
THE SENATE DEBATES

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2013 – 2018

THE SENATE

Wednesday, July 19, 2017

The Senate met in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, on Wednesday, the July 19, 2017 at 11 o'clock in the morning.

PRESENT

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

His Honour Senator the Very Reverend HAROLD E. CRICLOW, G.C.M., B.A. (Hons.) (Dunelm)(Deputy President) Senator the Hon. Ms. MAXINE P. O. McCLEAN, B.Sc., (Hons), M.A., M.B.A. (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade) (Leader of the Senate) Senator the Hon. DARCY W. BOYCE, M.B.A.(Finance) B.Sc.(Econ.), C.M.A., F.C.A., (Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister) Senator Mrs. V. IRENE SANDIFORD-GARNER, M.B.A., C.I.M., Dip. Mgn., (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Tourism) Senator JEPTER INCE, J.P., M.B.A., BB.A., Dip. (Mgmt) (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs) Senator HARCOURT A. HUSBANDS, M.L.I.R., B.Sc.(Public Administration) (Hons.), Ed. Cert. (U.W.I.) (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education)

Senator REGINALD A. HUNTE, J.P.

Senator Rev. Dr. DAVID L. DURANT, D.D. (Hons.)

Senator the Hon. PATRICK M. T. TODD, B.Sc., (Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister) Senator Dr. the Hon. ESTHER R. BYER-SUCKOO, M.B.B.S., (Minister of Labour, Social Security and Human Resource Development)

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

Senator Miss VERLA A. G. DePEIZA, LL.M. (Merit), B.Sc. (Hons.) Senator Dr. JEROME X. WALCOTT, J.P., M.B., B.S., FRCS (Edin.)

Senator WILFRED A. ABRAHAMS, LL.B. (Hons.)

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

Senator Dr. Sir TREVOR A. CARMICHAEL, Q.C., S.C.M., B.Sc.(Econ.), M.A., Ph.D.
Senator JOHN WATSON

ABSENT

Senator Prof. Emeritus Sir HENRY H.S. FRASER, G.C.M., B.Sc., M.B.B.S., Ph.D., FACP, FRCP. Senator ALWIN A. ADAMS, J.P., B.A. (Ed.), Ed.Cert., M.Sc. Ed. Senator Dr. CAROL Lady HAYNES, M.B., B.S. Prayers were led by Rev. Father Errington Massiah.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Good morning. The Senate is now in Session.

MESSAGE FROM HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR GENERAL

MADAM PRESIDENT: I am in receipt of a message from His Excellency dated June 30, 2017, and it reads:

“Dear Madam President, I have the honour to inform the Honourable the Senate that, with the approval of Her Majesty the Queen, I shall demit the Office of Governor General on retirement on June 30, 2017. In accordance with the provisions of Section 29 of The Constitution of Barbados, Sir Philip Marlowe Greaves, K.A., Q.C., will perform the functions of the Office as Acting Governor General. As the Honourable the Senate will not meet prior to my demitting Office, it will not be possible for the usual formal message to be sent down to your Chamber. Will you therefore please bring my retirement to the attention of the Honourable the Senate when next it meets? I have the honour to be Yours Faithfully, SIR ELLIOTT BELGRAVE.”

On behalf of the Senate, I wish Sir Elliott and Lady Belgrave a good and long retirement after dutiful and distinguished service to his country.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HER HONOUR THE PRESIDENT

MADAM PRESIDENT: I am in receipt of excuses for the following Senators: Senator Adams, Senator Fraser and Senator Lady Haynes. They are unable to be with us today as they are out of the country. I am also in receipt of an excuse for lateness from Senator Abrahams.

PAPERS

Senator Dr. the Hon. E.R. BYER-SUCKOO: Madam President, I am commanded to lay the Electric Light and Power Fees Regulation, 2017.

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

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Senator Dr. the Hon. E.R. BYER-SUCKOO: I beg to move that Standing Orders 22 (1) and 45(2) be suspended for the remainder of the day's Sitting.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Senator Dr. the Hon. E.R. BYER-SUCKOO: Madam President, I beg to move that the following Bills be read for the first time:

1. The National Insurance and Social Security (Amendment) Bill, 2017.
2. The Offshore Petroleum (Amendment) Bill, 2017.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

ORDER No. 2

The National Insurance and Social Security (Amendment) Bill, 2017

(Second Reading)

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

Senator Dr. the Hon. E.R. BYER-SUCKOO: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, this morning I stand before this Chamber to move the Second Reading of the National Insurance and Social Security (Amendment) Bill, 2017. This is an Amendment to CAP 47, the National Insurance and Social Security Act. This is

a rather simple Amendment, because what it does is give effect to the waiver of interest that would have been announced by the Minister of Finance in the Budget of 2016. This waiver had started then from October 1, 2016, and ran right through to March 1, 2017. This was also in keeping with another budgetary proposal, and that was a waiver on certain taxes as well, which ran for the same period. That was a waiver on interest and penalties. In National Insurance, however, there are no penalties; it is just interest, so for this legislation today we are waiving the interest that would normally accrue to monies owed at the National Insurance.

As I said, this was from October 1, 2016 through to March 1, 2017, and this waiver was granted to employers and self-employed persons who are indebted to the National Insurance Fund. The 100 per cent waiver of interest was granted on the condition that the employers and self-employed persons be required to liquidate the 100 per cent of the contribution arrears that they owed to National Insurance by March 1, 2017. The waiver was then applied to the interest accrued up to March 15. The payment that was required then to clear this off was to be paid either in a lump sum or by multiple payments within the five-month period of the waiver, and all interest accrued on outstanding contributions as at March 15, 2017 was then waived, provided those contribution arrears were liquidated in full.

S: D11 (1)

Along with the waiver of taxes was part of the measures that were put in place to assist businesses and self-employed persons with their cash flow. We have seen over the year, certainly since I have been responsible for this Ministry that a number of companies and businesses, not just small businesses but some very large ones as well have had some problems when it came to keeping up with their National Insurance payments. Unfortunately I am also aware that very often the payments were deducted from the employees and were not actually remitted to the National Insurance Scheme but for whatever the reason, we have seen that there were a number of businesses and self-employed persons who owed money National Insurance Scheme.

Madam President, I was encouraged to go to the National Insurance Scheme and sit with the relevant department and discuss your concerns and discuss your challenges and make arrangements to pay off these arrears. Unfortunately, I have seen too many cases because persons when they really get down to the final straw is when they want to call the Minister to see if something could be done but they have not gone through the process. They do not when they realise they realise they are missing a few payments to call the National Insurance Scheme and say they are behind by a payment, two, three or four and ask

how they can catch up because the National Insurance Scheme does routinely sit with such persons and help them to make a plan to pay over a period until they catch up again. There are folks who have not done that and then after repeated attempts by the National Insurance Scheme to try to get this money back without success then they have to be taken to court at which point when they ask the Minister to intervene, the matter is already in court and there is nothing that any Minister or anybody can do for them at that time.

Madam President, I find that maybe it is a Barbadian thing and we do not go forward to say we are having a challenge with a particular bill and make some sort of arrangement and find themselves then too late with this Bill that they cannot manage and so I encourage even as I discuss this waiver here in the legislation which is pretty straightforward, that five month period has already passed but I encourage persons where you are in arrears to the National Insurance Scheme or anybody to go and sit and have a chat and say this is my challenge, I cannot pay you \$100 every month right now because of this challenge but perhaps we can make an arrangement that I can pay \$50 for XX period until we get it sorted out. I find where I have had to make interventions like that for persons be it at the household level or at the business level it is met with success but very often folks wait until it is too late, until the bailiff is behind them, until the court is knocking at the door and then they want somebody to intervene for them but they have let it run too late.

Madam President, anyhow, we had this five month period in which the 100 waiver of interest was granted and that was found to be very successful. Madam, under the programme 147 employers submitted contribution of arrears of payments of \$11.7 million and interest totaling \$7.8 million was waived. This measure helps small businesses and they get that off their back, the arrears they have to pay but it also helps the National Insurance Scheme in terms of allowing folks to come in and bring all this money they owe because there is an incentive to them to do it. The same thing happens with the taxes when certain taxes were waived and we found persons coming forward quickly to meet that deadline, to bring in money and then you were able to see a significant deposit then in the Treasury. We have had this measure and it yielded \$11.7 million, waiving \$7.8 million in interest. The National Insurance Scheme will describe it as being moderately successful. Madam, I can say here that the National Insurance Scheme because of the success of this and because there are Barbadians who will call at the very end after the deadline or a week before the deadline to say that they did not know about the measure, are you going to do it again and that happened with the land tax, the VAT, anything that was waived, you found folks calling to say that they did not know they were doing this and that they missed out on it. We are continuing to extend this waiver of

interest on National Insurance for an additional six month. Madam, of course, that would allow other legislation to be brought. In a similar vein, I know that when the Minister did the last Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals a similar thing was done with the taxes as well, that a waiver on interest and penalty was extended for 6 months. The Cabinet is favourable, the Ministry of Finance is favourable to the National Insurance Scheme putting that in place so that we can see an extension of the waiver. I encourage folks with businesses and folks who know they have arrears to keep their ears to the ground and listen to when these things might come about because too often I get calls at the eleventh hours, sometimes even well passed that, after the time has expired saying that they did not know about. I am saying it now and you will hear more about it. It will be in the newspaper and if you are hearing about this and you know somebody who have a similar challenge to pass it on. Madam, I did not give any dates today, the extension is supposed to be for around six months, I did not give any dates but if this would affect you or interest you, keep in tune with the National Insurance Scheme, call the National Insurance Scheme and find out what is happening so that you can benefit from what would be significant assistance whereby you would have the interest waived.

Madam President, managing the National Insurance Scheme is not a simply task. I sit as Minister and I realise it has many challenges. Of course, we have the actuarial advice and the actuary does issue a report every three years and we would attempt to follow that actuarial advice as much as is humanly possible but the main arrears of managing the National Insurance Scheme include, for example, what we have here with the waiver to try to increase contributions. One of the planks of managing the National Insurance Scheme is to ensure that the contributions are up, that folks are bringing contributions and that you try to get the arrears down, you try to work with persons who have the arrears so that they can clear those and we can have more money coming in. Madam, the other part of managing the National Insurance Scheme is to control the expenditure and our National Insurance Scheme had done very well controlling the expenditure. We have not seen expenditure cost rise significantly in the last five years, for example, and then of course there is the investment. Madam, the National Insurance Scheme invest what money comes in as contributions minus the money that is issued that is given out in benefits and any money used in administration so what is left

over, the surplus, that is what is invested. Madam, of course, that is a very important part of managing the National Insurance Scheme, how this investment is handled. Of course, the challenges that one has with managing the investments are several. Right now in the climate, locally as well as globally investments are not yielding as much as they once would have but hopefully this is cyclical and we will see the time come again when

investments could actually yield a little bit more but there is a challenge in terms of where do you investment, where it is safe to investment and where you are going to get the returns on the investment that you would like.

