctuality is key or if you determine that you must do X amount of hours on a daily basis and you set the example as the Manager or you put the checks and balances in place as the Manager to ensure that this is done, it would be quite difficult for your employees to slip through the cracks and not necessarily meet those standards and those targets on a daily basis, so you need to set some sort of standard.

Madam President, something which is not done too often in Barbados and in many companies is this whole notion of performance management. Performance management is not simply you wait until November when you know that bonuses are due to be paid in December and you call the employee into a one-on-one interview where you lecture them on everything that they would have done wrong for the entire year before saying to them that as a result do not expect much bonus this year because that worker has not worked to contribute to it. Ma'am, that is not the way to do it, you should be doing a performance appraisal or a performance management system. You need to work with your employees to establish the standard, it is recommended that it is done at least twice per year; at the beginning of the year you meet with the employee and say that this is the target that the company would like to reach, what does that employee has to do in order to reach that target. You then review it again, either quarterly or in the middle of the year to see how that employee is progressing in terms of reaching that target or particular standard and see if you can do anything to further help them along, because as the employer you should be more or less the coach and not the headmaster or headmistress who is there only to chastise that employee, but you are more or less the coach to help them along to reach their standard or their goal. If they manage to reach their standard or target set for the company you would benefit as well because the company will benefit as well as the employee. Madam President, we need to move to that area in terms of our human resource management in Barbados and more companies, not only in the private sector but also within the public sector as well can establish performance management system so that you meet with your employees not just to highlight all of their faults but to give them guidance in helping them to reach the standard that was set for the company. It will go a long way within the public sector as well, so that we would not have so many delays

with projects. Each year we meet here to do the Estimate debates and we decide that during a calendar year we expect that we allocated “X” amount of money to be spent on certain projects and that we expect certain reports to be done.

Madam President, sometimes we come back the following calendar year and some of those projects have not even been touched. I am saying that if we had appropriate performance managements systems within the public sector we would be able to better meet these time lines. We would also be able to have a better grasp of what the employees can accomplish within a certain period of time as well. so these are the things that we need to consider as we move forward and even though this is just looking at establishing the Minimum Wage Board, the responsibility is there to make sure that the wages which are paid are linked to output on productivity so that you can justify the higher cost of living and the higher labour cost which we have in Barbados and as long as we can do that we do not then have to have any fear that because we have a higher labour cost or a higher cost of living that we are not competitive or that we will not be able to carry our weight in this world, so we need to look at that and to focus on ways of improving the productivity within the workforce.

Madam President, a lot of what I said focussed on the employer but also on the employee. I am not saying that the employee does not have some responsibility but that the employee to has a lot of responsibility but that we just cannot solely put the blame on the employee as the employer needs to take up their role and do their job better.

Madam President, I know that some of the resistance that you would have in some sectors when the Minimum Wage Board actually meets, even though it would comprise of persons from the various unions and also representation from the employers, I know that at the end of the day once they make a recommendation that you would hear from some employers that this is too much and that they would have to send workers home. Madam President, this was already discussed but I would hope that in doing their work as a Minimum Wage Board that the appropriate education would go along with any community outreach or public relation exercise would go along with any determination of a minimum wage in Barbados so that we can hear the voices of the workers, the employers and any problems that are identified that we can look at possible solutions and that we can have the appropriate education as well going along with it so that persons would not say that if it causes them to raise their minimum wage by 10 or 20 per cent that they may have to send home a few workers. Ma’am, to do that will not necessarily help the situation, we must recognised in Barbados that we have a very small vulnerable economy and that when something is done in St. Peter that it affects someone in St. Michael. Ma’am, there is a very strange

nexus or interconnection in Barbados so that oftentimes one would hear calls from persons within the business community requesting the Government to cut their expenditure and also to reduce their employment levels, not realising tht if Government had to fire their recommendation and cut their expenditure and reduce its employment level that persons will not be able to walk into their store and spend \$100 on groceries every week, as the spending in those stores will also be reduced. Ma’am, we have to realise that we have that very close nexus and interrelationship within our economy of Barbados, that what is done one place affects you in another area. So we have to all take on our responsibility to find the correct balance to make sure that it works. Ma’am, I am recommending that when the Minimum Wage Board is established and you go to sectors to make decisions in terms of appropriate minimum wage for that sector, that the appropriate educational component is done with the employers and employees in the particular sector or area so that they will understand the justifications for the level that you have set and what they need to do, for example, if in the case of the employer they may need to up their output more that they would know what they have to do in order to reach that; if it is the case for the employer then obviously he may have to pay a bit more, but what else can that employer do to ensure that this company remains competitive and profitable. So that would call for a serious educational component on behalf of the Board and other agencies such as the Barbados Productivity Council and Ministry of Labour as well.

Madam President, one final point, it is a Minimum Wage Board and it is just a recommendation on what is the minimum wage but I would hope that employers would not treat it as the wage they would pay, where they see that they can pay below that, but that they pay above and beyond that wage so that you can expect to get more. You can use that as an opportunity to increase the level of output, productivity and engagement of the employees.

Madam President, one other point I would like to make with regard to productivity in Barbados and I would hope that maybe the unions can pick up on this as well and start to champion this but I think that the level of productivity in Barbados will increase, especially within the private sector if the employees had more of an ownership right within the company, so that they too can share within the profits. Madam President, with those few words, I think I may have dealt with all of the points that I wanted to look at with regards to this particular legislation.

Asides.

Senator A.R. WORRELL: ... Thank you. The employees have more of an ownership right within the company, and I think that without any studies, that would be the one major tool which would go a long way in

Barbados to seeing a workforce which is more engaged and highly productive. With those few words, I support this Bill, Madam President.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Crichlow, you have the Floor.

Senator the Very Rev. H.E. CRICHLLOW: Thank you, Madam President. I will be brief, as usual. The Ossie Moore joke, I think I heard that joke before Ossie Moore was born, when it was given by my neighbour, a Foundation man. He said it was not Ossie Moore but it was given at Combermere. I think it was by the Reverend A.E. Armstrong in 1946; that was when I entered Combermere. I had one term with Reverend Armstrong, and that joke was associated with him. There was a groundsman who came to him and said if he did not get a bigger salary he knew what he was going to do. The Reverend asked him what he would do, and he said, "I would have to work for the same thing." That was not meant to deflate persons.

I think the matter of productivity is an ethical and moral one, and this applies to all of us, really. It is something that has to be taught. You could ask who would teach it. It should be taught in church, at home, at school and at your workplace. I support the idea of a Minimum Wage, which would provide the basic needs healthwise of each person. It should be based on what a basket of necessary items, healthwise, should cost. This would reduce the level of poverty and increase the health of the nation. This, as one speaker said, is all part of the promotion of social justice. I support the establishment of a Minimum Wage Board, and I think if it was voted for, then we should do well to wait for its recommendations instead of debating those proposed recommendations.

For those listening at home or at work, the functions of the Board, and I will read them, are:

"The Board shall perform the following functions:

(a) Obtain and record information in relation to wages, other forms of benefits, terms and conditions of service and all other factors affecting the circumstances of employment and remuneration of employees paid a minimum wage.

(b) Keep the information referred to in Paragraph (a) under continuous review, and periodically make reports to the Minister on this information.

(c) Consider and advise the Minister on all matters relating to (1) a National Minimum Wage, or (2) Minimum Wage for a specified group or sector of employees.

(d) Recommend a National Minimum Wage or a Minimum Wage for a specified group or sector of employees.

Madam President, I fully support the Minimum Wage Board. Thank you very much.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Todd, you have the Floor.

Senator the Hon. P.M.T. TODD: Thank you very much, Madam President. I rise to support the passage of this proposed Minimum Wage Bill, 2017, and at the outset I would wish to congratulate this Democratic Labour Party Administration for not just promising but actually delivering on very revolutionary labour legislation such as the Employment Rights Bill, Holidays with Pay Bill and this current proposed legislation. It demonstrates that we are really indeed a labour party; the Democratic Labour Party, not a right wing, conservative, reactionary party but a party that is concerned with social justice and equity. As we say, Barbados is more than just an economy; it is a society, Madam President. As such, workers have inalienable rights to exist, enjoying a basic minimum standard of living where they are able to provide for themselves and their spouses and offspring in such a way that physical hardship is not suffered by themselves or their families in terms of the inability to sustain themselves in terms of providing nutritious food, basic shelter, clothing and basic toiletries for themselves and their families, Madam President.

This Minimum Wage legislation goes a long way in ensuring that these inalienable rights of the common man on the streets, the masses, are upheld and protected by the Government which is there to ensure that these rights are protected, Madam President. Our role as parliamentarians is important in the passage of such far-reaching legislation as this current Bill before us is today, Madam President. I am no historian, but I reflect upon the fact that our experience in Barbados and the Caribbean leading up to the middle of the last century was one where the masses endured slavery; and even after Emancipation the living conditions of the masses were deplorable. We have read and heard in recent years about the emigration of tens of thousands of Barbadians to Panama in the early part of the 20th Century, and they helped to construct that Wonder of the World in the face of knowing that even to journey by sea from Barbados to Panama they would be risking their lives in overcrowded boats, with inadequate amenities, food and shelter from the elements. A number of them lost their lives. When they reached Panama, Madam President, we learnt of the deplorable conditions in terms of exposure to vectors such as mosquitoes which killed many of them with yellow fever. The damp of the swampy land that they had to operating giving rise to too many of them dying even some of those person interviewed in the documentary

who worked in Panama talked about the fact that their clothes were not properly dried. They did not have enough change for fresh clothing and so they would have to actually go to work the next morning in the wet clothes that they wore the day before and as a result a number of them got very ill and lost their lives.

Many of them had to handle dynamite in very dangerous situations where the dynamite exploded prematurely causing them to lose limbs and in some instances their lives. Many died falling from high elevations as they constructed the big gates that were part of this engineering feat in terms of the infrastructure which the Panama Canal represented and in the face of all of these risks, Madam President, the point I am making is that living conditions in Barbados in the early part of the 20th century were so deplorable that these tens of thousands of young, strong Barbadians men risked their lives to get away from the harsh conditions in Barbados to seek a better lifestyle in Panama. They complained that in Barbados at the time, the wages, we are talking about wages today, Madam President, were so low because they were working for shillings per day per person and could not sustain themselves and their families. In fact, Madam President, a few decades later we had the whole issue of the 1937, some people call them disturbances, some people call them riots and, of course, this was pervasive throughout the Caribbean as trade unions were not allowed to exist. We heard of starvation wages and riots ensued. The Moyne Commission was set up and in that Royal Commission were trade union leaders from the labour movement in Britain to ensure that the rights of the masses would be addressed. Coming out of this we had the establishment of trade unions and the necessary legislation to enable this to occur and, of course, we had mass based political parties coming out of this process. Madam President, still I remember a few months ago viewing a documentary produced by the Central Bank of Barbados in which the narrator made the point that even as late as the 1950s in Barbados, the wages for the masses were among the lowest in the Caribbean region and as a result life expectancy for the average Barbadians was no more than 50 years of age. Now, of course, we can boast of life expectancy in the 70s and what would give rise to that low life expectancy would be the poor standards of living in terms of diet, shelter and so on, Madam President.

When we are talking about wages we are not talking about any academic exercise. We are talking about protecting the lives and the health and safety of the masses of our country, the workers to build this country and, of course, their dependants. That is why I said, Madam President, this is a very important today. We, as a Parliament, are passing this revolutionary legislation to advance the cause of the masses of our country therefore, Madam President, I would urge the employers to embrace this and do not feel threatened by it as other Honourable Senators have mentioned. I do not need to reiterate what

they have mentioned by to support the points made in terms of demonstrating that this legislation does not threaten the viability of the private sector entities in our country.