Madam President, that is one challenge with investment but, Madam, remember I have also said that what we invest at the National Insurance Scheme is the surplus and when contributions are down it means obviously that your surplus would be less as well, so there has been less money to invest. One reasons for that has to do with the fact that employment has been down for a period. In fact, I will speak briefly in a moment on the Unemployment Fund of the National Insurance Scheme. The Unemployment Fund has actually dipped quite a bit because of the level of unemployment and folks taking money out of that Fund but what that also meant is that because unemployment was high, contributions were actually lower, fewer people working means less money coming in, so that in the long run we had less money to invest. Madam, that is another challenge that we have had at the National Insurance Scheme. How do we manage the investment we have, bearing in mind that it is not as much money to invest right and that the climate is not as ideal as you would like for investing, so what do you do?

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National Insurance has manage prudently. They have had to invest more locally than they would normally do under better circumstances but all of that will change when these circumstances that we find ourselves in change. What the National Insurance has however decided that they will do during this period is not just focus on the investment which has been the big thing at National Insurance all these years, focussing on all this money and where you invest it but not just focussing on investments but on other very important things like cash flow management which is where managing the contributions and the arrears comes in as well as focussing on customer service, which is very important, and as more and more people look to National Insurance for support, that customer service becomes more very important, the kind of interface they have and including also the IT interface because we do know that it is possible to have interaction with National Insurance using an IT platform and we want to see more of that develop in the future as well. You do not necessarily have to speak to somebody or you do not necessarily have to go in. Of course, that for Barbadians right now is the preferred method they still all march down to Culloden Road and they transact their business there at the National Insurance but when they do so they want to know that, not only is the interaction that interface pleasant, but that it is effective, that something comes of that interface so we are working through training and certification of the staff at the National Insurance to ensure that it is a more pleasant experience for the general public and that in fact that

interface actually does yield the desired result. Closely linked to that too, another area that we are focussing on is that of claims processing. Right now at the National Insurance there is quite a backlog on the processing of claims including, in fact, especially the sickness claims. There is a backlog and from time-to-time what would happen is that the relevant department would just put other areas on hold and focus specifically on the claim that is backed up a lot whether it is sickness or whatever the area is to try to clear off that backlog but the last time I checked for sickness claims was somewhere in the vicinity of, I may be wrong, I am not sure if it 2 005 or 25 000. I hope it is 2 005, I think it was 2 005 sickness claims that we had backlog at the National Insurance. That is an area too that we find that we have to work on. Right now you hear folks being very concerned about their National Insurance and they want to know that they can talk to somebody at the National Insurance. They want to know that when they expect their benefits that it comes because when they do not then you hear all kinds of reasons proffered as to why that was not done. We have a problem with the printer and the cheques are not issued on time and so everybody gets concerned, the National Insurance has run out of money, there is nothing there. A couple of weeks ago they changed the colour of the cheques and you would not believe the kinds of calls and concerns that came because the colour of the cheque was changed. When moneys had to be logged and in some instances they went ahead and logged the money when the National Insurance a couple of years ago was attempting to move from issuing cheques to "logment". This ideally would be phased in but at one point a decision was made at the National Insurance that effective this date we would log all the moneys. That

happened and again it created concern. It speaks to the fact that it is important that we continue to dialogue with our clients, that we have this information available, that it is available on our website and that when you call you can get answers to these questions because if a pension cheque is a day late, I know that the pensioners rely on this pension cheque coming on time because everything, the day they go to the supermarket and so on depends on that pension cheque coming and so it is important that we continue to first of all to try to make sure that these things are done in a timely manner as expected but that also, where there are challenges that we get that message out. What we have seen happened from time-to-time is where there are concerns and they are aired in the public, they are aired in the media, then after that, somebody from National Insurance comes out to say this is the challenge. We are trying to get ahead of the game because it is important for the general public especially when there is this feeling that has been put out there that the National Insurance is not going to be able to pay your pensions next month or is not going to be able to pay your pensions come next year and things like that creating that kind of unnecessary fear where that is put out there. You could imagine then how the

slightest delay creates panic for the general public but we are working to ensure that we have the information issued in a timely manner and that we also try to have all these things done without delay. As I said, instead of focussing only on investment right now, we are focussing on the cash flow management, we are focusing on claims processing and we are focussing on customer service.

National Insurance has now reach 50 years and we are actually looking at new strategic plan which takes all of this that I have discussed into consideration and when that strategic plan is done, I propose that it will become a document of this Senate. We are also looking at the tribunals because we have had some problems with the tribunals at the National Insurance. The severance tribunals and the medical so we are looking at that. We are looking to see if that is the best structure for the volume that comes through the National Insurance and if there are better ways that we can do it because we do know that sometimes the severance process can take a long time. Mind you, I am also advised that process is not always because of the National Insurance Office or because of the tribunal but sometimes the required information takes a while. Sometimes trying repeatedly to get the employer. I am told that is a big challenge. You try to get the employer, you send registered mail, you try whatever method to get the employer and sometimes that can delay the process by months if not years and then you have the administrative in the National Insurance and then, of course, at the level of the tribunal. We propose to revise that whole process to ensure that it runs more smoothly and more efficiently. Of course, we are grateful to the attorneys' Chair who sit on the tribunals and other persons who sit on the tribunals because what they do takes a lot of time and many of them are committed to coming regularly and doing this. What they get per hour for this is nothing close to what they would get in their regular practice. For all of them, the attorneys, the representatives of the workers and the representatives of the employers, for all of those who sit on the tribunal, this is really their service to country. This is them giving back but they all have other obligations as well and it can be a challenge sometimes getting all of them at the same time but for many of our tribunals, we have four severance tribunals, for example, for most of them they have a set time that they will come. We did have a challenge when the rooms for the tribunal were unavailable because they were retrofitting the National Insurance building and as they went through for a period, some of the rooms became unavailable and they were down to just a couple of rooms. There have been challenges but none of them have lasted very long. We have worked through them because we understand the significance of the work that happens at National Insurance, the significance to the people who expect their benefits from the National Insurance Scheme so none of these problems last long. We set about very quickly and efficiently to get the problems solved.

I mentioned the issue of the claims backlog and the backlog two with the financial statements. That is something else that we are really working with. We are working with the Auditor General, with an external firm as well that would help us and has been trying for years to help us to sort out the issues with our audited financial statements because there were some issues dating back more than a decade now and getting all the information together to be able to complete those financials have been a challenge. The National Insurance, of course, did not want to just take the statements as they are with a note.

Asides.

Senator Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO: A qualification that is the word. I had it there and it slipped just now. They did not want to take a qualification on the statement they want to for purposes of clarity and transparency they really wanted to get down in there and get down to the nitty-gritty but that has taken some time and because 2004 took some time then that of course had a domino effect on the other years and so I think they gradually got to 2004, so that we are now playing catchup.

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I do believe we have statements in for 2014 and 2015 but we are still working to get everything completed, so that one day very soon we can come to this Honourable House and say, here, all of these are the statements that you have been waiting on for so long.

Mr. Speaker, that is something that we have been working hard on. Again, we talk about the public needing to trust the National Insurance Scheme, needing to know that their money is safe, needing to know that they can rely on their pensions and on the other benefits when they need them because the National Insurance Scheme is sound. Ma'am, there is one thing to take my word for it and of course as a politician when I get up and say one thing I will expect that somebody on the other side would get up and say, oh! no, no, that is not so, that only confuses the public and so it is important that we have all these financial statements and other information available on our website and also to the public so that the public can see for themselves that there is no need to start to panic, that the money that I have been saying is there, that it is there, that is why it is important that we are working now.

Again, right now many in the Accounting Department have put other things on hold to focus on what is needed by the auditor to ensure that we can get those statements out. The 15th Actuarial Review is ready and so we will shortly be bringing the 15th Actuarial Review to Parliament. It is time for the 16th Review so that when they actually came and did work on the 15th Review we actually said to go right ahead and start working on the 16th

because that was also due and so we will be seeing that very shortly.

Madam President, that kind of brings you up to speed as to where we are with our National Insurance Scheme today, what we are doing, where we are focusing and what are our priorities. As I said, for the purposes of the waiver we will be bringing an extension of this waiver to this Honourable Chamber some time soon.

Madam President, as I hinted at earlier, our National Insurance Scheme is 50 years old. Less than two month ago, June 5, 1967 was when we launched the National Insurance Scheme and for 50 years it has served the people, it has been, as their motto says: "More than a contribution but [indeed] a lifeline". Everybody knows the jingle and I hope that they would act accordingly when it comes to making their contributions. In fact, one of the areas I talked about just how about how they are focusing on contributions, we are focusing too on getting the contributions not just from employers who are in arrears, employers who have deducted the moneys from the workers and have not yet filed it to the National Insurance Scheme but then we have persons who are self-employed and have not been able to submit their contribution; some of whom do not, some of whom wait until they are almost pensionable who then come to the National Insurance Scheme to see what they have to do to earn a pension. Madam President, the actuary has noted that we need to actually tackle that problem, that we need to sit with those persons and devise a scheme that would work for them. Somebody in the informal sector, for example, a hairdresser, a mechanic or whomever may not be able to say that they will pay "X" amount every quarter, but there are other means by which this can be done.

Madam President, what we are looking at administratively at the National Insurance Scheme is ensuring that we have the capacity to be able to sit with these persons and help them to come up with a way to a plan to pay their National Insurance contributions, so that we are working with the informal sector, including self-employed persons because all of these people sometimes realise too late that they need the help, that they need that pension from the National Insurance Scheme and of course they then rush to pay the minimum payment which does not really help the Fund, it does not help the Fund where there are people who tell themselves that they need to contribute "X" amount to be able to receive a pension, whereas there have been others who have been contributing for 30 and 40 years. Madam President, this is not just in Barbados this is a global challenge and so our National Insurance Scheme is a member of the International Social Security Association and there they tackle these problems that member countries around the globe face. This is one of the problems that has been highlighted and there are proposals and techniques that are being used in other

countries and so we are looking at those here in Barbados as well to see how we can do that.

Madam President, it is important because as everyone in here is aware, because of reduced employment opportunities in both the public and private sector, we have been encouraging persons to starting their own entrepreneurial endeavours and in so doing we have to ensure that we want them to be formal, i.e. paying their National Insurance Scheme contributions, taxes, VAT and everything that they are supposed to pay, so that we have to have the inspectorate and the administrative staff that can get out there and have a chat with these people and can make sure that they are doing that. Ma'am, that is one of the areas that we are putting focus on, that administrative and inspection support so that you can go out there and see what is happening.

We are also bringing legislation. Madam President, as far as the collections are concerned there is legislation in draft that will further empower inspectors of the National Insurance Department to be able to go to businesses. At present they can do that, but the information that they can glean from such a visit is quite limited, but to be able to empower them that they can get the relevant information so that, for example, if a company is in arrears they can have an honest discussion on what they can really afford to pay, so that that legislation is in draft because we need to have that capacity in order to boost the collections at the National Insurance Scheme.

Madam President, social security is something that we take for granted now because we have had it for 50 years and everybody see in their pay slip that this money was deducted, they expect that this money has been remitted, one can now go online and see if it has been remitted, persons can call and check to see if their employers have been putting the money there, but even though once you have been getting a pay slip which says that your employer has been deducting those payments, when you need the benefit the National Insurance Scheme will not let the worker suffer, it will not say to the worker that because they do not have the amount of money in that they cannot claim severance, instead would sort out that worker, then deal with the employer to be able to get what that employer owes the National Insurance Scheme.

Madam President, everybody expects when they are sick that they would get National Insurance contributions. Madam President, it is a bug-bearer of mine, I have been saying it a lot, I have been incurring the wrath of some folks as well but there are folks who even when not sick but for other reasons take time off and still expect to get money from the National Insurance Scheme. They do so as well and cost the National Insurance Scheme millions of dollars, but the thing with the social security is that because it is so much a part of our life now we take it for granted.

Ma'am, there are many countries in the world that do not have access to some or to all of the benefits that we do have, for some countries there is no social security, they are now talking about social security, they are now questioning whether or not it makes sense; some countries may have a pension scheme but they may not have sickness benefits; some countries may have sickness benefits but not unemployment benefits. We in Barbados are lucky, we have a slew of benefits that are the envy of many countries, including countries in the region. In fact, I have been to meetings in Latin America and when I mention what we have in our National Insurance Scheme they sit up and take notice, so that a lot of countries are now debating it.

Madam President, for example, at the National Insurance Department we have the Severance Payment Fund. As the name suggests, this takes care of severance matters. We have an Unemployment Fund, that deals with unemployment. We then have other benefits that come under the National Insurance Fund, so that there are three main funds - the National Insurance Fund, the Unemployment fund and the Severance Fund.

No.D11 (4)

There are three main funds: the National Insurance Fund, the Unemployment Fund and the Severance Fund. We also have a Sugar Workers' Provident Fund and that just deals with the sugar workers, we have a Catastrophe Fund for catastrophes, and we have the Retraining Fund into which \$10 million was injected for persons who are unemployed to be retrained up to a year in which they are unemployed. All these are benefits that we take for granted here in this National Insurance Fund. National Insurance deals with long-term benefits and short-term benefits, and you can also get grants. When folks do not qualify for a recurring benefit, they may get a one-off grant. The long-term would be things like pensions, invalidity, disablement and survivors' benefits. Those are long-term. Those are things that are not going away next week or next month. Then we do a lot of short-term things. We do sickness, maternity, employment injury and medical expenses. All of these things our National Insurance Fund is doing and, as I said, there are social security funds in the region and across the world which do not do all of this. We even do a funeral grant. We do a survivors' grant, as I said, where persons do not qualify for a recurring benefit. They can get a funeral grant, a maternity grant, a survivors' grant, or a disablement grant; all of these things happen at our National Insurance.

Madam President, we take it for granted but social security really contributes to the stability of the worker. It is part of a social protection floor. It contributes to the stability of the family and it contributes to social cohesion, because it gives that assurance that when, for whatever reason, I cannot earn, there is still something which I can

have to provide for my family and to provide for my basic needs. For example, there is the unemployment benefit which of course is not your full salary. It pays up to 60 per cent of what you earn, but still it is something with which you can meet your most basic needs and which keeps you going. It is responsible for social cohesion. In fact, a former President of the International Social Security Association, Karl Gustaf Scherman, actually said, "Social security contributes to the functioning of the market economies, to the prosperity of populations and to social cohesion. This will remain its role in the future." It is a big role; it is not just our lifeline where we contribute and we get back when we need. It really has resulted in social cohesion and prosperity of populations, and contributed to market economies. It is social security which keeps individuals, families and societies afloat when, for example, there are downturns in economies. We have seen here in Barbados in the 2008 crisis, for example, the response of the National Insurance Scheme. National Insurance for a period increased the duration of unemployment benefits. Senators would recall that the unemployment benefit that was usually 26 weeks at 60 per cent was extended, so that for an additional 14 weeks you got 40 per cent. It was 40 weeks in all; the usual 26 weeks at 60 per cent, and then we added on 14 weeks at 40 per cent, because we realised at the time that the prospects of getting re-employed were not as great as we would have liked so folks needed money for a longer period. Of course, after a while we realised that because of the breadth and the depth of the recession and the unemployment that accompanied it, we could not continue with that kind of support for very long, so we kept it going for, I think, up to 18 months to two years before we then had to revert to the 26 weeks which we had been giving workers for that time.

Madam President, in 1944 the International Labour Organisation (ILO) signed what is called the Philadelphia Declaration; the Declaration concerning the aims and purposes of the ILO. That was at the 26th Session of the ILO in Philadelphia on May 10, 1944. In that Declaration was included a commitment to the extension of social security measures to provide a basic income to all in need of such protection and comprehensive medical care. The ILO signed onto that as part of the Philadelphia Declaration in 1944. In 1948 social security was included as a fundamental right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Decent Work Agenda and the programme of the ILO which we are working with today also include as one of the four pillars of decent work social protection, under which social security is a part. The four pillars, of course, are: Employment, dialogue, rights at work and social protection. Social security is a major part of that. We had in 1944 the Philadelphia Declaration and in 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Democratic Labour Party in its Manifesto of 1961 included this commitment.

Asides.

Senator Dr. the Hon. E.R. BYER-SUCKOO: Madam President, my copy is missing something so I am going to find it, because it is important that I give you that quotation because that is where this Democratic Labour Party stood. Remember it was this Democratic Labour Party which, after it came to office in 1961, established the National Insurance Scheme six years later. This goes back then, as I said, to a commitment made in 1961. I have it here:

“The party is of the opinion that in addition to the obligation of the State to provide its citizens with maintenance in old age and also in case of sickness or loss of capacity to work, that the comparatively prosperous position of the colony, the high level of taxation, and generally burdensome cost of living (this was 1961) entitle the community to a comprehensive system of social security with a minimum delay.”

The party committed to that when it came to office in 1961, gained national Independence 1966, and in June of 1967 the National Insurance opened its doors. That is why, even as Barbados is 50 years now, our National Insurance Scheme is also celebrating its 50th anniversary as well. We came to office and we established that. In 1967 what they started was the National Insurance Fund, and beginning in June contributions were collected.

Asides.

Senator Dr. the Hon. E.R. BYER-SUCKOO: We came to office in 1961, and after Independence in 1966 there was a Report that was done and that allowed us in June of 1967 to introduce the National Insurance Scheme. This was done, as I mentioned, on the basis of a recommendation of the Stockman Report. During 1966 that Report was discussed and everything was put in place, so that by 1967 our National Insurance opened its doors. I am advised that they started -- this was a little bit before my time, a little bit -- and set up on the compound of the old General Hospital in Jemmotts Lane with a skeleton staff. As I said just now, they started with the National Insurance Fund and contributions were collected. Then, of course, once they had funds we were able then to start looking at the benefits. In 1967 was when it really started.

12.13 p.m.

Madam President, in 1971, self-employed persons became insurable for long-term. In 1973, severance was added to the package. In 1974, self-employed persons became insurable for short-term. In 1976, the Sugar Workers Provident Fund that I have just mentioned in passing was established. In 1982, unemployment was added to the package and then in 2010, the legislation for the Retraining Fund was passed. Madam, we have had all

these developments and these developments have responded to the need of the community at the time and so what I will do in a moment is mentioned where I see us taking National Insurance because National Insurance is not a static entity, it has to respond to the needs of the people and it has to respond to the needs of the society, so that we expect that we will be seeing other legislation in the same way that we are bringing the waiver here because this is necessary for our small businesses to clear their arrears and for the National Insurance Scheme to get the contributions coming in and as situation arise in the society, we will seek other amendments that would come to the National Insurance Scheme so that we can meet those needs.

Madam President, I have mentioned the Retraining Fund and in terms of our responding to the need. I have just mentioned the 40 weeks and about extending unemployment by 40 weeks. In the crises what we also did was ensure that we have increased the pensions above what was normal. Madam, from time to time there is a normal increase in pensions but at the very outset of the recession, we actually did see an increase in pensions as well again, to respond to the needs of the people.

Madam President, this Retraining Fund. I will not spend too long on it now because I have spoken on at length in the Chamber but the Retraining Fund that put \$10 million into an account that is managed by the National Insurance Scheme but administered also through the nib in the Ministry of Labour. The purpose of that Fund is that so that persons who are unemployed who are not finding reemployment can come say that with the skills they have they are not being successful in finding work, that maybe they need new skill, or maybe they need to enhance the skills they have or maybe they need to go in a completely new direction and learn something else, so this Fund was established and we are seeing gradually an uptake of the Fund. Madam, at first it was hard and people were just saying they wanted their unemployment money and they could not see why they had to sit in any classroom to get their unemployment money to give them what was theirs. Madam, as the recession went on and they realise they were not getting employed...

Asides.

Senator Dr. the Hon. E. BYER-SUCKOO: Madam, what I have noticed in Barbados is that nobody rushes to look for work as soon as they become unemployed. They know they have 26 weeks of unemployment and they intended to get all of it. Madam, something we are doing also as I talk about managing the National Insurance Scheme. It is against the law for a person who is receiving unemployment benefits to refuse work. If you refuse work and you are on employment benefits, your benefits are supposed to stop, it is written in the legislation.

Madam President, I have seen it myself. I have had persons come to me and told me that they have lost their job last week, so let them know if I hear about anything and me, in all my enthusiasm go searching but when I call them tomorrow and tell them that I have found something for them to start on Monday they tell me, no, no, you got me wrong, I did not mean tomorrow, I only just start unemployment and I still have six months to go so we will talk another time. Madam, under the law, that is wrong. If you have an employment opportunity and you refuse to take it up, your employment should stop and this is why I am strengthening the capacity at the Ministry of Labour because when folks go to the National Insurance Scheme, they get this card and they are supposed to go to the National Employment Bureau and tell them that they are unemployed and as what is available for them to do. If there is nothing that card is stamped and they go back and get a further two weeks of unemployment. If there is work, then there is no need for that card to be stamped and for them to continue the unemployment because they have something to do.