Of course, a private company is focussed primarily on maximising profits because that is what a company is about. The business is there to make a legitimate profit for the owners, shareholders and so on but we are not Darwinian, Madam President. I said we are more than an economy, we are a society, we must be our brother's keeper figuratively and literally, Madam President, because we do not exist in silos, we exist on this beautiful island paradise Barbados and we must care about each other.

As I said, we are not Darwinian and it is not case of survival as the fittest, a rat race or crabs in a barrel so that if an employer is so narrow minded just concerned with maximising profits that greed and being misers and providing the workers with starvation wages that are inadequate to ensure that those workers can enjoy a basic standard of living then they are being short sighted, Madam President, because a hungry man is an angry man. Of course, I am not supporting anarchy, the lack of respect for law and order but I am supporting equity and social justice because as other have said, if the employee believes that he is being treated in a just and fair way, he is getting fair wages for a fair day's work, then moral is not compromised, social stability is not compromised, Madam President, therefore, the environment for the increase probability of increase profits of the company is not compromised. We are looking at a symbiotic relationship and I will take this opportunity to refer to what the leader of this Bill before us mentioned, Senator Dr. the Honourable Byer-Suckoo, referred to the work of the National Initiative for Service Excellence (NISE) where she made the point that in their 100 improvements in 100 days initiative which has been hugely successful, a number of the companies that were successful in this effort boasted or reported to the public that management were fully engaged. Moreover, workers themselves at the lowest level participated in leading suggestions to enable those companies to win in those various categories in terms of the 100 improvements in 100 days. I can attest to this, Madam President, because I am honoured to serve as Government's principal director on the Board of the National Initiative for Service Excellence (NISE) so I have a little knowledge of the excellent work which NISE has been doing over the past decade or so of their existence. It is a wonderful example of tripartism where coming out of the social partnership, labour, Government and the private sector have equal representation on the Board of NISE. I wish I could say that Government has been able to get the necessary financial matching of the Government's financial contributions over the years in the National Initiative for Services Excellence (NISE). In fact, as I would have reported in last year's Estimates debate, up until the current financial year the Government of Barbados contributed

over \$1.2 million per year towards the financing of the day-to-day operations of NISE. Whereas in the initial period, the first year of its existence, the private sector was able to match Government's contribution, I must report that in recent years the private sector has fallen very short with regards to matching Government's financial contribution to the work of NISE, and I really take this opportunity to invite the private sector to rise to the occasion and to make their promised contributions in a timely manner to ensure that the work of NISE can go from strength to strength in terms of the expansion of staff so that more services would be provided to employers, employee and the general public as we seek to promote service excellence, increase productivity and greater employees engagements to ensure that this National Initiative for Services Excellence is propelled from strength to strength. It takes money to employ staff, to pay rent for offices and to pay utilities and so on.

Madam President, I know that a number of private companies do in fact engage the services of NISE regularly in terms of exposing from management right down to line staff in terms of training in service excellence and engaging the services of NISE in terms of mystery shopping and so on to ensure that best practices obtain in terms of services excellence in their particular company. I am saying that we need to ensure that the direct financial contribution through the day-to-day functioning of NISE is not left just to Government, it is not fair, because it is not a Government statutory agency and the Board is not made up of simply Government operatives, we are tripartite in nature and so that financial injection will be much appreciated, Madam President.

Madam President, let me just continue to talk about the great work which the NISE has been engaged in and this is well-known to the public. The 100 improvements in 100 days has been very very successful and I really congratulate those companies and public agencies because it is not just private agencies that are involved but actually departments within Government. I remember in recent years the Ministry of Health were able to win in various categories and at those gala events the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Freundel Stuart, graced us with his presence and presented the Prime Minister's Award. The euphoria and real joy which we saw in the faces of not just the management but all categories of staff in the various private sector agencies at one of the various categories was really a sight to behold where there was this pride in promoting service excellence and innovation and best practices in public service and service to uplift our county.

I will also take this opportunity, Madam President, to also mention that the National Initiative for Services Excellence does not just focus on large companies but even on small micro enterprises such as snow-cone vendors. You may have noticed within the media within the last

three years that we focussed on training a whole cohort of snow-cone vendors with the assistance of big businesses. Paint companies contributed in terms of painting and refurbishing the snow-cone carts. Ice manufacturers chipped in to provide attractive uniforms for the snow-cone vendors. The snow-cone vendors themselves bought into this initiative and sat down in the classroom and were able to garner information about best practices in terms of proper sanitary practices in terms of utilising hand sanitizers and napkins and so on and friendly customer relations. Of course, these snow-cone vendors do not just interact with members of the Barbadian public, they also interact with the visitors. They are ambassadors for our country.

Madam President, we also went into a northern St. Michael district and refurbished a small pet fish enterprise, a one-man operation, where again big businesses came in and helped to refurbish that pet fish shop and so the owner of that shop was able to win an award in the 100 improvements in 100 days.

Madam President, what we also did in the National Initiative for Services Excellence 100 improvements in 100 days initiative was to actually reach out to micro enterprises on a large scale and prospective entrepreneurs where we actually put them in a classroom scenario. I remember attending such an event at the Cave Hill School of Business where the highly motivated and very well-trained staff of NISE were able to teach these budding entrepreneurs about the basics that are necessary to ensure the increase likelihood of their enterprises succeeding.

We also collaborated with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth through the Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme where they were able to assist these budding entrepreneurs in obtaining the necessary skills, be it in marketing and accounting. I attended an event where they were trained and given an opportunity to deliver their sales pitch as it were to prospective investors. Coming out of that exercise a number of larger businesses were able to actually partnered with these entrepreneurs in terms of providing necessary venture capital funding to such an extent that a number of these entrepreneurs were able to reach the standard where they were able to develop viable businesses that actually exhibited their products at BMEX that year where some of them, for example, took parts of the coconut tree and fruit to make jewellery and another group took palates that would normally be discarded as part of the shipping processes and made attractive furniture from these palates thereby providing entrepreneurship opportunities.

Madam President, while I am on entrepreneurship, I would wish to link it with this Bill before us to encourage workers to not just limit themselves to one job. It is commonplace in North America where we have relatives

and friends, in the United States of America, Canada, Britain and Europe, for people to have a second job or even three jobs. Of course, there must be the sort of check and balances. I would not encourage persons to overwork themselves to compromise their ability to effectively execute what is expected of them in their primary job. I remember a retired Chief Education Officer a few years ago publicly calling upon Barbadians to consider supplementing their income in terms of secondary employment or even entrepreneurship. Traditionally in the Barbadian culture we know a number of Barbadians who on the side as it were have a little ground as we would say in their backyard where they would grow ground provisions, fruits and vegetables and then market them on weekends as hawkers to supplement their income. Madam President, my own family lived in the urban area Dalkeith. They say it was not appropriate for much agriculture but we reared a pig. I remember Fedrica shop at the top of Chelsea Road and Dalkeith Road, if you ever enjoyed her tasty pork cutters of pork patties from the leftover fat, we would engage the pork and would supply her with a leg. I was responsible for going into the district after my grandfather would bring the butchers down to kill the pig, early in the morning I would have been deployed throughout the district of Culloden Road, Britain's Hill, the Bay Land, Miss Brown would get four pounds and Mr. Jones would get six pounds off the shoulder or the leg, and nobody wanted too much fat so that you would make sure that you were not feeding the pig with too much fatty pig food that would have caused the pork to become too fat. Madam President, that pig helped to send to school other siblings and me.

Madam President, I am just using that as an example and this is commonplace in our Barbadian culture where our people are resourceful and would supplement their income in terms of secondary jobs or entrepreneurship, be it persons having skills in plumbing or electricians and being able to utilise those skills to have secondary sources of income. Madam President, I must make the point as I understand it, some of our big enterprises today, for example, Goddard's Enterprises started with just a small shop at the bottom of Milk Market/Tudor Street and now this is an international multinational corporation.

Madam President, what I am saying is that we should not limit ourselves to simply a job which people say stands for "just over broke" but we are glad and happy for the opportunity but we must not put all of our eggs into one basket, but expand one's horizon. Madam President, that is the point I want to make. I also laud the unions who have been encouraging their workers to think outside the box. In recent years I heard one union talking about pooling its resources to encourage the members to contribution to a buyers club to be able to have discounts, et cetera. Madam President, these sorts of things will help. We also have the Credit Union Movement where the masters are able to pool

resources together for the greater good of each and every member.

Madam President, as we have run out of time, I wish to say that I am very happy to support this legislation and I would really wish to touch very briefly on the whole issue of the 24/7 workweek where again we seek to think outside the box and not shut down businesses at 4.30 p.m. but to remember that we are seeking to be competitive in the global village that we are and we have to accept the realities of what is current around the world and therefore I have no difficulty with looking at ensuring that the necessary supporting infrastructure and other supporting facilitation is put in place to ensure that there is seamless transition to extending the working day to past 4.30 p.m. of 5.00 p.m.

Madam President, again we must be our brother's keeper, so I know that other labour legislation referred to earlier ensures that the workers are not exploited so that by law if an employer requires a worker to work past 11.00 p.m. then provision must be made to ensure that that worker is not left stranded not being able to get a bus after a certain time. That employer is responsible for providing transportation to that worker. The employer should not seek to circumvent that legal provision by just going a shy of 11.00 p.m. for example, and making the worker work to 10:45 and say to that worker that he has to fend for himself, that that worker has to provide his own transportation. Madam President, it again goes back to minimum wage then it would be unfair to expect that worker then to be forced into a position where that worker has to spend the better part of that minimum wage on transportation in terms of taxi fare alone. What would be left to provide nutritious food for themselves and their families, or to provide clothing, toiletries or to send to school their children?

Madam President, again we are not living in a Macavillian or Darwinian situation but in a society where we care about our brothers who include the workers but we must provide the necessary support security for example. In some situations because of security concerns we would not want to encourage a situation where workers have to work into the wee hours of the night or morning and being locked away because if there is a fire or other natural disaster the person's life and limb would be at risk and so the necessary security must be provided there.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Todd, I think you should be wrapping up.

SENATOR the Hon. P.M.T. TODD: Madam President, again it does not mean that I am not supporting the issue of facilitating work past 4.30 p.m. or 5.00 p.m. but that the necessary enabling rights of the workers in terms of security, transportation and so on must be

necessary. Madam President, as I wrap up, I would again wish to congratulate this Democratic Labour Party Administration for not just talking the talk but walking the walk and actually taking the time to do the necessary preparation so that we have reached the stage where we are enacting yet another piece of revolutionary labour legislation to ensure that the inimitable rights of the masters, the workers of this country are protected. I thank you.

SUSPENSION

Senator the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Madam President, I beg to move that this Sitting be now suspended for 15 minutes, until 5.30 p.m.

The question was put to the Honourable the Senate and was resolved in the affirmative, without division and Madam President suspended the Sitting accordingly.

RESUMPTION

Madam PRESIDENT: This Sitting is resumed. Senator Watson, you have the Floor.

Senator J.A. WATSON: Thank you, Madam President. I rise to make my small contribution to this Bill, which makes provision for a Minimum Wage Board and also seeks to repeal the Wages Council Act. Madam President, I have said in the past here all the time that once we are debating any legislation, it should always be in the interest of national development, and of course this Bill is no different. We are actually creating a Board which will monitor wages and make recommendations to the Minister on minimum wages for specific groups or sectors, and also possibly a National Minimum Wage. To achieve this, I believe that it would be expected that there be a lot of consultation with all of the relevant people to ensure that we get the best possible information so that the Minister could be well advised.

Madam President, this brings to mind that the importance of the Social Partnership should not be underestimated, and its functions should be used to the maximum, especially at this time in our economic development. I do not think that we are as bad as 1991 or 1992 but we certainly have some challenges, and I believe that the functioning of the Social Partnership would bring us desired results as they did back then in 1991. The private sector was led by good leadership, the labour sector was led by good leadership, and the Government of course was also led by good leadership, and I believe that the time has come now where, as Barbados' economy is supposed to be private sector-led, so too should the Social Partnership, Madam President. I am suggesting that the Social Partnership should now be led by the head of the private sector, Madam President. Let me rephrase what I just said.

Madam President, I believe that the Social Partnership should be led by the leader of the private sector, and I am not at all suggesting that the present leadership of the private sector is not capable. What I am suggesting is that if we are going to accept that the economy of Barbados must be private sector-led, then the private sector must carry a greater responsibility than it is presently carrying. Madam President, I want to suggest that back then - and I think Senator Ince mentioned it - Senator Sir Roy Trotman would have played a significant part in the development of that Social Partnership, and I believe that at this juncture he should again be playing a very significant role in the continuation and the revitalisation of the Social Partnership.

Madam President, the other thing I want to suggest is the fact that the Public Service, as I understood it back then, also had representation within the Social Partnership, and I believe that at this time we would want to see the senior leadership of the Public Service involved in the Social Partnership again. I believe that the head of the Civil Service should probably be a part of that Social Partnership as well, so that you have a Social Partnership which involves all of the people who are at the level of the decision-making in the various sectors. Madam President, it is obvious that even within this Act the thinking of having the sectors' views heard is borne out. If we look at, I think, Item 2 of the Act, it sets out the three sectors that would be represented on the Board, which would be the Government, the employers' representatives and the employees' representatives.

Madam President, I also want to suggest that the development of our economy is going to be spurred on by the development of the small business sector. I believe that our growth and the development of our economy lie very much in the expansion of the small business sector, and therefore I believe that wherever possible the small business sector should be represented in areas where there is decision-making or policy-making to be done. For that reason, I want to suggest that there should be representation by the small business sector, and that this representation should be done by the Small Business Association, Madam President. Within the three persons who would be representing employers, I would like to suggest that the Small Business Association be one of those three. A lot of minimum wage workers work within the small business sector. As a matter of fact, most of the minimum wage workers, I would think, are within that sector, and I think it would be good for the Small Business Association to be represented within the Board which is being formed.

Madam President, we are talking about minimum wages, and the question has to be asked: What is a minimum wage, and why do we need one? Do we need one? I believe that we had some very expert comments this morning, and we can form our own opinions from those

comments, and I believe that we obviously would have some more comments on why we need a minimum wage but I would venture to give what I consider to be the reasonable definition of what a minimum wage is and that is the minimum, legal wage that must be paid by employers so there could be no question. Once that legal wage is set, then all employees are bound to pay a wage, that wage or above it and always remember that the minimum is what it says. It is a minimum wage, it is not the wage that you pay people simply because it is there as a minimum wage.

Madam President, I also would ask the question, why do we need a minimum wage and there are many arguments for and against? I believe that all of us would have our view whether we are for or against that minimum wage but I want to just mention some of the arguments for and against because there are so many arguments for and so many arguments against that sometimes we could get confused.

I will give a few examples of what I mean. There are some people who are for the minimum wage that would say it has a positive impact on small business owners and industry. On the other hand, those who are against it would say it hurts small businesses more than it hurts large businesses. Those that are for will say it removes financial stress and encourages education resulting in better paying jobs. On the other hand, those who are against it would say it discourages further education among the poor by enticing people to enter the job market. Madam President, you can see that the people who are for it have similar reasons to the people who are against it and I think it is a matter of country, especially like Barbados understanding what our goals are in the country and how a minimum wage would impact on what we want to achieve.

Right now, Madam President, we are economy that is base very much on tourism and to a lesser extent international business and as the Act is suggesting, there would not be minimum wages across the board immediately but certainly there would be minimum wages by sector so that a minimum wage in the hotel sector would probably be different from a minimum wage in some other sector and those are discussions that will take place I believe in depth enough to help us to make decisions as far as the different levels of minimum wages are concerned.

Madam President, I am not for or against minimum wage. I think that there is a place for it and other times there is a place not for it because being competitive sometimes is better than having a fixed wage therefore there may be areas especially when you go higher up in the employment scale that minimum wages would probably be to the detriment of the employee.

Even though I am not for or against, Madam President, one thing that I am for is what Barbados needs

right now and that is a comprehensive programme to seriously improve our productivity. I believe that almost every speech I heard here today mentioned productivity and there is a reason for that. I think the reason is obvious. For the last 30 years, Barbados have been discussing the importance of improved productivity and we have not done a lot about it. Barbados needs a programme, Madam President, which would be led by institutions that already exist and I will name a few. The Productivity Council, for one, which came out of the social partnership. Barbados Institute of Management and Productivity (BIMAP), there are charged with the responsibility of developing manager and then you have the productive sectors like the Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc., the Barbados Agricultural Management Company Limited, National Initiative for Service Excellence (NISE), Invest Barbados, the trade unions, all these people would have to be part of a programme that will have productivity improvements at the fore of what they are doing.

I believe, Madam President, that is something we should be turning our attention to. I am not saying that we should do that at the expense of not paying attention to our minimum wage, but what I am saying, Madam President, is that the discussions on productivity in Barbados right now deserve a lot more attention that it is presently getting and it cannot get that attention unless there is something that would drive the attention to it. I believe that we have to creative, we have to be different, we have to find ways of getting a movement that will create productivity improvements. Madam President, I believe that could only be done if there is a strong and very progressive vision that will focus on productivity improvements.

During the Estimates debate last year, Madam President, I mentioned some thoughts on productivity and at the time I wanted to get across the point that in all we are doing our attention to productivity is the area with which we will bring about growth in Barbados. It is through increase and improved productivity that growth would come about in Barbados and I made a few suggestions as to how we should go about that. Madam President, I said before, repetition is good and I would like to repeat myself in that respect.

I suggested back then that we should first accept that productivity improvements would have a positive impact on growth. That is an axiom but the fact of the matter is I do not think that everybody believes that. I believe that it has to be said so often that people understand that productivity would bring about growth, growth would bring about stability in our economy, stability in our economy would avoid devaluation and I hate to use this word because everybody I meet I discourage them from talking about a devaluation but the fact of the matter is, it would ensure that our dollar that our dollar remains where it is. Once that happens then our standard of living would

also be stable or improving. There is no doubt that productivity improvements must be a goal for what we are doing.

I mentioned back then that you need to have an awareness programme. I noticed that the Productivity Council is doing something now but I look before a mascot and a jingle as far as productivity awareness is concerned. I believe that we have to sit down and come up with a real powerful awareness programme, and I believe that this would involve all of the leaders in Barbados, and by leaders, I mean Permanent Secretaries, Headmasters and Chief Executive Officers of companies. Everywhere that there is a leader even in the voluntary organisations, we need everybody involved and focused on the same thing, and that is productivity improvements. I think that Senator Worrell gave us a bit of a lesson in productivity improvements this morning and I do not need to do that but I think that the important thing is to have certain elements involved so that you could set goals and you could monitor them and you always know where you are going, so that to design a productivity improvement programme would have to be key in bringing about productivity.

Madam President, I have absolutely no problem with this Bill. There were two things I wanted to mention regarding the Bill itself. I mentioned one in terms of the representation on the Board by a small business representative but I also want to mention, I think Senator Worrell mentioned it but again I see nothing wrong with mentioning it again, that the Bill suggested that the Secretary to the Board would be drawn from the Members of the Board, and that I agree with. I had made the note here about it that the Secretary should really be a functionary and not just a Board Member. The Board is going to require so much clerical work, research and everything else that I think it would be burdensome on any one director to carry out the secretarial functions. I did not go as far as Senator Worrell but I agree with him that a Secretariat is probably a good thing to have.

Madam President, I support this Bill. I want to commend the fact that productivity is what we need to be looking at in Barbados now. I think that the Government needs to find some creative legislation to keep bringing to Parliament that would encourage productivity. Now, I heard the various discussions about productivity being the responsibility of labour or the responsibility of management but my simple little bit of training I had tells me that productivity is a function of management plain and simple. I do not think that productivity is a function of labour at all, I think productivity is a function of management.

What I want to say, and I heard it here this morning, is that very often people refer to unscrupulous businessmen and unscrupulous managers but nobody ever refer to

unscrupulous workers and bad workers. Madam President, my view is that there are bad managers and there are bad workers. The trouble is it is the managers' responsibility to improve productivity. I heard something recently that at first I did not quite understand it but now I do. Guy said that the worse worker was a good worker but that does not make sense immediately but when he described what a good worker is, that is, a good worker will do exactly what he is supposed to do, come to work on time, carry out his assignments, finish them on time and everything but he contributes nothing to the growth and development of the business and you cannot fire him because he is doing what he is supposed to do. Then you have a bad worker but you could dismiss a bad worker because he is not coming to work, he is unpunctual and he is not doing his assignments. The point that was being made is that if you have a bad worker you could do something about him but when you have a good worker you cannot do anything about it. What you want is a productive worker and that is the sort of workforce that we need in Barbados and I believe that the training that we go through overtime will bring us to that point.

I believe that bad workers sometimes may be the result of bad management and I accept that, but sometimes bad workers are bad workers. People may say that bad managers are the results of bad directors. I think it was mentioned here this morning about a certain organisation that wants its managers to be fired, but the fact of the matter is that sometimes there are people who are just bad and you cannot do anything about that but where improvements could be done then I think we need to do them.

Madam President, I am so convinced about the idea of this productivity improvements that I really hope that the idea of the functioning of the Social Partnership be considered. I really believe that the private sector in Barbados has been a very docile private sector. I believe that we need a private sector in Barbados that will push Barbados forward. I am not comfortable at all, Madam President, with our attitude towards the ownership of Barbados. I heard people talk about it is no problem, the building is going to remain here, they are aggressive businessmen, people would be employed, and all of these reasons for ownership other than Barbadians.

We have a decline in our foreign reserves now, Madam President, and I do not know if the answers for that decline have been given as yet, but there are some practices I know in Barbados that have caused some of our foreign exchange either not to come here or to leave here. I have said before that we need a foreign exchange committee that will look after how our foreign exchange in Barbados is managed. The best example I have heard about ownership is when an ex very senior civil servant said that there is no harm in somebody else owning the companies here because

they are employing people, they are doing all of the things they should be doing, no problem. He was challenged by somebody else who told him okay you own your house, sell your house and then rent it back. What was his position, he would not sell his house. This thing about the ownership does not matter, Madam President, I think we need to rethink it.