Madam President, because of capacity issues at the National Employment Bureau we have had a situation where unemployed persons have been coming in and just getting the card stamped and going back which is why they complain they have to leave all the way here in Culloden Road and go all the way up to Warrens just to get the card stamp because we have seen that is what has been happening, that they have been going all the way up there to get the card stamp but, Madam, that is not the purpose of the trip you know, Madam. They were not supposed to be going up there just to get the card stamp because I could stand up outside the door and stamp the card for them right there in Culloden Road, the purpose was not for them to get the card stamp. It is to go up there and see what is available, what work is there, to see what training opportunities are there, to get career counselling that you may never have had and you may not have been interested in before but now you are unemployed you might now be interested in having this conversation and that is what the trip up there was for but because of our own capacity issues, we have had a challenge with that. We have had support however from the EU with the Human Resource Development Strategy and now also with the strengthening human and social development project that we are doing in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Care, where we are strengthening the capacity in the National Employment Bureau. We are providing more of the materials so that they can get better counselling, so that more advice and information is available so that we strengthen the relationship with employers so that we know what is out there and what jobs are available and in doing that, we are rebranding the National Employment Bureau. We have started a process that very shortly would have not talking about the National Employment Bureau anymore but it is going to be the Barbados Employment and Career

Counselling Services (BECCS). We have started the process of the rebranding, we have actually the process so that is the name that we would be seeing shortly, the idea being that unemployed persons can come there and get the kind of advice they need, so they are not just rushing back down to Culloden Road to say that they have come for two more weeks of unemployment because we have to ensure that is one of the areas that is managed properly. You are not just taking the unemployment money because you are unemployed and you are going to expect 26 weeks of it. We are going to be doing our part so that there is better counselling, better advice and then you know that if you get that advice and you do not take up the opportunity that will stop. We are tightening up too on things like sick leave and we are trying to work now with the doctors to sensitise them as to rationalizing the prescribing of sick leave because there are other ways that persons can be allowed to mend. There are certain situations where a person can go back into work earlier than has been happening with appropriate advice. We are working with the doctors to ensure that this kind of approach is taken by the doctors in terms of prescribing sick leave.

Madam President, for example, it is not every back pain that has to be home all the time and not going to work. Madam, sometimes we are advised that being out there and getting back into the rhythm of work is actually good therapy as well. Madam, these are things we are hoping to tighten up on. It is all these little holes that would see us depleting the National Insurance. It is important that we manage carefully the monies at the National Insurance Scheme.

Madam President, one of the things I did not mention just now is that we actually decreased the requirements on garnishment. You may know, and I have mentioned it earlier that when a person is in arrears and you go to National Insurance Scheme they may make an arrangement so that they will garnish your salary, if you are a business and you have a contract, they will garnish that. They have been garnishing sometimes some very large amounts, sometimes as much as 100 per cent and that affected the cash flow of a business, so we have now been actually working with those businesses and self-employed persons so that they can work out a package that is more suitable to them. Madam, even as low as 25 per cent in some cases but you have to commit this is what you are going to do over the period.

Sequence 6

We do have some defaulters who default no matter what programme you put them on and then there is very little you can do for them in those circumstances but there are folks who come and sit with you eagerly and you work out a package and they can get their arrears sorted out. Something else we have done as well is ensuring that

persons do not have to have all their arrears cleared in order to get the necessary tax clearance and the Clearance Certificate in order to be able to bid on work because that is something else. You can see the catch 22. If you have arrears and because of the arrears you cannot get a Clearance Certificate and because you cannot get a Clearance Certificate you cannot bid on work and you are never going to be in a position. It is like debtors jail. If you put someone in debtors' jail they are never able to pay that debt so we have been looking at the requirements for a tax clearance certificate. Once you are current in the programme that you are on. If you have arrears but we have worked out a programme that you have to pay me \$10 a week and you are up-to-date in your \$10 a week we can do something. It does not mean you have to clear off everything but we are in a position that we can see that happening. The National Insurance is trying its best to be responsive to the needs of the Barbadian society right now.

Of course, I want to use this opportunity to highlight some of the challenges that we envisage going forward in social security and hence in the national insurance of Barbados because I feel the need to sensitise us to this because these are going to be discussions that we will have in the future. If I begin to sensitization here when you hear these discussions happening in the future you would not be saying, I wonder why they feel the need to do that. It must be because all the money run out which is the quickest thing everybody is there to say but there are challenges to social security. One of the things, for example, is our demographic profile and everybody knows that is an issue. The actuary highlighted that I think in the 13th Actuary Review it was highlighted, in fact, before that because remember we have a process of pension reform that has been ongoing now since 2004 where every four years the pensionable years increased by six months and that pension reform was due in part to the fact that Barbadians are living longer, we have an aging population and we are not growing as fast so we are not having as many younger people. It is not unique to Barbados. Again, it is something that we are seeing around the world, this phenomenon of an aging population, fewer people to put into the pool, more people taking out of the pool for longer periods because they are not contributing, they are getting pensions, they are getting whatever other benefits they need. That is a challenge and one that we have started to address with the pension reform but that will require, I am sure, further modification in the future because the situation is not getting any less intense. We are seeing and there has been talk about the fact that our growth rate and our birth rate is also down so we know what, in terms of the level of contributions, at the current rate, with fewer people, we are not going to see as many people. This aging population affects the social security needs, it affects our income and it affects our expenditure. In fact, they have shown that the cost of aging on countries, both developed and developing across the globe, as a percentage of GDP actually has been

increasing steadily over the years. In developed countries they have shown where in 2015, the cost of aging they have put at 16 per cent and they expect that to rise to 21 per cent by 2050.

MADAM PRESIDENT: The Honourable Member has five more minutes.

Senator Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO: Thank you, Madam President. I referred to the challenge to the challenge of the aging population because that is one that we in Barbados are aware that we have. We have the challenge to of providing, I mentioned it earlier, social security for self-employed persons and persons in the informal sector and I did mention that is going to be a part of our new strategic plan and vision as we try to capture more people in the net, not only for more contributions but as we try to capture for better coverage of persons when they actually need it for medical reasons, for pension reasons or whatever, we will try to ensure that we have better coverage for all of these people. Some of these things may require us bringing legislation. One of the things, for example, is what we do with disability as well. Right now if a person is deemed disabled through the process, the medical tribunals and so, they will get an amount and they are expected not to work or else they lose that amount and we are trying to include disabled persons and to include more disabled persons in our work places. With the passing antidiscrimination legislation and other legislation to ensure that workplaces do not discriminate against persons with disabilities. What that will mean is that we will have to adjust the National Insurance for persons with disability to be reintegrated into work even if it is not for a full 40 hours to allow for them to come back into the workplace and maybe to supplement what they are getting from National Insurance and not just losing it because sometimes we have seen persons with disabilities try to do something to supplement but what they are getting cannot replace what they are getting from National Insurance so if they lose that they are in trouble so we want to be able to be more responsive to the needs of disabled persons, especially as we looking at encouraging more companies to employ disable persons and we are encouraging persons to be integrated into the community as well so we have to make sure that our social security needs for them fits their particular need. Another big challenge is that of youth unemployment because not only are we an aging population but we have youth unemployment so the young people who should be working and contributing to the scheme are not being able to do this. This again is a challenge around the world. In fact, we are advised that 40 per cent of the world's youth are unemployed so that affects social security around the world. We are, in addition to encouraging our young people into new ventures and new enterprises, the National Insurance is also looking at how we can use our resources to help young people to get into the world of work. We have a number of proposals on

the table that we are looking at but it benefits the National Insurance to be able to invest in our young people because if we do not, our contribution income is going to dry up so we have to invest in our youth being able to work so that we have those contributions coming in. Another challenge that we know we will have in Barbados and we are having already is non-communicable diseases, the impact they are having on healthcare and then on social security, on the ability for persons in the productive age group to work, so we have people, 30, 40, 50 cannot work as well because of the non-communicable diseases but then also because of the benefits that they are requiring and maybe even leaving work early and so on.

Finally, they are those new shocks, those new risk that I think every ministry is concerned with as well as social security. Things like natural disasters, those have an impact on social security because as people are impacted they are going to turn to social security systems for support. Environmental phenomenon, we know that in country devastated by tsunamis the impact that it had on social security systems.

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Madam President, climate change is a reality and that is creating unexpected events which can have an impact on our social security system. There have also been economic challenges and I have outlined a couple of situations where the economic challenges that we faced from 2008 have had an impact on what we have had to do to respond but also an impact on, for example, our unemployment benefit. Madam President, because we had a challenge with the unemployment benefit, employers actually shifted a little bit of their contributions from the Unemployment Fund to the Severance Payment Fund so that there was no money in the Severance Payment Fund. Government also took \$10 million out of the Consolidated Fund and put into the Unemployment Fund so that we can prop up that Fund time for the time being, so that economic events also have an impact.

Madam President, I use the opportunity on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the National Insurance Scheme of Barbados not only to bring before you the legislation for the waiver that has come to end but we needed to bring the legislation here and to make folks aware of the extension of that waiver that they would be hearing more about shortly, but also to take this opportunity to look at what 50 years of social security has done for Barbados, how it has benefited us, how for us it has been a lifeline, how it has changed the way we think, how it has even changed the way we work, how it has allowed for that social inclusion and how it has allowed us to weather certain economic and other events. I have just mentioned the Catastrophe Fund where we have been able to use from that in the event of certain catastrophes as well,

so that the National Insurance Scheme has been a benefit to us.

Madam President, I take the opportunity also to highlight for the benefit of this Honourable Chamber and to all who are hearing the things that we are seeing down the line that we know that we will have to address in order to ensure that National Insurance Scheme continues to be there, that it continues to be a reliable lifeline for Barbadians for another 50 years and beyond. Ma'am, that is very important, if there is a threat that the National Insurance Scheme is going to dry up, then how are we going to convince young people that we need to be contribution to this Fund when there is rumour out there telling a 20 years old that by the time he or she becomes 67 that there would not be any money. Why would that 20-year-old want to invest in that? Madam President, we are doing all that we can to ensure that the National Insurance Fund remains viable. We have our challenges but because we know that the National Insurance Scheme is a lifeline for Barbadians, and for the most vulnerable of Barbadians as well, because we know that they need it, we try to make sure that we address the problem.

Madam President, there is one other matter that I did not mention and that is the future of work. As work changes, people are not going to be going into a workplace from 8.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. every day, but as the nature of work changes, because of Internet Technology, because of the digital era people will be able to work from home, some will be freelancing, not having set hours, some will be working for more than one employer, they are working for companies overseas, all of that affects their income, their contributions and the National Insurance Scheme, so that this is something else that maybe we are going to have to work with other countries as well to ensure, in the same way that we work with other countries to ensure that migrant workers who contribute to the scheme can also get from the scheme. We have relationships with Canada, CARICOM and other countries. The fact is that the future of work is changing because of Internet Technology, because of digital technology and it means that the structure of work is changing and so we are going to have to ensure that the processes, the administrative arrangement and the legislation take all of that into account. Madam President, I am sure that somebody may find a loophole where you will see that certain arrangements today are not accounted for in legislation that is 50 years, so that we are going to have to amend legislation to address some of these situations.

Ma'am, we have the vision, we are aware of the ideas, we are aware of the challenges which as I said, none of them is unique to Barbados, they are all global challenges and different countries have already tackled some of them to differing degrees and so we have a path that we will embark upon for another 50 years and beyond

and that will be rolled out in the new Strategic Plan and Vision for the National Insurance Department. Ma'am, suffice it to say that the National Insurance Fund is sound and that this waiver has been moderately successful and so we are bringing another amendment. Madam President, with that I now beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Ince, you have the Floor.

Senator J. INCE: Madam President, I rise to support the Second Reading of the National Insurance and Social Security (Amendment) Bill, 2017, which is significant when we look at the history of the National Insurance Scheme's 50 years of significance to the development of the Barbados landscape. I was afforded the opportunity, Madam President, to work at the National Insurance Scheme 15th December 1996 as Finance Manager, Investment Manager, and then I went on to be Chairman of the Board. I want to use this opportunity also to thank the staff and the Board of the National Insurance Scheme who worked along with me to achieve those objectives that Barbadians can be proud of a social security system to date that when we compare with other systems in the Caribbean we stand heads and shoulders above.

Madam President, the National Insurance Scheme is an environment... Madam President, I must say that when I first walked through the doors of the National Insurance Department that I realised that it was not an institution where you learn from a text book at university but that you have to be familiar with the legislation. Madam President, coming from a background of finance and investment, I quickly put away my other hat in the drawer of my desk, read the legislation and worked along with the staff of the National Insurance Department and would like to publicly thank the former Director William Layne; the present Director, Ian Carrington; former members of the Board, and Staff of the National Insurance Department who really guided me. I would also like to publicly thank Sir Roy Trotman, now a Member of this Senate for all the assistance he gave to me as a member of the staff of National Insurance Scheme.

Madam President, I would say this to the public of Barbados, it is important when you go to an institution that you do not walk into that institution with an attitude. Ma'am, too many times many of us because we have Masters degrees and are given the opportunity to head a critical area in an institution sometimes we go with an attitude that we know it all and it creates problems not only for you but for the Board and the staff, that is why I said that I put away my Wall Street hat, my Master's Degree and decided that I am going to work.

Madam President, further, I would want to thank persons, for example, like John Bushell, Joel Forde, Kathy in Collections Department, Beverley Greene, Mary Boucher, among others. Madam President, these are persons who I could approach, persons who taught me how to rate a benefit. I could back to the National Insurance Department tomorrow and sit at a desk... Madam President, I knew nothing about rating a benefit, I did now know what a "BU" was, I knew nothing about compliant, I knew nothing about applying rates for earnings, I knew nothing. Madam President, I must say that the staff of the National Insurance Department worked along with me, that is why I can say that I can walk through the doors of the National Insurance Department tomorrow and can continue along the same path. Madam President, that is critically important, that is why I think it was important for me to publicly thank these persons, including the Board of the National Insurance Scheme because I do not think that we could have achieved that objective had I gone in there as a self-centred individual who thought that I knew it all about National Insurance.

No.D11 (8)12.54 p.m.

It is critically important, and I think it was important for me, to publicly thank these persons and the Board, because I do not think that we could have achieved that objective if I had gone in there as a self-centred individual who thought that I knew it all about national insurance. You cannot learn national insurance in a university or from a textbook. Let me say that. It is not an institution which you can learn about in a textbook, dealing with people or from a university. It is within that environment. Madam President, 50 years is significant, and the National Insurance Scheme, as we said, started in 1967. When we look at legislation in Barbados, this National Insurance in my opinion is the greatest piece of legislation that ever happened to this country. There is no doubt that if we want to speak about social revolution or if we want to speak about changes in a country, this 1967 was a watershed when we speak of social and economic development in any country. That cannot be argued.

Madam President, the NIS is a provider, and what is critical is that the NIS is a provider of income protection. I do not think that we ever took the time out to realise that NIS is a provider; what we call an income protection provider. It is a social provider. It protects the vulnerable, it protects you in unforeseen circumstances, and that is why I said it is the greatest piece of legislation. Coming out of that legislation is the institution. When we look at the whole idea of the provision of pensions, we know there are times when you work and your savings at retirement may not be enough. That is why I encourage self-employed persons and employers that when you deduct the employee's contribution, please pay it over to the National Insurance. I know sometimes you must make decisions in

running a business, such as whether or not you have to pay a bill down the road or you have to keep the electricity on. You may make a decision that you are going to use the monies to pay the electricity or to keep the business going, but then you have difficulty in getting back those monies. When another month comes along, do you know what happens? The monies owed from last month are now added to this month and the next month, and then it creates a challenge. It is therefore critical and important that the self-employed persons who are listening to us in the Senate today understand that in 50 years of NIS you should pay your contribution, because one of these mornings you are going to get up and your knees are going to say to you, "You cannot go anymore." Your hands are going to say to you, "I cannot do it anymore." Your mind may be willing but the body may be weak, and despite how strong that mind is you are going to have an image and that image is going to look at you in the mirror, and the first thing he is going to say to you is, "You know you have not paid your National Insurance contributions." That is what it is going to say to you, and then you cannot create a national insurance world, as I call it, which you neglected for years; you cannot create it one day or two weeks. It is not going to happen. If your savings or your other assets are not enough, then you are going to have a challenge; so it is important that you pay attention to your National Insurance contributions.

Madam President, it is not only the provision of pensions but, as mentioned by Senator Suckoo, there is the whole idea of the benefits and protection. When you look at the unforeseen circumstances that do occur, I was recently saying to an individual from another territory that our National Insurance Scheme has a Catastrophe Fund for persons whose houses are destroyed by fire, flood or in circumstances that could dislocate a family. The person said to me, "Jepter, you are kidding me." I said, "Yes, we have a Catastrophe Fund which comes out of the NIS." He asked how it worked, and I said, "I cannot explain to you the principles of how it works, but what I can say to you is that it compensates individuals, especially those persons whose houses are destroyed by fire. We have a committee in place and once those criteria based on the inquiries are met, then that person is compensated, and materials of like kind and quality are replaced." That is a factor within the social development of Barbados that protects families. Not only does the National Insurance protect families, but it also minimises the possibility of mental stress. That is why I say that the National Insurance is the greatest piece of legislation that was ever passed in this country.

If you are unemployed, you can get a benefit; if you are deemed an invalid, you can get an invalidity benefit, or you can get what one terms a survivors' benefit or a disability benefit. None of us knows when we would be disabled; we do not. Simple things can cause us to be disabled. The fact is that you can get a disability benefit so

that when you reach pensionable age, that disability benefit is now converted to a pension. Let us say you become disabled through unforeseen circumstances at 39 or 40 years old, and your National Insurance is paid up and you have met all of the requirements and have made over 500 contributions which have been paid into the Fund. Now you are entitled to a disability benefit or an invalidity benefit until you reach a pensionable age. You cannot work anymore, so you are now protected. That is what I call a critical safety net. Imagine what would have happened to you and your family if you were the bread winner and something like that occurred, and there was nothing else, no-one to turn to and little savings. You have the safety net called the National Insurance, which is now able to protect your family, minimise the whole thing of mental stress, minimise the dislocation, and you are still able to have that life within a comfort zone. It may not be the comfort zone which you had when you were working 40 hours or when you were paid a full salary, but the fact is that it keeps the family together. Madam President, those are the important things of the NIS, and that is why it is critically important. We cannot stop repeating it: We have to go out there on the highways and in the hedges and say to persons, "Please pay your National Insurance contributions." We must continue.

As I said, it is one of the biggest providers of income protection. When we look at the capital development of Barbados, there is the National Insurance Fund. When we look at development in housing, when we look at the development in our health system and education system, we see the fingerprints of the NIS and the social security scheme. When we look at our road infrastructure, and when we look at the whole idea of minimising poverty, I do not think that many of us realise that the National Insurance is a major contributor to literally minimising poverty among Barbadians because as I have said if not for the National Insurance Scheme and the monies paid, tell me what would be the level of poverty in Barbados because if you look at the statistics from 1967, for example, our sickness benefits, when we look at what was paid out as far as our sickness benefits are concerned, Madam President, in 1967, we had 373 short-term claims and by 2016, short-term claims received during the year \$63 391. S: D11 (9) 12.52 p.m.

We moved from \$3 000 and that is why I say that the National Insurance Scheme clearly demonstrate how we have minimize and protect the families, protect people and protect the environment, what I call the social dislocation. Madam, if your society starts to break down, then you have problem and that is why I always say that it is critical that Barbados is built on labour. Madam, many of us like to use the idea about capital but I always have a formula, it is not an accounting formula but I always say that capital plus labour equals success. We talk about profit but I talk about success in a country and that is why we must have cordial relationships between capital and labour because if labour sees capital as a monster with a cutlass sharpened on both

sides, or if capital sees labour as a monster then you are going to have what you call disruption in society, so it is critical.

Madam President, when you look at the short term claims, these are persons who get injured on the job and sometimes during rainy season you have dengue fever and all these things happens. Madam, and when we look sickness benefits paid, in 1967 sickness benefits was only \$48 000 minimum and we call that low but by 2016, the National Insurance Scheme was paying sickness benefits to the tune of \$24.2 million. Madam, when we look at the significance of the National Insurance Scheme 50 years how it has protected Barbados, how this National Insurance Scheme has created the political stability and, Madam, this is nothing to do with political Parties. It is call the National Insurance Scheme because it is a national issue and it is a national institution owned by both political Parties and all Barbadians. It is owned by all of us, so it is not a Democratic Labour Party institution or a Barbados Labour Party institution, it is owned by Barbadians and by all of us who have worked hard. I have always said that Barbados was built on hard work and we will continue to build Barbados on hard work, honesty and debt. We were honest in our debt and that is why we have the Barbados we have today because we built Barbados on hard work and honesty and borrowed money.

Madam President, from \$49 000 to \$637.8 million. Madam, can you imagine moving from \$49 000 to \$637.8 million by 2016. We have to ask ourselves this question because sometimes some people are puzzled. How could a country of 166 square miles approximately 290 000 or 300 000 people maximum could afford to pay over a 50 year period \$637 million in sickness benefits. This has nothing to do with other expenses that the Fund would have incurred. Let us look at the importance of the Fund. Madam, that is why I say that when we speak of the social safety net, when we speak of capital development, when we speak of the division of pension... Madam, the Fund would have had its challenges over the years. The numbers would tell you that there were changes in the demographics because you cannot move from \$48 000 to \$24.2 million or from \$49 000 to \$637 million with the same amount of people without any changes in the demographics but we have a number of things happening in the society. Increase in employment injuries, increase in non-communicable diseases (NCDs), HIV/AIDS, varying things that would have impacted on the scheme and, Madam President, as a result of that, the Government instituted changes for the betterment and for the long-term financial viability of the National Insurance Scheme.