I was saying that back in 1991 or 1992 with two or three weeks of foreign reserves in Barbados our economy was stable because our companies were operating by Barbadians in Barbados. I cannot say the same thing today, that even though we have ten or 12 weeks of foreign reserves I am not sure that our economy is as secured as it would have been back then. I am saying all this, Madam President, because we want a very vibrant economy in Barbados. We talk about 10 per cent or 11 unemployment but I want to say, Madam President, that even though the unemployment rate is 10 or 11 per cent in Barbados, right now the same minimum wage that we are discussing the people who would benefit most from that what would be entry level workers, first-time workers or people out of school. Our unemployment among young people in Barbados is over 30 per cent so that something must be wrong with what is happening at that level. Where alternative energy these young people who should be working, they are on minimum wage of \$250 per week, they must be looking for work. Why are they not working? I cannot believe that all of them are on the 'blocks' either, so that there has to be some understanding as to what is happening in our economy.

Madam President, before I sit, I really want to impress on Barbadians, especially senior Barbadians, this idea of every day on the radio or in the newspaper hearing about the devaluation of the Barbados dollar or by whatever else name they call it is unnecessary. I think that we have to understand, and I said it the very first time I spoke in this Senate, that devaluation is not an option for Barbados, it could never be an option for Barbados. We have no big industries. There can be no justification for the change in our dollar except upward. I think Madam President, that we have to make sure that whatever we are doing in Barbados, including the setting of minimum wages whether national or sectorial, that it is in the best interest of the development of Barbados.

Madam President, the idea of competitive wages was mentioned. Ma'am, there are companies that will come to Barbados because we are who we are, Barbados is a high quality country and I have no qualms about that. I always say that we sell ourselves short.

MADAM PRESIDENT: The Honourable Member should be wrapping up at this time.

Senator J. A. WATSON: Madam President, I have said in here over and over again, we sell ourselves short. There is no business that is interested in operating above board that would not want to come to Barbados. We have a sensible workforce, we have a tradable workforce, we have good weather, we have good communications both physical and otherwise, so that any company that wants to set up in Barbados has a lot of pluses before they get to wages and wages, I believe, would almost be the last consideration for setting up in Barbados. If they send their overseas managers here, we have the nice beaches on the sea for them to enjoy so that we have an excellent country here and I think that we need to preserve it. We need to treat it the way it should be treated.

Madam President, i thank you for the time. I conclude by saying that I support this Bill but I really must suggest that we need very creative and visionary legislation so that we could improve our productivity in Barbados. I thank you.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Carmichael, you have the Floor.

Senator Dr. Sir Trevor CARMICHAEL: Madam President, thank you for allowing me this brief intervention. Let me, at the outset, state that any Bill which deals with this type of social legislation which is so far-reaching is one that obviously has to be applauded and one which has to be duly recognised. Madam President, I was particularly pleased to hear what I consider to be the two opening batsmen this morning because they did tour the field before lunch and I listened very carefully to Senator Byer-Suckoo's introduction and was indeed captivated by it. the reason being is that I did not expect that an introduction of a Bill such as this could be given the level of comparative analysis which the Honourable Member gave it, especially in terms of the way in which the Honourable Member linked it to productivity and so I learned a lot and I am sure that we all did I thank you very much.

Madam President, I do not know if this was a planned act but then Senator Sir Roy as usual in matters of this kind gave us a tour de force which borrowed lightly on his vast experience, both national as well as international, so I think this morning we were very well-served. Ma'am, the quality of the debate has continued at a high level, every speaker has given something that is very important for us to digest and I feel a little at a loss here wondering as to where do I go now.

Madam President, let me say that one of the things Senator Hunte said was one that resonated very much with me when the Honourable Member mentioned the comment by J. E. T. Brancker, later Sir Theodore Brancker, in terms of St. Lucy being a dry parish and when he adverted to the

role that Sir Theodore played in the School Meals programme. Ma'am, I do not think a lot of people recognised that, I think that people think of the School Meals essentially long after Sir Theodore but Sir Theodore was really the person behind the School Meals.

Madam President, if I may, en passion, Sir Theodore still holds the record for having addressed the jury for the longest period in history and these were the days when juries met for a whole day where courts began at 9.00 a.m. and finished around 3.00 p.m. and Sir Theodore was known to address the jury for three days. This was the Holford Johnson case in which he gave an address which focussed on only two words, time and identity. I think the jury heard the words time and identity more than they might have even wished but as Sir Theodore said in those days, the more the jury heard you tired them out and so the jury was suitably tired out and the defendant was acquitted.

Madam President, at this hour of the evening we are allowed, with your license, to veer of the course just a bit but to get back to the course. Madam President, we have all talked about the importance of minimum wage and we all recognised it and not doubt it. However, what I would like to remind us, and we should always be cognizant of this, there are still some critics of the minimum wage and they are largely the followers of the neoclassical economic theory, they argue that the minimum wage increases employment but that it increases employment particularly among the lowest categories; in other words, those who have the lowest inefficiency, those who are inexperienced or those who suffer from a handicap while working. They further suggested that a high minimum wage can therefore diminish an employer's desire to hire extra staff. Madam President, there is still a lot of stuff still being written in this vein, they say that the employers will cut the jobs and farm out the work in places elsewhere.

Madam President, a lot of this neoclassical theory obviously works in relation to the bigger economies, but I see some of it also being recommended and suggested in relation to our smaller economies. We must not forget that. We must not forget it because, as was so well stated here today, labour and capital in Barbados have had, for want of a better term if I may borrow it, an unholy alliance; but fortunately through the good work, again, of Sir Frank, Sir Fred, the stalwarts, and Sir Grantley, that unholy alliance has become, I say, more sanctified, but it has not become sanctified without a struggle. It has become sanctified with a struggle, and that is a struggle which has to continue. The improvements in 1990 were further testament to sanctification with a struggle. The Social Partnership did not come about as a result of cocktails one evening; not at all. It did not come about because of a lovely breakfast, and people decided "let us have a Social Partnership." We know what that struggle was. It was a struggle on the streets, but it was also a struggle in the courts.

I just say that because we must remind ourselves that Minimum Wage and all that it stands for is something which creates positive social change. It comes from that background, and it creates positive social change without and with legislation at both levels. What we know is that the lowest levels of pay will never rise if there is not the legislation there. That is a fact. We know that. The weak will always be preyed upon by the strong unless the weak is empowered. This legislation is part of that empowerment.

Obviously, I support this Bill. We all support the Bill, and I would have said a bit more on this but it has all been said, but I thought I would advert on my right to Senator Fraser who talked about devaluation, and on my left to two speakers who spoke about it. Somehow, it is creeping into the dialogue today but everyone is saying we should not talk about it, yet it has been mentioned. I think I have a little licence to say a little about it now as well. Madam President, let me say that there are some things which we should recognise, and I will not be long on it. My friend Senator Boyce can speak more knowledgeably about this because he knows these things, but let me say that the yield on Barbados dollar bonds maturing in 2022 has risen 146 basis points since November 8. November 8 is a very important date. I think you all know what happened then. It has triggered off the selling of emerging market bonds. A lot of assets have gone, and traders are continuing to bet that President Trump's policies will lead to higher borrowing costs in the United States.

Last week, the United States dollar strengthened to a 13-year high, and what did it do? It took the Barbados dollar along with it, and the Federal Reserves clearly signalled a steeper path for the United States' interest rates. I am putting this in a perspective. I do not call it a bad time for Barbados. It is a challenging time for Barbados, because it comes at a time when we are experiencing a slump in the Sterling following Brexit. There is good news on the horizon. I never end a contribution here without good news. If I am saying all of this, I have something that is positive, I hope, and says well. Our international reserves fell to a 16-year low this year; we know that. We are now, I think, at \$440 million roughly, equivalent to 2.6 months of imports. I think that is the figure we heard. We recognise that we should not devalue. If we devalue, we are going to raise the cost of imports, so what do we do? I think this is an opportunity for dialogue. I think this is an opportunity for a new social contract, and I think that this is something that has to be taken above the level of partisan politics. I think this is the opportunity for us to engage with our thinkers. We have some of the best. I know at least three economists in this country who are here. You do not see their names in the newspapers, you do not hear them on platforms, you hear nothing about them, but they are some of the brightest economic minds. I can tell you of my good friend, Professor Emeritus Martin Williams, and since the

policies have changed in Washington just by the presence of President Trump, he has found that his articles have been googled exponentially -- more than ever -- because he deals with these issues. There are other economists. I do not have their licence, or even his, to call their names on the Floor, but I am saying that this is an opportunity for us to get together and look for a new social contract.

I go further. There are positive things in addition. We talked about the sale of the terminal company, which will bring in obviously some foreign currency, but something which is not big but which has the chance of getting bigger is the presence of the new hybrid companies; something no-one is talking about yet. During December this jurisdiction received an influx of over 50 new hybrid companies operating because of changes in the tax laws. I am going to be candid with you: It was not anything that we did, but you can say it was something that we did because we have a jurisdiction which is poised legislatively to capture changes. It might not have been something that we did in December, but we have societies with restricted liability legislation, and we have transparency and we have confidentiality, and we have all of those things which make us an appropriate jurisdiction; so that when changes take place such as the new hybrid company legislation, we were able to capture over 50. Many of these companies are huge. They are some of the largest companies. I will not call their names because that is not the appropriate thing to do, but they are large international companies. These are not spiders which are hiding; these are big entities. These are transparent entities, and these entities will pay taxes at 2.5 per cent; not now but when their financial statements are filed in months to come.

I say all this to suggest that we have the situation where the dollar is causing us to wobble a little bit, and so is the pound, but you have another situation which took place in December but obviously nobody is talking about it because nobody knows about it and it is not something that we should be running around advertising but I feel I need to say it. We have a situation where the Sterling and the dollar are coming together in terms of the private sector and its planning and we are benefitting from it. Madam President, I hate to use this over work term, but it is one of swings and roundabouts and I say, not much more, but we should also say to ourselves, have no fear. Let us get together, let us put our minds together, we have talent, we have the expertise and for some strange reason we seem to always have faith with us.

I am much obliged, Madam President.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator De Peiza, you have the Floor.

Senator Miss V. A. G. De PEIZA: Thank you, Madam President, at this late hour after so many have

spoken and before I run the risk of being redundant I give notice that my comments truly will be brief in respect of the Minimum Wage Bill 2017.

I also state at the outset that I do agree with colleague Senator Trotman that the name Minimum Wage Bill does not do justice to the content of what we are deliberating today. Having said that though, I think the title is sufficient to generate interests and having got there by interest to then realise the depth of the legislation. I do not think it requires tinkering with but perhaps a little intrigue will get persons interested in the content of this proposed legislation.

A lot has been said about minimum wage and I will acknowledge that I missed some of the contributions and how it allows one to live above subsistence not just simply breathing air and getting by but actually to create a living and a life for oneself. I am most interested in how a national minimum wage will impact on the very obvious gender gap that exist in Barbados in terms of wage received. The majority of households in Barbados, this is historical and it is also a reality, are headed by females. That is not in any way to cheapen the contribution of the men who are not present in the household but the financial decision-making is mostly by females in this country and there is no better recognition of the role that is played by a woman, financially, than to reward her for the work that she does. It is not just about getting a decent wage for work done and it is not just about raising the level of the contribution between employer and employee beyond getting something for nothing more than that but simply having persons able to hold their heads up, to pay the bills, to pinch the money and build, and inspire dreams in their own children because that is where it starts. If you see mummy struggling, hustling to work, and coming back home and still unable to put food on the table what is your own incentive to work?

It is, for me, a part of nation building and social engineering, despite the naysayers, and no matter what piece of legislation you bring to the table there is going to be at least one person who is dissatisfied but of a certainty there is no employer who is going to make a decision that harms his business. If a minimum wage carries up the payroll percentage but those persons are essential to his business, they will stay on. We Bajans have a saying: "Cut off your nose to spoil your features". It applies in business as well. They will make the decision that allows their business to function effectively and efficiently so that argument, for me, is a nonstarter.