Madam President, from time to time you would hear criticism in the areas that the National Insurance Scheme needs to diversify its portfolio and that there is too much Government debt but I ask the question: The National

Insurance Scheme is a fiscal agent of Government and the Central Bank of Barbados is a fiscal agent of Government. If the two institutions do not carry Government debt, then who will carry it? Madam, that is the question: Who is going to carry Government's debt? If we are going to build a society where we are going to provide critical services and where we are going to continue to protect the elderly, where you are going to continue to have capital infrastructure where persons can move from one point to the other. If we are going to continue to provide an educational system that is the envy of countries regionally and internationally, if we are going to provide a health care service at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital despite the challenges because no institution is perfect, if we are going to continue to provide these services, then who is going to carry the burden, who is going to carry the debt.

Madam President, in a country like Barbados when we look at our financial infrastructure or the financial sector, we have commercial banks but I have said before that the commercial banks in Barbados do not have that capacity to carry the debt of Government. Yes, from time to time we would see banking institutions, credit unions and other institutions take part in the issue of treasury bills and treasury notes but when we are speaking about Government debt and using debt for our capital development, for our long-term viability, for economic growth many of the financial institutions cannot carry that burden. I call it the burden of debt as far as developing Barbados is concerned, then who carries that burden? It is the Government. We cannot compare ourselves with the United States of America.

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Our financial markets do not allow that. Madam President, so when I hear about the criticisms of the Government debt within the NIS and when you look at the portfolio, the strategy of portfolios and asset management, is that most of the time you rebalance the portfolio. If your portfolio is over-weighted and when you look at the NIS portfolio and speaking as a former investment manager of the fund, there are times when your portfolio is going to be over-weighted and you need to rebalance but if you look at the critical nature of Government, the importance of Government to a country, the importance of Government to people then, as I said before, if not the institutions, who?

Within the United States of America, oftentimes we hear about the United States of America is going to give \$2 billion to a country and we ask ourselves the question: but how could the United States of America (USA) have so much debt and yet can give \$2 billion or \$300 million to a country?

MADAM PRESIDENT: The Honourable Member has five more minutes.

Senator J. INCE: Yes, Ma'am. It is important to note, Madam President, other countries purchase United States debt we do not have that luxury in Barbados and that is why I say, if it is not the NIS or the Central Bank of Barbados then who? I am going to give you a quick example. The United States issued Treasury Bills, Taiwan \$181.2 billion so when they issued it they said listen, this is what we want to buy from you. Japan \$1 111 300 000 000. Can you imagine, Madam President, if a Government would say to the Minister of Finance, what is your wages bill for the year and the Minister of Finance say to the Government of Hong Kong or Luxemburg, my wages bill for the entire year is \$953 000 000 and the Government of Luxemburg or Japan says listen we want you to issue \$950 000 000 in Treasury Bills, we are going to take them. Madam President, problem solved but these are the countries that buy US treasuries. The United Kingdom and this is in May, \$234.4 billion they took on. What I am saying is that we in Barbados do not have that luxury and sometimes when I hear the criticism what would happen is that persons would use the Actuarial Reviews but we must understand, Madam President, that those reviews are based on three assumptions. You have the best assumption principle, you also have the pessimistic principle and you also have the person who is optimistic. That is one of principles on which you review, the actions of the fund but for political purposes, persons would go and look at the pessimistic principle that would say unemployment is going to continue to rise over the next years, that the fund is not going to perform, all of that is pessimistic view but we do not read the entire document or the entire report. When you go back to the reports, you would see Madam President, that the reserves of the National Insurance -- and I want to say to Barbadians -- I have not seen the current Actuary Report but I can say from older reports that based on what I have read is that the National Insurance reserves are sound. We have enough reserves, Madam President, that if Barbados is at a standstill, if the great Jehovah says, listen I am going to allow Barbados to standstill for the next 24 hours we have enough reserves that can meet all of the National Insurance benefits for the next 40 years. I am confident that the next Actuary Report, Madam President, is going to highlight -- I do not have to see it but based on the trend from previous reports -- that our reserves are sound so I want us to dismiss this whole idea. I have been hearing it too often and it is coming from people who should know better. People meet me in the streets, Jepter man tell us the truth. We hear the National Insurance Funds going bankrupt. In think we should tell the Minister to remove that principle call the pessimistic principle, do not put it in the report. I think we should take out those views because people take it out and if you repeat it too often the country would start to believe it but remember those are views based on projections and you have to use them. You use them in finance and you use them in asset management, but what I am saying is that the National Insurance is sound

and I want to let Barbadians know we are in a position to pay benefits.

Madam President, as I close as I said, one of my disappointments is the National Insurance back then had the opportunity, and I am glad that Sir Roy is here, because I am going to speak about it and Sir Roy could correct me. There is a property on the west coast called Treasure Beach and at that time Treasure Beach owed National Insurance thousands of dollars in severance funds as well as the employment contributions and Sir Roy made a submission to the Board and this is where we had the opportunity to empower employees that it is let us look at the possibility of purchasing that property. The Board on principle, Madam President, and I still think about it today after all these years, we accepted the proposal and elements within Barbados made sure that it never happened and the National Insurance Board agreed in principle and it was not a big set of money to buy the entire place out because the BWU at the time under Sir Roy's leadership, at that time he was young, he was handsome and militant, he is still handsome today.

Asides.

Senator J. INCE: He was militant and he made a proposal and I agreed with it because I was the Investment Manager, Sir Henry Forde was the Chairman of the Board, the Board agreed with it saying that we should purchase the Treasure Beach and empower the employees, put systems in place. We had quality management persons so Madam President, when I hear persons talking about this Government and the initiatives of this Government I smile. There were persons who made sure that it never saw the light of day that is why I said I am saying that in the presence of Senator Sir Roy Trotman.

Madam President, let me say to Barbadians, the National Insurance Fund is doing well, it is managed well, the Government has the interest of that Fund and the people of Barbados at heart and I would say, God bless National Insurance, 50 years and beyond.

SUSPENSION

Senator M. P. O. MCCLEAN: Madam President, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended for lunch until 2.30 p.m.

The question that the Senate do no suspend until 2.30 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and MADAM PRESIDENT suspended the Sitting accordingly.

Senate D 11 Seq 11 1.11 p.m.

RESUMPTION

MADAM PRESIDENT: Good afternoon, Honourable Members, this Sitting is resumed. Senator Trotman, you have the Floor.

Senator Sir ROY TROTMAN: Madam President, I rise to give support to the Bill that is before this Honourable Chamber and I would wish to take the opportunity that is presented to make some observations which are of some concern to me or which are of some interest to me and I believe of some interest to those who are likeminded. I would wish, first of all, to thank the Minister of Labour, Social Security and Human Resource Development who led in introducing the Bill before this Honourable Chamber, in the Honourable Member's effort to present to this Honourable Chamber, I cannot go outside of that because the discussions are supposed to relate to what happens in the Honourable Chamber, for the Honourable Member's effort in presenting to this Honourable Chamber some of the challenges which still face the relationship in the marketplace, in the world of work and which will have the effect of making the institution of work either more stronger or even more burdensome. The Honourable Member very correctly started with the Declaration of Philadelphia which I will remain very mindful of since it was my first birthday present coming the day after 9th May, 1944, so that there can be no question that somewhere, somehow the Cosmos decided to do its thing and that I have been involved in the matter of labour over these many years, in the good times, as well as in the bad times, as well as in the challenging times and when the challenging times come then I have to take the responsibility to see how I can help to make sure that out of the bad there comes a little bit of good.

Madam President, I am pleased that the Honourable Member has started with the Declaration of Philadelphia and spent a significant amount of time on treating to the subject of social security and the wellbeing of the working-class people and relating that to the country Barbados. I think it is important in that regard therefore in that we go with the Honourable Member to her question of looking at the pillars which address the subject of decent work and to try to position those and see how over the years we in Barbados have tried to measure up, where we have failed to measure up, what we need to do in an effort to measure up, and how at the end of the day we can see ourselves being responsible for our own destiny and masters or mistresses of our own fate.

Madam President, the Honourable Member spoke to the question of employment creation, though the Honourable Member did not use that language because the Honourable Member was speaking to the broader principle, a very important subject for us in Barbados as anyone would see and I will come back to it in a minute. The Honourable Member spoke to the subject of setting of

standards which is the lifeblood of the work of the International Labour Organisation, the question of social security which would include the subject that we are addressing today and the Bill that is before this Honourable Chamber, and to another important element which Barbados is particularly concerned with at this moment in our history and that is the matter of social dialogue.

Madam President, if I may be permitted a little time to touch on each of those, I would want to be able to speak from my perspective and from the perspective of the organisation that I have been associated with for many of the years that the Minister spoke that we are now using to celebrate the history of the National Insurance Scheme and to speak from that position on the importance of employment creation. Ma'am, however much we might want to deal in other issues that there may be that relate to the marketplace, it is critical, it is important, especially in times like these with a high level of telecommunications and technology and the explosions in those areas, for us constantly to be looking at areas through which we may be able to commit to and to assist in the creation of new employment opportunities.

Madam President, both the Minister and Senator Ince

spoke with some concern regarding the problems which we are likely to have from having too many people among the ranks of the unemployed. I would think, Madam President, that everybody in this room - and if we could speak for them, many outside of this room - would be as concerned as we are with the reality that even though we are building a better community, and that even though we are trying to make sure that we position Barbados to be a First World Country, that that is being done against the challenge that the new jobs which there will be are going to be jobs which will demand less persons and even in the old jobs that we have, in the old established employment agencies that exist that fewer people are going to be called upon to do the work that our brothers, sister, uncles and aunts were doing, so that we have the problem of there being a shortage at the moment of labour and a future where labour is going to be very much something that is going to be in short supply, and so we have to look to the International Labour Organisation and to the standards that are set by agencies like the International Labour Organisation for ways through which we may be able to bring together likeminded persons who are interested in making this country a better place and who will be, as we are, willing to do whatever is possible to recognise that we have to make provision for persons to be engaged.

Madam President, while the communities can do well with robots, with mechanization...I am not saying that we should allow ourselves to fall behind the completion, I am merely saying that we have to bear in mind that our

country is going to need to be looking and bringing heads together to examine this major question of employment.