Madam President, we are not to hear asides, but with or without the union is correct and for several reasons but for me the most important reason is that minimum wage legislation tends to target the persons who are least able to organise themselves and are less amenable to other persons

organising them. It is into these lacuna that Government must step in. I also disagree with the notion of Senator Watson that the time has come for the reigns in the social partnership to shift towards the private sector. I think there can be no better way to negate all of the gains that we have made but to place greater weight on one of the two parties in that contract, the employer and employee.

For the time being, even though Government also wears the employer hat, Government acts as a balance in that social partnership between employer and employee remembering always that the employee did not come to that relationship initially from a position of strength. Just like in the old time weights you had to put a little piece on this side and a little piece on that side until you got the equilibrium, it is the same with our social partnership. Having said that, it would be clear that our social partnership is ripe for some revolution of its own, but then given its age, it was designed to deal with and entirely different set of circumstances and 30 almost 40 years on, I do not think there is anyone who can seriously oppose a re-drafting and a re-shifting just to get the balance back. We have to be very careful when we hear the negativity in relation to a minimum wage and be able to counter those arguments. I can, through my practice, speak about situations where despite a minimum wage for shop assistants there are persons who fit the description of shop assistant but who have been given a different job title and are paid \$150 a week. Anyone who has been to a supermarket will know that it is impossible to feed one person never mind a family on \$150 a week and still house and clothe yourself and live in any decent manner.

There are times too when more than statutory deductions are made from persons' wages, and that too is a practice that this Minimum Wage Board will need to have an eye to because it is not just about the basic wage, it is about what are allowable deductions. It makes nonsense of the Protection of Wages Act if an employer is not allowed to deduct and give to a third party past a certain amount but is then allowed to deduct to pay themselves. These are the issues that the social engineering we are undergoing now within the labour movement have to address next, and these are the issues that this Board, once constituted, will have to consider in terms of what impacts the minimum wage.

Madam President, I too wish to have a word about productivity, and I have a couple of things that I want to add to the debate. Getting a decent wage is absolutely linked to productivity. If you feel that you are being unfairly treated, you will not give of your best, I think that is just simply human nature. If the conditions under which you work are one rung up the ladder from slavery, again you are more likely to register your protest by the way that you work than in any other way. Productivity is, for me, inextricably linked to the wage that you earn for the job that you do, but it has another limb for me.

Madam President, somewhere along the line, I think, we dropped the ball and gave young persons the impression that they are not to work. When I say young persons I mean children. I am an advocate for children getting used to working. When I read the legislation I see that it says that children are not to be forced to work during school hours. We cannot expect a 16-year-old suddenly to have a work ethic. Like everything else in life that you become good at, it requires practice, and if children were permitted, it does not have to be a weekend job, it could simply be a vacation job when they have downtime anyhow, to do something that requires them to work, whatever it may be called, they will develop a work ethic.

Let me throw out a sprat and suggest that another way of developing a work ethic is when you have to combine work and study. I am satisfied that the next generation of the University of the West Indies graduates will fit better into the workplace for having to put that struggle in because we dropped that ball somewhere and a sense of entitlement crept in that has a significant knock-on effect on productivity. I do not expect very many people to agree with me on that point, but having worked and studied and having to organise my time and structure because I had to do the people's work and also had to do my studies and do them well, I did not know or understand what a passed Degree was, so there had to be excellence in my study and I had to keep the job so there had to be excellence in my work and that is something that has been missing, the discipline of commitment to work, and I hope I am heard in relation to that point. I need not be agreed with, I do not mind that part but at least let the discussion begin that perhaps a missing cog in the wheel of productivity is having the practice of working.

Madam President, another argument that I wish to address is that low levels of wages encourage unemployment. The question that is asked then is why work if you are going to work for pittance. I will agree that there has to be some examination of the social benefits in particular unemployment benefits when one is considering the minimum wage because it would not help if the minimum wage is lower than the benefits you would receive were you unemployed, so there would have to be some consideration taken of the benefits received.

Madam President, persons with a desire to work will do so anyway. What we need nationally is to inspire persons to want to work. I do not mean that in the narrow sense of working for somebody else although that may well be the only choice for most people. Getting in touch with ideas and entrepreneurship will move productivity along in this country.

Madam President, I will mash a few more corns because I am satisfied that Government has to take a leap on this. When I say Government I am using it in the sense

that people think of Government and that is the civil service. Productivity in the civil service can never be described as anything than low. You will find bright sparks but there has to be motivation at that point. If we are going to be insisting on productivity and standards in the private sector it has to start with Government, and linked to productivity then has got to be efficiency in your numbers because one of the greatest reasons for a lack of productivity is that you actually have nothing to do. We need to stop shying away from the rationalisation that has to take place. I am not talking about the shedding of jobs, I am talking about a determination of requirements, setting of standards and, then the step we always forget, insisting that those standards are met. Madam President, once we get over those hurdles and of course insisting that standards are met, you come alongside sanctions for not meeting them and once we get over those hurdles productivity in Barbados will rise. Madam President, to bring my argument home, because productivity is linked to that feeling of pride and satisfaction in what we do, this nation even if somewhere else can argue that minimum wage is not for them, this nation needs a nation minimum wage to get employers on the page of understanding that slavery was more than cutting but not pain but that it is quite the same and analogous situation if you pay something less than subsistence wage.

Madam President, once we reach that point and in this country it tends to be driven by legislation, another the Social Partnership cannot be led to my mind by the private sector. Once Government sets the legislative framework and has this Board set up hopefully to develop a short shift in minimum wage for this country I am satisfied that we will see the knock-on effect in terms of productivity redounding to the benefit of this country. Madam President, I wholeheartedly support this legislation.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Abrahams, you have the Floor.

Senator W. A. ABRAHAMS: Madam President, I rise to make my brief contribution with respect to the Minimum Wage Bill. I can see everyone looking at me very frightened and hoping that I do not use my full allocation of time.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Abrahams, I can assure you that the only person who is concerned about time is myself. Please do not worry about the others.

Senator W. A. ABRAHAMS: Thank you, Ma'am, I will assure you though that I will be as brief as I was last week. Madam President, no one can really object to this piece of legislation. We have heard the arguments for and against a minimum wage, we have heard the considerations that must go into it, and the reality is that any piece of legislation that works to protect the most vulnerable in our

society and to enhance conditions whether social, practical and financial of workers in Barbados I am in support of and the Barbados Labour Party would be in support of.

Madam President, the concerns were ably articulated and I do not propose to go into them but this was an important debate and it is an important piece of legislation that formed the first or part of a myriad of adjustments and other legislations to generally raise the standard of living of Barbadians and to solidify all the protections necessary for the most vulnerable in our society.

Madam President, everything boils down to money, almost all boils down to money. I heard Senator Todd say that Barbados is not just an economy, it is a society but Madam President, and to be honest with you we are almost getting to the point where it is not even an economy. Madam President, the point of a debate is that one side puts something and the next side is free to respond once they are relevant. This Senate is not solely concerned or its sole concern should not be the pros and cons of the pieces of legislation, as can be seen from the table today we have covered the gamut, anything that is almost relevant to minimum wage and applies to the workers in Barbados was discussed and sometimes that is as it is supposed to be.

Madam President, Senator Hunte spent almost half of his presentation on the concept of 'blood' money, as the Honourable Member is free to do.

Asides.

Senator W. A. ABRAHAMS: Madam President, the Honourable Member does not like that term, I will give him another one, the Judas coin. Madam President, the point is this, we can discuss all of the legislation that comes before the Senate. We can discuss all of the things that we are doing to try to make laws for the betterment of Barbadians but for us and Government to be relevant at some point in time it has to talk and address the issues that concern the people of Barbados. I spoke last week about this and I will again say while we are discussing we do not always stick strictly to the topic, it is not always a strict adherence to the topic. Senator Todd gave us ten minutes on the Panama Canal. He gave ten minutes on the work of National Initiative for Service Excellence, 100 improvements in 100 days. He gave us another ten minutes on how one pig sent to school four people. I understood Ma'am, the economy of the pig, I also learned a new phrase, "don't put all your eggs into one pig", but the point is that there was not strict adherence to the Minimum Wage Bill.

Madam President, I ask somebody and if we are going that route and I ask somebody on the other side and I am prepared once again to accede the rest of my time, if we can address these few things that I am concerned about and

I believe a lot of Barbadians are concerned about. Ma'am, what are the true state of the economy in Barbados and the implications of the declining foreign reserves? When will the VAT be paid to those to whom they are owed? When will the income tax refunds be paid to those to whom they are owed? When will all the severed workers get their just due and entitlement under the law? They are entitled to it, when are they going to get it? When are the CLICO policyholders going to get their money? Ma'am, people have not received their Reversed Tax Credit since 2013. This Government reduced the Reversed Tax Credit from \$1 300 down to \$650 and still not paying it. This money means a lot to the people to whom it is owed. Madam President, what is the situation with the garbage trucks? The questions that the people of Barbados are asking appear quite often in the papers. We all know what those questions are and they mainly concern the economy.

Ma'am, I am asking that as we debate and we stray away from the strict confines of the debate to touch on other things that are anecdotal, informative and historical, that are of concerns to the speakers who are speaking and may address other concerns of people not in this room, I ask that when we do that the next time that somebody on the Government side of the table would address the economic questions that we keep asking and that the people really want to hear the answers to. These issues are also very important and very real for the Barbadians who are suffering.

Madam President, I accede the rest of my time if someone on that side wishes to make an intervention to answer one or all of those questions. I thank you.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Honourable Member, I will caution to remind you that the allocation of time is my province, not yours. This is the second week that you have ceded time, and that is against the Standing Orders of the Senate. We do not cede time. Everyone has a set allocation of time. I understand you have concerns which you wish to have addressed but you do not cede time. Senator Husbands, you have the Floor.

Senator H.A. HUSBANDS: Madam President, I rise in support of this Bill and to make a brief half-hour presentation.

Aside.

Senator H.A. HUSBANDS: I am not going to cede any time or take any time from anybody. Madam President, last week, I came with the intention of wishing certain people Happy New Year and offering some compliments and some observations of brilliant things I have seen happening in the country for the New Year, and was led down this snake hole by the other side, dealing with matters which are outside the issues we are currently

discussing. I am not going to take that bait this time. I want to begin by complimenting the Minister of Labour, by congratulating her. I often compliment her but today I want to congratulate her.

Asides.

Senator H.A. HUSBANDS: I want to congratulate the Honourable Minister of Labour...

Aside.

Senator H.A. HUSBANDS: I want to compliment and congratulate the Minister of Labour and her team in the Ministry and the Labour Department, some of whom I have worked with over the years and who I know to be very competent. We have, I think, to put this Bill in context. I said last week, and I am going to repeat, we have to put this Bill in the context of a suite of legislation which we have brought to book and placed before the country. They are the Safety and Health at Work Act, the Employment Rights Act, the Holidays with Pay Act which we dealt with last week, and the establishment of the Minimum Wage Board which we are dealing with this week. The Shops Act was also in that suite.

The speeches which have been made so far -- all of them -- are very important speeches, and sometimes we could have too much of a good thing. They have all highlighted the important points in this Bill which we are discussing today. I want to go back and draw to the nation's attention that in the Safety and Health at Work Act, I have had the privilege of working with it in its development, and over the last month I have had the privilege again of working with it as it represents the law of the land. I want to say that I am very pleased to be associated with a Minister, a Ministry and a Government which have brought that piece of legislation to reality in this country. For the first time, we have broad safety and health at work legislation. Previously, we had the Factories Act, but every workplace in this time is covered by safety and health; schools and all kinds of workplaces. I said last week that we had to look at the challenges facing the workers at the National Conservation Commission, and I think it has been reported in the media and, to the best of my knowledge, the Opposition representative of the other side keeps asking the same question. I noticed that it was modified a bit today to talk about workers who have not had compensation, but I have seen it reported in the media and elsewhere that the workers at the National Conservation Commission received their award from the Employment Rights Tribunal. I think that matter has been put to rest. The unions in that area have all dealt with that.

What is important is that, as regrettable as those circumstances were, under this Minister of Labour and under this Democratic Labour Party Administration, we

introduced a new remedy. Prior to the passing of the Employment Rights Act there were no broad rights at work, nor was there the right not to be unfairly dismissed. I keep saying that we, the Democratic Labour Party and representatives on this side, sometimes do not broadcast enough about what we are doing. Each time I get the opportunity now, I talk about the quiet revolution that is taking place in education. Those on the other side always defeat us on this issue of public relations and giving things a name. We do stuff and feel that by doing stuff, it is enough, and we do not advertise enough what we have done. We have to take every opportunity to do that.

Last week, we dealt with holidays with pay and so on, so I am saying that we are on a particular path. In this democracy in which we live, we are in Parliament putting in place the structure for the establishment of a Board to determine minimum wages, but this is not a discussion occurring in Barbados only. In the big United States, either under the last President or the current President, workers have been marching, going on strike throughout the entire country, especially in the fast food sector, and demanding what we in an orderly fashion under this Democratic Labour Party Administration are putting in place legislatively. There are no big demonstrations up and down the length of this country. Even under the Democratic President whom many of us think so highly of, for the last two or three years throughout the United States there have been demonstrations. We have taken advantage of our more advanced democratic state to put in place certain protections and so on for the workers of this country.

The importance of this Minimum Wage Board, though, I think, is that it makes the point and it takes out of the hands of politicians the.... Politicians are not now the sole determinants of whether we have a Minimum Wage or not. We cannot use it as a sort of mechanism on the appropriate occasion. The Social Partners will, with the support of the supporting staff which I gather would come from the Ministry of Labour, after extensive discussion and so on, I hope, bring before the Minister a proposal for a Minimum Wage. It is not left to the Minister or for Parliament. It is not left for the politicians to decide and to use it in a way of bargaining with workers for power and so on, but that there is widespread discussion among the Social Partners and that mechanism is not just left either to persons from the University of the West Indies (UWI) or distinguished economists but we have the input of the workers, the employers and the Government input is also there with the backup and research and so on to help determine a minimum wage. I think that is a key and important aspects of this entire proposal that we have taken it out of the realm of politics and placed it firmly with the social partners to propose a minimum wage.

At the same time, I want to say that there are already existing in Barbados several minimum wages but the

difference is that these minimum wages are determined by negotiations. In our main section, the largest employer and most important sector of the economy, as is said, there is a minimum wage in tourism but it is a negotiated minimum wage. Any employer who is starting a tourism related business would be advised to go to the collective agreement between the Barbados Workers' Union and Hotel Association or whichever agency it is with and see what is the minimum wage. We have to make the point that those wages that are negotiated are the minimum. People are entitled to pay above the minimum but that is the minimum wage in the tourism sector. It is a reality that if you do not do that or if you do not do the necessary research you are going to find yourself or that investor would find him or herself employing people at the extremely lowest end, not only of the wage but of skill also because other people will be attracted to at least the minimum which is established in the industry. I want to use this opportunity to say to workers that while this provision that we are discussing this evening is important and while it is important that Government should get in there to support the most vulnerable and to provide a floor below which wages, whether sectorial or national, are not expected to fall below, it is my view that the best minimum wage is a negotiated minimum wage. I negotiated minimum wage comes out of joining a union.

There is a discussion in the country, and it has happened here this evening, about wage rates in Barbados and traditionally one would say that wage rates are related to the labour market, market forces, unemployment and so forth, but we in Barbados also have to take into consideration that part of the determinant in our wage rate is not only union activity and traditional market forces but, for example, the level of education. You cannot educate people and we do not sometimes recognise or we have not yet accepted that quality of education that we provide even at the very lowest level to persons who graduated from our schools. Sometimes we focus on saying that so many and so many people have graduated without certification but these people graduated without certification but employers would tell you that they are extreme trainable. They may need proper work habits and things that I am of the view that sometimes it is the employers' role to provide and assist in providing but the reality is that wage rates are also a factor of the level of education in the country and the development of a country's democratic traditions and so on, so a country at the level of development of Barbados it is really not possible to have those wages ... Will the wage may be low in Barbados when you compare it with other places it is not possible to really have wages at that level because of the level of the development of the country and then you add factors like level of unionisation and so on.

I am very pleased this evening that legislation has come before us, the development of the Board, taking the activity and minimum wage determination out of the hands

of politicians and putting it squarely in the arms of the social partners to make a proposal and so on, I think is the correct approach to use. It says a tremendous amount about our country that we are doing this in the form that we are doing and while more advanced countries, especially those to the north of us, have not yet even made a determination of how they are going to decide about minimum wages, whether or not they are even going to have a minimum wage in several sectors so it is to our credit, I think, the method that we are using.

After having said that, let me say that I am still of the view that we cannot bury our heads in the sand and believe that the setting of minimum wages will not have some effect on employment rates and especially employment rates in small enterprises. It may not be that the employer, because there is an increase in the minimum wage or that there is a new minimum wage that the employer, especially small employers, because sometimes we have a tendency when we are discussing business to assume that we are only talking about large businesses and sometimes the large businesses are not in this area of minimum wages. They may be paying wages above the national minimum wage but it is not that the employer may lay off people because of a minimum wage, what may actually happen is that the employer may decide not to expand employment because of the additional cost of employing one additional person. We all did basic economics and we know that is a reality. We cannot bury our heads in the sand so in setting these minimum wages I think we have to be very careful about that. One of the challenges that our small business sector, and we should be encouraging more and more of people to go into business, so sometimes we cannot always be saying these unscrupulous, exploitative business people. There is a time for that but in general broad discussion we want to be pushing more and more of our people and more and more of our school-leavers to see them creating businesses and creating wealth as a viable option. I think we have to create a climate but the point I am making about that is that sometimes there is not enough support for small and micro businesses on this issue of employment. If you have a business plan you can go to the banks and there are Government agencies where you can get funding and I notice that in some business circles there are new calls for the reopening of the Barbados Development Bank and so on. That is good but in my experience in being a representative of employers, there is not enough advice and support given to people who are going into business about the employment of people. A fellow opens a business, it may be a small restaurant or a bodywork shop because that is a skill that he has and it is something that he likes, and the business begins to expand and he employs that one person but because he loves that he cannot understand why his new employee does not want to work 27 hours a day because he has worked 27 hours a day to build it and he does not understand the significance of the charges that

come with employing a person and the importance of vacation and motivation and that dealing with people and the employment of people and so on is not a skill that you get because you are a good welder or a good cook, they are two different sets of skills.

We need, I think, more support for our small and micro businesses in this area of employing people. Madam President, at that same time as the old people say, when you say A, you have to say B, it is also the responsibility of many of these small employers to become attached to the organisations, I made this point last week, which work on their behalf. You do not have to be a member from day 1. You can call and ask a question and get advice and then you begin to build up a relationship and you become a member, but many of them see the fee that they pay as an additional burden on the business, but the membership dues become part of the investment that you can get legal advice and employment related advice and so on from competent people at a good rate and you begin them to develop your skills. You have to take advantage of whatever training opportunities exist out there in order to be able to deal with this issue of the employment of people creating incentives for the people to do the work. You feel that because you like this area that this person you hire should like it too. How do you build a series of incentives to encourage the people to be more and more productive? These are aspects, I think, that there is not enough of this type of work in Barbados to help those people who want to go into business. I know that people complain about the availability of credit and money and so forth but I think that those complaints though real pale into significance in relation to the assistance that is readily available on this issue of the employment of people and so on.

Madam President, I want to close by going back to where I began to say that the Democratic Labour Party and this Minister of Labour, Social Security and Human Resource Development must be congratulated and complimented, I will congratulate the party and compliment the Minister, for the work that they have done so far in bringing to this Chamber and to the people of Barbados a comprehensive suite of legislation that promotes not just the rights of workers but puts the country to an international level because in the areas of safety and health, for example, it is not just about promoting the rights of workers.

There are people who invest in Barbados and the first thing they want to see is the safety and health laws. The old Factories Act that we had was not adequate. These people do not want to see these safety and health laws because they love Barbadian workers, they are hedging against actions in courts by their employees when they come to work in Barbados. I have had cases where construction companies using local companies as proxies and so on were saying they are not even dealing what the

Barbados laws, they are operating under the safety and health regulations of Alberta in Canada because that gives them better protection if they send people to Barbados to work, so this legislation brings us into an acceptable international standard, and this action this evening continues this trend of which I think we ought to be eternally proud. I want to thank you, Madam President.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Boyce, you have the Floor.

Senator the Hon. D. W. BOYCE: Thank you, Madam President. I feel that I must contribute albeit with a great degree of brevity in this matter of the Minimum Wage Bill.

Madam President, we can congratulate the Minister of Labour, Social Security and Human Resource Development for the work that she and her teams including the teams that have cooperated with her from the private sector and the union sectors in getting this legislation ready for Parliament. Madam President, we do not really wish that many people in any sector would have to work at the minimum wage but really this is a signal, I think, to the whole country that this matter of what people at the bottom are paid will be kept under active consideration by the Government and indeed by the Social Partners. It is always a danger when you do not pay attention to these things that bad habits develop which then leads to an underclass in your society. Our society has been built by paying attention to avoiding the development of such an underclass in the country.

Madam President, as I have also often said, our economy has for a long time been driven by the fact of the social quality of this country. We would not have done as well in tourism and we would not have done as well in international business if we did not had the quality of the social safety net in this country and if we did not had the quality of the social services that we have here in Barbados to buttress that. This is another sign of the importance that we want to give to our mantra of this country being socially balanced so that all of us are able to enjoy some of the benefits of our labour.

Madam President, there is a lot of concern about what changes in the minimum wage will do to employment and to output. I take the approach, however, that if the wages of my employees were to increase that I should find ways to better utilise those employees and look for the technology and the ideas and the creativity in how to add new products to our services to create and to sell that allows me to pay those higher wages and also to make higher profits.

Madam President, sometimes where you do not have these challenges you continue with the old ways of doing

things, which may not be the best of ways in a given circumstance when times have changed. When you have the challenge of some factor of your production increasing you can make your way in two ways, you can decide to substitute another factor for that one that has increased, or you can decide to grow the business and make it bigger so that you can both improve the technology as well as to increase your labour. Madam President, really and truly, we have to pay attention in the country to the matter of the technology that we use and how we mix that technology within our businesses.

Madam President, this matter of productivity is something of which I used to know a little something about. As you know, Madam President, the National Productivity Council came out of the efforts to put together the Social Partnership in 1993 and I had the pleasure and honour of working with people like Sir Roy, Ambassador Robert "Bobby" Morris, the late Sir John Stanley Goddard and the late David Thompson, our then Right Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs under Sir Lloyd and we fashioned the National Productivity Council and part of its work span at the time was to help our Social Partnership to define and to measure productivity in the various areas and to help us to link compensation both of workers and the employers to the productivity of the businesses.