Madam President, in the matter of standard setting, again that is one of the pillars on which we build decent work and I would wish that in examining our concern for the social security work that the Government is endeavouring to do for the working-class of the country, that we would not - in examining our concern for the social security work which the Government is endeavouring to do for the working class of the country -- recognise that the setting of standards cannot be a subject which the Barbados Government, which the Barbados representative of employers at the ILO or which the Barbados representative of workers at the ILO can allow to be a subject that is kicked around by the first countries of the world which may have seen the ILO perform what they wanted, and which may at this stage no longer want the ILO to perform those roles, but which are concerned with new approaches to the treatment of labour.

3.01 p.m.

These would be new approaches which, in my view and in the view of my organisations, may have the effect of bringing workers and the working class of countries like ours back to a position that approximates to slavery. We have to be very concerned about what we do from our perspective because there are new kinds of thought, philosophies and catch-phrases that are driven towards having an arrangement where a person who goes to work will not be a human being but will be a machine in human form and will answer the drive for profit by an employer who is not concerned by the humanity in his workforce, but only by the dollars which that workforce will provide. We have to be careful of that, and one of the ways we might do so is by addressing the institution of social dialogue.

The Minister raised that issue of social dialogue. It is a very important matter because it is intended to bring the Government, the private sector, the employers and the trade union movement as the three factors involved in the real economy. I do not speak to finance but I speak to the world of work. I speak to the persons involved in the real economy to make sure that the world of work, which produces real wealth, is an economy which works for the advancement of all people, including those who have worked and cannot work any longer and those who are looking for work and cannot at this moment find it. There has to be a willingness for dialogue to take place, and every effort on the part of all of us to have that dialogue take place must be taken at every occasion possible. All of those of us who are in a position to assist in creating a climate for that dialogue must play our part in ensuring that that dialogue takes place.

Finally, there is the matter of social security which brings us back to the essential question of the National Insurance Bill that is before the House and the question of how we can have a social platform, a minimal standards platform and a platform below which no-one will be allowed in our beloved country Barbados to fall through the cracks. In that discussion which took place earlier, an interesting comment was made by Senator Ince as well, who spoke to his now very famous equation that capital plus labour equals success. While I would not seek to guild the lily, I merely would wish to suggest that there is therefore the need to explore what it is that constitutes the cement or the glue to complete the equation that Senator Ince is speaking about. Capital by itself and labour by itself will not produce success unless we have other ingredients, and I argue that Government has to be an important element within that equation, and that beyond that there are other essential elements and constituent parts which we have got to be able to look at and look at together if in fact we are going truly to build the pillars that exist or the pillars that must exist for decent work.

Madam President, having set that as a background against which I wish to support this piece of legislation, I would wish to raise a question of concern. Madam President, I have been advised that the Barbados Revenue Authority is currently advising parents of children that where they may have thought that they could follow the maternity leave provisions and the provisions which we have in other elements of our regulations to get support for three or, in some cases I suppose, more than three children, now there is a new instruction which is advising parents that they may be able only to get support for two children. Two. Madam President, I am saying that is the instruction there is, and surely there may be an error, and I would love to be told it is an error, but people have got correspondence to that effect. I am wondering if the legislation limits a person to three children before you can say, "I am not going to give you maternity leave." If provisions have been made generally for there to be an arrangement that allows for benefits to children, if we recognise the seriousness and the voice of Minister Jones who is calling on us to take note of the demographic crisis which there is in Barbados -- a crisis which our own National Insurance office has been speaking about now for years where by 2030 we are not going to have enough working people to be able to support the pensions of those who will be receiving pensions -- and if we recognise that crisis is one where very shortly we are going to have a problem of a country without people, then clearly we must be able to recognise that negative growth in our population cannot be coupled with the information regarding a reduction in that provision for children's benefits. Madam President, I would like to think that there is an error, but if correspondence goes out to that effect, then I would have to say that I would wish the whole country at the same time to be advised that that was an error and that persons will not have that problem.

Madam President, you may imagine how that is borne and to what proportions it will be borne at this time in our existence. I do not wish to make a political speech but I say only that this would not be a time when we would want to have anybody understanding the level of benefits a parent, getting ready for the September school term, will be saddled with compared with the standard arrangements. If there is a problem in people's understandings of the messages which they are receiving, then it would be useful because we cannot be talking about the benefits in our National Insurance system, and we cannot be talking about providing for benefits and for easement in the condition of some kinds of people while at the same time we would be talking about tightening impositions on other kinds of people.

2.59 p.m.

Madam President, the Minister of Labour in her introduction of the Bill spoke at great length towards our concern for elements within the framework of decent work and in trying to address some of the abuses which may take place in that area. She made reference to the need there is for the dialoguers, the persons involved in social dialogue because somebody may challenge me on the use of the term "dialoguers", persons involved in social dialogue to look again at the question of sick leave provisions. I thought that was a useful comment being made at the time by the Minister. I do not see it as something which we should be afraid of but I see it as something which we should be careful of. I am aware that when I was in a position of responsibility particularly for the hotel industry that between the period of 2008 and 2012, as I was winding down, I was endeavouring to get the employers of the hotel industry and indeed other employers to sit with the trade union movement and to discuss means through which persons who are themselves sick, or persons whose children are sick where that sickness causes the parent to be absent, would develop a new approach to the work institution and the relationship to their employer where they could have a more flexible arrangement out of which they would give back the employer the employer's time because in many instances we were satisfied that they were not themselves sick but that they had to say they were sick because if they said they were staying away from work because my child is sick the employer might have fired them because the provisions are made up in that way and in fact, some employers do not have that kind of human sympathy so they had to tell a lie and say they were sick. We were quite ready to enter into serious meaningful dialogue because the labour movement contrary to the expectation of some is serious about the need there is for higher levels of productivity, for greater degrees of efficiency, for work interaction and cooperation that would Barbados from one level of competency to superior and improved level of competency and that would see us moving forward in the level of performance at the work

place and hence the level of general improvement in this society. Madam, that cannot be gainsaid even though sometimes the language in an exchange at a bargaining table might suggest otherwise.

The important thing is that it needs to be recognised that is a subject that we all have to commit to but we have to commit to it in circumstances where we realise that though it may not now be happening in Barbados to the same level, or to the same degree, there is an employer thrust, an employer push that says that a worker should be paid only for the number of actual physical hours of work. We are accustomed to going to work at seven o'clock in the morning and the employers would say while that is so, I do not want you at seven o'clock tomorrow, tomorrow you come at ten o'clock and the next day come at one o'clock and if I have work that only takes you only until two hours after, I will pay you only for those hours because the institution of work as we used to know it is gathering support from a number of people all over the world including here in Barbados where people are ready to say let us have zero hours contract and let us pay a person only for the number of physical hours that person puts into the place.

Madam President, mind you, the person may not be able to leave the workplace because the person would not necessarily be able to get home using whatever system of transport there is or the person having gone home may not be able to do anything effectively, so the person is committed to the workplace maybe for 12 hours but then by this new arrangement may become entitled only to perhaps two hours or three hours of payment.

Madam, we have to be careful while we going around trying to take the cliques which they may be in the air and while we endeavour to be able to hold hands with fellow employers, while we endeavour to be able to track friendliness and business that we may have encouraged we have to be careful not to be reducing the standards, and the qualities our people.

Madam President, expectations will vary from time to time and from place to place and those will always be a subject for discussion but that discussion should be within the realms of the discussion on decent work and what decent work is intended to do and what decent work is intended to achieve because we cannot, as a nation, be working as hard as I believe everybody wants to work to building a better community if in building that better community they are classifying the community. Madam, by that word classifying, I do not mean segmenting into groups of those who wear white shirts and those who wear blue shirts and divided into classes, the classes of those who are better off and the class of those who are not so well off.

Madam President, I continue. We have to guard against those kinds of evils which they may be around the corner and which if we are not careful are likely to overwhelm us and to overcome us.

Madam President, I wish though to say that it is a good thing, the Minister raised it and I am very happy to hear it. It is a good thing that the Government and the Ministry are looking again at those persons with disabilities who may have those disabilities that prevented them from taking their old jobs but who may be able to take on new work. Madam, I attempted that in some areas when I was running an organisation and I know that I ran afoul with the powers that be because I was trying to do a little bit of patch of work for those people who could not work but who could not live on the National Insurance payments they had and I am pleased that now a number of people will be able to assist persons like that. Our experience says it is a great thing because it not only provides money but it provides a basis for living, a basis for hoping, a basis for believing and belonging and I think it is important in those circumstances that we move with alacrity to deal with that.

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Two more concerns and then I will be through.

I have a concern that although we see the importance of National Insurance at the same time we have a number of intelligent persons, and I must call them intelligent, who seek to show just how smart they are by avoiding paying their contributions to the National Insurance Scheme. It may be a form of smartness. The problem though is that sometimes we can get overly smart, too smart for ourselves and we have to guard against so we have to speak to people about having them avoid a situation where we create a new class of old age indigents because if those persons who do not make contributions then when they get to 67 they will not have a basis for the payment of any benefit and then they will be walking with begging bowls and we do not have any old age pensioners arrangements anymore and even if we did, they would not morally be in positions where they could hope to get such an arrangements so I think that unless we have our own source of private pensions, and I do not think if you get so smart, that we do not want to contribute to National Insurance that we would be smart enough to get private insurance. Those persons run the risk of being liabilities to their own families or to the country as a whole. The final thing I wish to say in supporting this is that we have to find a way, Madam President, in the Government to ensure that where workers are defaulting as in fact, employers defaulted in their payment of National Insurance and that is what gave rise to this particular piece of legislation where employers are defaulting in their payments of their own contributions that there has to be some means through which the workers contributions are registered and are put against their names

in benefits so that those workers where the employer fall down do not find themselves in situations as has happened where they are unable to qualify for benefits under National Insurance not because the money was not taken from their wage, but because the employer did not register, did not pay and did not record and the workers are made to suffer twice. I think it is important that we go back to an arrangement where it could be clearly established that persons are, in fact, contributing and where, if the employer fails, then the NIS itself assumes the responsibility for that persons benefits as though the records clearly so indicated. Let us move in that direction as urgently as we can because if we are doing whatever we can to help the employer by this Bill, we have to move as quickly and as efficiently to help the worker, who is a contributor, who will be the beneficiary.

I am obliged.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Hunte, you have the Floor.

Senator R. A. HUNTE: Thank you very much, Madam President. I rise to give my support to the Bill before us and that is to the National Insurance and Social Security (Amendment Bill) 2017. Madam President, I wish to upfront congratulate the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) Administration on one hand and compliment them on the other for the foresight and the initiative in having this piece of legislation, this work of art, as my colleague calls it, one of the most, if not the most progressive piece of legislation ever established on the statute books in Barbados and that is the National Insurance Fund.