Madam President, at that time profit-sharing schemes were talked a lot about. Of course, they were not necessarily used as much as they were talked about but then after the world economy began to grow so nicely in the late 1990s everybody promptly forgot about the effort to increase productivity. There are some of us who call, like John the Baptist in the wilderness, for a return to productivity and to productivity-based compensations but our voices went completely unheard, until now when we are once again behind the curb on the matter of productivity.

Madam President, on that matter of productivity maybe we labour too much on looking only of increasing the output of the current set of goods and services for the amount of labour or capital that we use, now you measure productivity. That assumes in a sense that the world is static, many companies grow not by producing more of the same thing but by producing more things, by producing more lines of business because in every business there is what is called an "S" curb where you grow slowly, then rapidly, then your growth begins to decline. Therefore if you are to keep your business going you have to have a new product or service coming into a high growth phase when that old product goes into its low growth phase.

Madam President, therefore, product and productivity what we have to consider once more is how do we create, design, market or sell additional new products or

services; how do we make what we now do better and more varied so that we can generate more revenue. If we adopt that approach with productivity then we can apply it in almost every area that we have in the country. we can also measure productivity by how long that it takes us to get things done and maybe that is the standard that we should be using in some of those areas where it is harder to measure the outputs. With regards to the public sector maybe that is how we should focus on how long it takes us to get certain things done or how can we get this thing going faster, without sacrificing the quality of what we do. Madam President, maybe we have to take maybe a more lateral view of productivity, other than the straight output for the same cost of inputs, howsoever we get it in order to grow our businesses.

Madam President, what this bit of legislation also causes the Minimum Wage Board to do is to pay attention to the competitiveness of the sectors for which it makes recommendation on minimum wages. Clause 5 sets out a set of areas that must be considered by the Minimum Wage Board when it comes to looking to start making those recommendations.

“5 (1): The Board may, where it is of the opinion that the Minister should fix a minimum wage or make specific provision regarding the minimum terms and conditions of service in respect of employees generally or in respect of a specified group or sector of employees, forward a recommendation to the Minister and the recommendation may include;

(a) the proposed minimum wage;

(b) the proposed change in the minimum terms and conditions of service of employees generally or in relation to a specified group or sector of employees; and

(c) any other related matter. 5(2): Before making a recommendation under subsection (1), the Board shall consider

(a) the rate of inflation, cost of living and general level of wages in Barbados;

(b) contributions payable and benefits provided under the National Insurance Act , Cap. 47;

(c) the taxes to be deducted in accordance with the provisions of the Income Tax Act, Cap. 73;

(d) payment for similar jobs or tasks in other countries in CARICOM, the Commonwealth or similar jurisdictions; and

(e) any other relevant or related factors.”

(3) The Minister may accept the recommendations or advice of the Board or implement such measures as he considers appropriate in the circumstances.”

Madam President, it makes that comparison in the Commonwealth and other jurisdictions because that recognises that the international nature of much of what we now do in Barbados, where you are in international business service, for example tourism, your standard of service, sometimes your cost has got to bear relationship with what is happening in other countries, not only those alone in CARICOM. Indeed, nowadays it is not the comparable cost in CARICOM which drives what you do but the cost in some Latin American countries or in Asia to which you have to pay attention. This bit of legislation calls upon the Minimum Wage Board to look at those sorts of issues.

Madam President, this legislation at Clause 5.2 (d) also calls upon the Minimum Wage Board when it is considering doing a recommendation to look at:

“(d) economic factors, including the requirements of economic development, level of productivity and the desirability of attaining and maintaining high levels of employment.”

Madam President, it does not say that a minimum wage should be set based on only one thing but that there are other factors to which you need to pay attention before making a judgement about it. Madam President, that is as it should be because Senator Worrell this morning quoted from a study that had been done in the mid-2000 by Professor Andrew Downes regarding the several areas that have to be looked at regarding this matter of minimum wages.

Madam President, my professional training has largely been in economics, finance and accounting, and so people like to take it that I am interested only in the bottom line and in the profit figure for the owners of the business, but no good business continues for very long if it does not pay attention to the labour force and minimum wages. If you do not pay attention to the labour force which you have, they are not going to engage with you; they are not going to give you the level of productivity you are looking for; they are not going to give you the creativity which they have in their heads. If you pay attention to your workers, they will have some creativity which they can offer to the business in terms of how to do things differently, how to do something altogether different, or how to make a new product. We need to make sure that we bring that creativity and energy of our labour force into play, and managers ought not to be afraid to encourage people to make recommendations. Senator Watson gave a definition of “good”, which I said to him across the table was a very narrow definition. A good worker, according to one of the

things he said, is one who tells me what it is I am doing wrong, how I may be doing things wrong, and how I can improve over and over again. Maybe that is not a good worker; maybe that is an excellent worker. That is what we are looking for among our people.

Madam President, I am glad as well that this is essentially a Social Partnership institution. I have had my share of work in the Social Partnership. I have represented the private sector when it started in the Social Partnership, I have represented the union on one of the Social Partnership institutions, and now I am representing the Government. I have seen it from all three sides, but whenever I have seen it I have seen only one interest: the interest of Barbados. There is no other interest. Sir Roy will tell you that he and I have had many a battle because my understanding of what Barbados needed was.... We both love Barbados, we both wanted the best for Barbados but we saw it a little differently. Eventually, we would have come to an amicable conclusion on the matter and we would have persuaded each other to change somewhat.

Having seen it from all three sides, let me say I think we should continue to keep the Social Partnership structure and its chairmanship and so on much as it is. Government has the responsibility to bring balance into the country but, having said that, Madam President, let me also say that the Social Partnership in the early years may have worked better than it may be working now. This is not so much because of the structure of it but because, outside of that structure, there were a number of people who were there and wanted to sustain diplomacy between each other in order to make sure that the Social Partnership held together. We need sometimes to back away from just reliance on the formal structure and have a little more of the informal, the dialogue and the diplomacy going on, and every so often have a little quarrel to clear the sinuses and get things back on a good keel.

We cannot repeat the language we used in 1992 but it was some very muscular language on occasion. In those days, I was so peaceful.

Asides.

Senator Hon. D.W. BOYCE: We have created something which helped us and helped to improve our productivity and helped to save our country back then. We must not drop that ball. We may feel uncomfortable from time to time with each other, but we have to sit down and work out those issues. We have to encourage each party to use its creativity, to use its initiative, to say what it has to say quite frankly; and preferably to say it behind closed doors so that you can do the things to solve the problems and then move on. I am betting that this Minimum Wage Board follows the same model as the National Productivity

Council, and that was by design, and several other Boards which we have had since then.

Madam President, I am going to just make three other comments before I sit down. The guidance of the Minimum Wage Act will provide for those people who hire labour which comes from outside of Barbados' shores, particularly labour from other CARICOM countries, Madam President. In Barbados our population is growing very slowly and our labour force is growing slowly. People will want to come and work here, and we will want people to work here, but one of the things we do not want in this country is where people are brought into Barbados to work and are being paid a wage which is not a fair wage. This is not the wage that we want to give for these outside labourers, and this is not the wage that we want for our own people. I am just sending a signal to people that these things will be kept under active consideration. As the one who has day-to-day responsibility for immigration, that is an issue which bothers me quite a lot.

Madam President, I just want to make one comment on the matter of the decline in the foreign reserves. Just one comment. I will make two comments on that. The first one is that this country in 2010, I think it was, or 2011, faced a situation where the Canadians changed their tax legislation. That took away an advantage which Barbados had over other jurisdictions in terms of our international business sector. Our international business sector employed over 3 000 people, generated in total up to ten per cent of GDP (Gross Domestic Product), and perhaps more for net foreign exchange. We had a choice to make. Should we have continued with the existing tax rates which we had and lose a large majority of those 3 000-plus jobs and the majority of that contribution to the GDP, or should we have taken a low tax rate, lose some tax revenue but keep the jobs of those over 3 000 people? We took the latter decision; that we would prefer to keep the jobs and yield some tax revenue to those companies. That, of course, costed us, I think every year close to \$200 million, but it is what it cost you to keep \$1 billion or more then you make that judgment. Of course, that tax revenue was paid to us in foreign currency so that was a blow that we took continuously at that time.

Secondly, Madam President, we have not borrowed, some may have said that we are not in a position to borrow, some may say it was too expensive for us to borrow, but the facts are that we have not borrowed in order to prop up the foreign reserves for several years. This was not always the case. It so happens that when you could the foreign reserves that we have you do not count the liabilities, how much you have to pay within a year or so, so we count the gross reserves so it may look good but it may have been financed by borrowings. Maybe in that position was not substantially different from what it is now.

The second comment, Madam President, well it is the third comment but it is linked to that one. In 1992, and Senator Sir Roy or Senator Ince would tell me the number of weeks of foreign reserves we had, I saw an index window go up, one index finger not even two, Barbadians got together and decided that, notwithstanding our differences, we did not want to have a devaluation because the people who would be hurt by it would have been the working class, those on fixed incomes and we took issue that we were going to fight that and fight it in our own way. Madam President, if with a week or two of foreign reserves then, we were able to fight devaluation, why are we letting people get into our heads, get beyond our ears, about devaluation talk when we have got, Senator Watson said 10 or 12 weeks, whatever it was, of reserves? Are we in this country using the common sense that our foreparents showed us? Have we lost the ability to fight? Have we lost the ability to resist? Have we lost the strength to climb out of a situation? Madam President, I do not believe that we have lost any of those things. I would hate to think that Barbados, 50 years from independence, in Barbados 24 from its first social partnership protocol would take such a defeatist attitude to life. I know a Barbados were people are resilient, people were strong, people were determined and that is the Barbados that I intend to live in in the future.

Madam President, I am not worried at all when they talk of devaluation. If people want to make themselves mad and wish to give themselves something to worry about let them worry about devaluation. I do not worry about it, I think we are safe.

Madam President, I wish to commend this Bill to this Honourable Chamber. I thank you.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Dr. the Honourable Byer-Suckoo, you have the Floor.

Senator Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO: Thank you very much, Madam President, and I rise to wrap up what has been an all-day debate. Let me, of course, begin by thanking all the Senators who contributed to this debate in the main, I think, I have gotten full support from all my colleagues and I want to thank you for that support. Certainly you have underscored the importance of the minimum wage and I believe that anybody listening, anybody covering this debate today would understand exactly why we all agree it is important that we have our minimum wage. We understand that it is important that we protect the most vulnerable. We understand that and we have agreed that in spite of all the different theories out there about minimum wage. I think one of the things that we understood and underscored was that the setting of a minimum wage would certainly benefit those persons at the lower end and that is exactly what it is about. We set that minimum wage so that those persons would be protected because without the legislation, those wages at the bottom

will not increase. The average wage for those workers will not increase.

I want to give my thanks to Senator Sir Roy Trotman for ... I am told that we partnered this morning according to Sir Trevor. Senator Sir Roy, it is a red letter day, we actually partnered together this morning but my thanks to you again as you did last week, reminding me of something I should have done and it is to congratulate Professor Downes for his work in this process. I did not mention it, Senator Sir Roy referred to the document about the minimum wage policy, the impact of a minimum wage policy but that is the document that was presented to the social partners in 2007 that then triggered a Cabinet Paper in 2008 that said, let us look at developing this Minimum Wage Board. I must thank him, not only for the document, not only for the work that he did, but he has been the one at the helm of a lot of the work that has been produced here today. He has worked with my Ministry in ensuring that this is here today. I did not want to call names earlier but I did say that when we look at setting up this Minimum Wage Board we have the tripartite partners, we have the employers, we have the workers and the Minister will also appoint three persons and I mentioned the fact that we do have brains, we have persons who are trained in these areas. I mentioned that we have economists, we have researchers, we have people who are not just coming out of the woodwork as it were, but we do have brains, people who are keen on this and people who have studied this who will inform this process so I believe that what we are establishing here is not going to be a slip shot affair. Of course, there will be questions. I know that whatever is put out, it will be questioned. There will be folks who will object and there is a process that allows for objection but I believe that we have the makings here of a system that is actually going to respond to the needs of our workers. As I said, it started in 2007 when the document was presented, a Cabinet Paper went in 2008 and then we found ourselves in a recession and there had been the concern that maybe we should not proceed with a minimum wage because who wants to establish a minimum wage in the middle of a recession and we had looked at information from different corners of the world where some countries, in a recession, introduced a minimum wage and raise the wages and some did not and we saw different experiences. What I did at the time when I came to the ministry in 2010 and no further work had been done on the legislation, the Cabinet had agreed to it in 2008 but then because of the recession and so on, I said no, legislation takes time. As I said, this is a process and we have seen all of our legislation come through here that takes time.

As I said, let us get the legislation in place so we can have the Board in place so that by the time we establish this Board and the Board does its work and the Board makes a recommendation nobody can come to us...

We would have gone through the worse of the recession and here we are now in 2017 about to establish the Board and I am hopeful that very shortly we can start seeing new Orders and so on coming. We have already pass 2008, 2010 and 2012 and we are here at 2017 and we used that downtime as it were to set up the legislation so that now in 2017 we are good to go once we get the approval in the next few minutes.

Madam President, another couple of spinoffs from this legislation, and I thank Senator De Peiza for mentioning it, I was keeping it to the last to, is that we talked about the more vulnerable workers and mention was made of the migrant workers. I mentioned last week that we have a migrant labour policy that will encompass all legislation including this so our migrant workers will be covered by this. I talked about the micro-jobbing and the zero-hour contract and how that disadvantages people especially the disabled, the young workers and the women. A minimum wage policy and a minimum wage legislation, an Order that is set, is going to ensure that these groups, our women, our young people, the disabled and other vulnerable groups, will be guaranteed at least a minimum wage.

Madam President, we talk about a national minimum wage and a sectorial minimum wage. Now, let me make it clear that the Board can establish a national wage and still then establish a sectorial minimum wage. It is clear in the legislation that the sectorial minimum wage will never go below the national minimum wage so perhaps one of the options is that we will start with a national minimum wage and then proceed to look by sector at what would be the sectorial minimum wage, but we can have both. All of that will be determined once we establish the Board and they sit down and get to work. We also talked about the parameters within which they will work.

As I said, this legislation will see us protecting our women and our migrant labourers. We did not talk much about domestic workers, I just included them as a category today when we talked about security guards and workers in different sectors, gas stations and so on.

I am hopeful that once we have this legislation on our books we can see our way, I mentioned Convention 26 of the International Labour Organisation, to ratifying Convention 131 which deals with a minimum wage setting especially in developing countries but also be able to ratify Convention 189 which is the Domestic Workers Convention. I was there as well as Sir Roy in 2011 when the International Labour Organisation adopted Convention 189 for domestic workers. We have tried to work with our domestic workers who are not unionised. We tried to do focus groups and so on with them so that we can ensure that the ratification of the Convention is in keeping with what the needs are for those workers. We do not have much

in legislation for domestic workers. We have the minimum wage thing that I mentioned that gives them now a minimum wage which as I said was \$1.50 an hour. Once we do this, I think, we can actually be on our way to ratifying Convention 189 for domestic workers as well, something that I am very concerned about because our domestic workers, whether they are migrant or local workers, are among the most vulnerable workers that we have in this country. In every country we see that domestic workers are quite vulnerable and this will allow Government to be able to step in and establish a minimum wage and other terms and conditions. Madam President, remember the point has been made that this Bill deals with other terms and conditions as well.

Madam President, with this legislation here today, we continue our work. I must warn you that we have more labour legislation to come and I am hopeful that in this year we can see other such legislation coming to this Chamber.

Madam President, there is one other point I need to mention. Colleagues did express concern about the Secretariat and the Secretary to the Board. Yes, the Schedule does say at 4 (2) that that Board will establish from among its members a person to be the Secretary of the Board. The Schedule also goes on to say at 19, I think it is, that the Board will regulate its own procedure and delegate to any of its members or to a committee of its members the power and authority to carry out such duties as the Board determines and that the Minister may assign such persons as are necessary to assist the Board with discharging its functions.

Madam President, this Board is going to be remunerated along the lines as other boards. These are not people who are in fulltime employment. In most of our boards the Chairman gets like \$200 for one meeting a month and the members get about \$120 for one meeting a month, so these are not people who are employed, so we have never expected members of the Board to do the back office work, that is usually done by the Ministry. We do that with the Safety and Health Board, the National Advisory Council on Safety and Health and all of our boards, so it is foreseen that the Ministry will do the Secretariat function. A Secretary will be appointed within the Board but the work of the Secretariat will be assigned to the Ministry. As I said, the Minister can appoint any other such persons as are necessary to assist the Board. That is broad enough because as we start we now have to see who will be needed to do what and so on so you can envisage that over the next year we will now be finding out, okay, here we need this and we need that and so on.

Madam President, having done this today we can now put the Minimum Wage Board in our Estimates for the coming year. We could not put it in our Estimates until it is actually approved. All we need now is for this Chamber to

give its full approval and then we are on our way to being able to establish a minimum wage and further providing protection for our workers and creating a society that the Democratic Labour Party is committed to, a society that is socially balanced, economically viable, environmentally sound and characterised by good governance.

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

The question was put to the Senate and resolved in the affirmative without division.

On the motion of Senator Dr. the Hon. E. B. BYER SUCKOO, the Senate resolved itself into Committee, His Honour Senator the Very Reverend H. E. Crichlow in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Senate is in Committee.

Clauses 1 -- 10 inclusive were called and passed.

Clauses 11 -- 20 inclusive were called and passed.

Mr. DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Sir Roy, you have the Floor.

Senator Sir ROY TROTMAN: Mr. Chairman, I wish to draw your attention to a slight gravelling in Paragraph 11. I do not think that it amounts to a big enough issue that would cause a change reflecting on the Bill in such a way to take it back to any revision or to the Other Place, it is merely the need for transposition of two words at Paragraph 11(b) where it states:

“At a reasonable time, enter any premises where an employer carries on his business or enter any premises which the Chief Labour Officer has reasonable cause to believe is being used by the employer to provide living accommodation an for employee to whom a Minimum Wage Order applies.”

Mr. Deputy President, it obviously means “for an employee” and I would think that that can, in fact, be dealt with as an error in terms of the text and so I would just like us to clear that. I do not think it materially would represent a real amendment.

Mr. DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, please note at page 12 the correction is “accommodation for an employee.”

COMMITTEE (resumed)

Clauses 11 to 20, inclusive, were called and passed.

The Schedule was called and passed.

On the separate motions of Senator Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO, His Honour the DEPUTY PRESIDENT reported to Her Honour the PRESIDENT, the passing of one Bill in Committee and Her Honour the PRESIDENT resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Senator Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Minimum Wage Act, 2017.

ADJOURNMENT

Senator the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Madam President, I beg to move that this Sitting be now adjourned until Wednesday, 8th February, 2017, at 11.00 a.m.

The question was put to the Honourable the Senate and agreed to and Madam PRESIDENT adjourned the Senate accordingly.

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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. Public Business. No Order number or title is given for the Bill debated; it is identified from the speeches and the third-reading citation as the Minimum Wage Bill, 2017. The Minister twice calls it ‘the Minimum Wages Bill’. Printed as in the source.

Q3. Committee. ‘Clauses 11 -- 20 inclusive were called and passed’ is recorded before Sir Roy Trotman’s point on paragraph 11 and again after it (‘COMMITTEE (resumed)’). The Chair in Committee is labelled both ‘Mr. CHAIRMAN’ and ‘Mr. DEPUTY PRESIDENT’. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Headings. The source has the headings ‘ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HER HONOUR THE PRESIDENTS’ and ‘PRESENTATION OF PAPERS’, and the opening reads ‘on Wednesday the February 01, 2017’. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Speech labels. Sir Roy Trotman’s first speech heading reads ‘Senator Roy TROTMAN’, and the motion to go into Committee names ‘Senator Dr. the Hon. E. B. BYER SUCKOO’ (elsewhere E. R. BYER-SUCKOO). Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The Senate met at 11.15 a.m. on Wednesday, 1st February, 2017, with the President, Her Honour Senator Miss K. F. Ifill, in the Chair; prayers were led by Senator the Very Reverend H. E. Crichlow. The President announced that Senator Rev. Dr. D. L. Durant was out of the country. Senator the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McClean laid the Fair Trading Commission Annual Report 2016, the Enterprise Growth Fund Limited Annual Report 2016, the Barbados Fire Service and Barbados Prison Service Annual Reports for 2015, and the 22nd Annual Report and Accounts of the Barbados Agricultural Management Company Limited.

The whole sitting was given to the Minimum Wage Bill, 2017. The Minister of Labour, Senator Dr. the Hon. E. R. Byer-Suckoo, said the Bill, which had gone through tripartite dialogue, would repeal the Wages Council Act of 1955, Cap. 362, and set up a Minimum Wage Board to advise the Minister on a minimum wage, taking social and economic factors into account. She traced minimum wage law back to 1938 and noted that the Shop Assistants Order of 2012 had set \$250 for a 40-hour week, or \$6.25 an hour, a figure many used as a guide although it applied only to shop assistants.

Senator Sir Roy Trotman supported the Bill, recalling Professor Andrew Downes’ 2007 report for the National Productivity Council and the work of the tripartite body. After lunch Senators R. A. Hunte, Sir Henry Fraser (whose concern was how and how quickly it would be carried out), J. Ince, A. A. Adams, A. R. Worrell, the Very Rev. H. E. Crichlow and the Hon. P. M. T. Todd supported it. After a short suspension Senators J. A. Watson, Dr. Sir Trevor Carmichael and Miss V. A. G. De Peiza spoke. Senator W. A. Abrahams said no one could object to the legislation but questioned the state of the economy, and offered to cede the rest of his time for answers; the President cautioned him that ceding time was against the Standing Orders and that this was the second week he had done so. Senator H. A. Husbands and Senator the Hon. D. W. Boyce congratulated the Minister and her team, Senator Boyce linking the country’s success in tourism and international business to its social safety net.

Replying, the Minister explained that the Board could set both a national and a sectoral minimum wage, the sectoral never below the national; that the legislation would protect women, migrant labourers and domestic workers; that she hoped Barbados could ratify ILO Conventions 131 and 189; and that Board members would be paid along the lines of other boards, about \$200 a meeting for the Chairman and \$120 for members, so that the Board could be put in the coming Estimates.

The Bill was read a second time without division. In Committee, with the Deputy President in the Chair, Sir Roy Trotman pointed out the misprint ‘an for employee’ in paragraph 11, and the Deputy President noted the correction to ‘accommodation for an employee’. The clauses and Schedule were passed, and the Bill was read a third time and passed as the Minimum Wage Act, 2017. On the motion of Senator McClean the Senate adjourned until Wednesday, 8th February, 2017 at 11.00 a.m.