Madam President, the history, so to speak has already been established and expressed as far as the legislation is concerned but what is interesting, I want to associate with all of what is happening around now, in respect of the labour movement, I want to give credit to a former labour leader in the name of the late Sir Frank Walcott who although this Fund was not an initiation of this, he gave tremendous support to the establishment of this National Insurance Scheme. You can say that he embraced it because fortunately even though the Fund came into being, that is the collection of dues and after all the other things were settled on June 05, 1967 he was a Member of Parliament in 1966 when the first part of the Act was passed in the House of Assembly in July of 1966. I have great regard and respect for the late Frank Walcott because he lost his seat in the General Election as an independent, the last of them, on November 03, 1966 and he would have contributed as a Member of Parliament at that time to this piece of legislation now known as the National Insurance Fund.

Madam President, we already heard the several benefits, the funds within the scheme, the several benefits

that workers, even in some cases shirkers, have been able to benefit from this scheme, the National Insurance Scheme. The changes and there will continue to be changes but let me say before I even get into the meat of my conversation. This National Insurance Fund is going to outlive all of us, not a lot of us, all of us. Do you know why I say that? I say that because it is backed by the Government of Barbados and there will always be a Government no matter who forms it and I say that based on a lot of the organisations, most of them insurance and fund organisations that have gone belly up and those who had money in those organisations had expected the Government as the last resort to, in raw Bajan terms, give them back their moneys. If people can expect the Government of Barbados -- mind you I say the Government, I do not talk parties when I am talking about matters pertaining to the State, not all matters, the Government -- to give them back their moneys, Trade Confirmers, The First Federation, Confederation Life/Manufacturers Life, Trade Confirmers Limited, all of those were entities in Barbados and in terms of banks we had a bank about here that had some Pakistani connections called The Commerce Bank somewhere there on Board Street that went belly up.

Senate D 11 Seq 16 3.18 p.m.

I think they had one about here called the Bank of Chicago, but all of that became part of the Barbados National Bank which today as Barbadians we cannot claim anymore, that has been outsourced, so to speak, to people other than Barbadians, apart from those employed in those operations. It is a very unfortunate thing and I tie that all into discussing this National Insurance and Social Security Amendment because National Insurance Scheme funds have gone outside -- well, not so much these days outside of Barbados because you are not getting too much from that now, unless of course you can buy large Bonds, Treasury Bills and so on like the Chinese and Japanese you heard that they can do, but because National Insurance Funds are invested into other operations, we can speak about some of those other operations pertaining to what is happening in this country with respect of currently what is happening now.

Madam President, unlike the Barbados National Bank which has been sold off, unlike the Insurance Corporation of Barbados that has gone to persons other than Barbadians, we now retain as a Fund and as an established thing to do, backed by law in Barbados and that is the National Insurance Scheme and it is going to live forever more and has to be kept a part as Government. There are lots of private organisations in this country and probably some that are not here that would like to be controlling the National Insurance Scheme, let us make no mistake about that, so that when you have situations now with the CLICOs and such organisations that now like a lizard bellied-up, that is why the National Insurance

Scheme must be kept and preserved by the Government and people of Barbados. There is no way that the National Insurance Scheme is going to die, as long as it is kept in the hands and controlled by the Government of Barbados, whoever that Administration is now or in the future, it will survive.

Madam President, that is why I made the comparison that if Government is expected to invest National Insurance Funds into private entities that have gone bankrupted, if it came to that, then the taxpayers out of the Consolidated Fund shall and must contribute if it ever comes to that, whether in my lifetime or anybody else in here lifetime, it has to contribute to the Fund because that is what we own right now. It is mandatory and as long as you work, whether privately or within any institution, you must or should pay.

Madam President, I do agree with Senator Trotman that we need to look seriously at both the employee's contributions and the employer's contributions and if the employers are deducting those funds from employees, which when those employees receive their pay slips they do see those National Insurance Scheme deductions but that those deductions are not paid into the National Insurance Scheme even though the National Insurance Scheme -- I will use the word -- has a responsibility to make sure that those persons get their severance -- and we are dealing particularly with severance certainly not sickness benefits -- when they become severed from a job, that the National Insurance Scheme makes you right once all the necessary paper work is presented and the National Insurance Scheme in turn hopes to get it back at some time later on from those defaulters, known in some cases as employers.

Madam President, the law states that if you are working for at least \$21 per week you should make a contribution. Ma'am, nobody really works for that but there must be a benchmark, if you working for at least \$21 per week you should make a National Insurance Scheme contribution, so you now have your life in your own hands whereby you make the deductions and you also make the arrangements to pay that benefit. Ma'am, all of us who do community work and so on know that people come to us, scrambling now, some of whom were good carpenters who had made a lot of money but who cannot now climb over anybody's roofs; some of them were good masons who made a lot of money but who now can no longer jump over anybody's walls, but they are now struggling but who now take out all their venom on the National Insurance Fund and on the Government of the day.

Madam President, mostly for some reason I find that the Democratic Labour Party, for all of these things that they have established to the benefit of the people, comes up with more licks than anybody else and that needs to be

spoken about, sometimes I am very concerned. Madam President, I have never heard it myself but the record is that the late Sir Grantley Adams has said that Barbadians have short memories and in a lot of cases I agree, I see it every day, we tend to forget a lot of the good things that were done for us after all the achievements but we find the Government of the day and in those cases it is the Democratic Labour Party, and I have to say that, that always tends to have to hold onto the end of the stick that is not very clean. Ma'am, you can call it ingratitude, you can call it whatever you choose to but it is a fact of life.

Madam President, I have said here already that Barbados' main resource is its people and that even though we will always have a population people die every day, but you will always have a population, even though it is decreasing now and I do think that we need to take that very seriously. I have said in here already and will also say it again, it may not be in my lifetime but while in another 50 or 60 years the black population of this country is going to be heading for the minority, so that the call to try and increase up our birth rate is not an idle call, it cannot be an excuse... Ma'am, nobody is telling you to get 10 or 15 children, I had two children who have gone to the Great Beyond who had 36 children between the two of them.

No.D11 (17)3.31 p.m.

Of course, they have gone to the Great Beyond now but they left a lot of sisters and brothers and cousins around this place. I saw a group of them at Pan Pun De Sand, and they nearly filled up the whole beach. We do not expect that in a day like today, but at least we need to be productive. I have looked at some countries which had black populations, but today they are almost in the minority, including the Fiji Islands, the Marshall Islands and Madagascar. I have looked at a lot of them and have seen what they were before and what their populations are now; because whenever a certain ethnic group moves in, they multiply like sandflies. Is that their fault? Maybe not, but I am saying that if our young people continue -- I do not want to say what I see they seem to be getting into -- with the behaviour and the lifestyle which they are having now, when the day comes that they become old, childless and otherwise, they are going to find themselves in serious trouble. I am not even talking of their offspring because if there are none, there are none. It is not a good thing for this country. We have seen certain things already. A lot of what is being sold in this country including land and old family homes, check out who are buying them, and buying them cash. There are Belmont Roads and the Bellevilles. Belleville has gone now from Caucasian to East Indian. Look all around Kensington Oval. Can you blame them? No, do not blame them at all. That is their position; that is why where they have come from there is one billion of them. One billion, and if you have to count those who are outside of that main country, you will see exactly where we

are heading as a small country. We behave and we feel in this country as if we do not want to contribute and we do not want to pay, and that the Government must provide everything. I keep saying that because it is something that concerns me in this country; that we want everything free. That is why -- some people speak openly and Bajans like to talk -- when a particular organisation is in office, they find themselves with more money, but when we get into office we understand why they say so because we have to pay back all the debt. They are working for a salary but they feel they should have all this extra money. I do not have to tell you how they think they are getting it.

Madam President, I keep saying I know what this country was before 1961. I know what it was like, and I saw the development, and the first five years of the Democratic Labour Party are unmatched by any country in the hemisphere; the first five years. Added to the record, this National Insurance which has contributed so much to this country was able to be established in that five-year period; in July 1966 as far as the passing of the legislation is concerned, Madam President. Never mind when the operations began; the legislation must go in first. That is why I want to ring out the name again of the late Sir Frank Walcott, who I had a little chat with before he left and after he had lost both of his feet. That was a union leader who made a contribution to this country. I am not sure whether the ones I see masquerading now are not really causing destruction in this country. I said it in here already and I will say it again: When you look at what happened in Britain in 1984-1985 with the coal miners' strike, Margaret Thatcher was the Prime Minister and she carved -- along with the support -- the strategy of "destroy" and "cut to size". I am a retired person now, but as a person who was in the workforce at one time or the other in my lifetime, I do not admire saying it but I am going to say it: She cut those unions to their knees. There were 142 000 workers, but do you know the mistake they made and why they did not get the whole support of the union membership? The acronym is NUM: the National Union of Miners. Do you know why they did not get the support? They did not go for a vote. It was a strike with a division.

MADAM PRESIDENT: The Honourable Member has four more minutes.

Senator R.A. HUNTE: That is all right with me, Ma'am. That is what they did. It collapsed. A lot of the workers worked through the strike and here comes Margaret Thatcher coming out looking like a bride on her bridal day. That was how it occurred, but do you know what happened? The majority of the workers came from a place called Grimethorpe in South Yorkshire, and it turned out to be the poorest county area in Britain, because a lot of them were out of work. Nobody wishes that in Barbados, but it only goes to show that when you bite off more than

you can chew, you can end up being the victim even though you set out to be the conqueror.

Madam President, when you reach a certain stage in your life, you feel that you owe your contributions to the State in which you live, and I speak really and truly as a Barbadian citizen. I speak as someone who is very concerned about what I see happening around us. Therefore, I am saying that those who wish this country or this Government hell may find themselves in a very sticky situation. Sometimes in trying to destroy something, it can be similar to how “Trumpism” is trying every day to destroy the so-called Obamacare in the United States of America. It is because he is black. What has happened now? Mitch McConnell, the Senate Leader, says, “Put it off for two years; this Bill cannot pass,” when Trump was trumping all about that he will “drain the swamp”. I saw a cartoon with an alligator in it and I saw a cap marked Trump and one cannot see Trump. The swamp was drained, but he went down the alligator’s throat.

3.38 p.m.

They are hurting the Stuart administration, they are hurting the country because when a ship comes in here and offloads people it does not go back with cement or coral or any kind of mineral. Madam, in other words, we produce nothing that can be marketed on the world market. Madam President, we are in a very interesting period in our lives and what has been built up over the years is right before us now to collapse. I feel extremely strong about it and I have to be at stage of my life. It is my grandchildren that will have to face the real battle.

Madam President, I am very much obliged. I thank you.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Boyce, you have the Floor.

Senator the Hon. D.W. BOYCE: Thank you, Madam President, I would like to lend support to this Bill for the waiver of interest on the arrears that is due to the National Insurance Scheme. Madam President, this National Insurance Scheme was the first, I believe and certainly was a forerunner by many years of our Social Partnership arrangement because the National Insurance Scheme is a Scheme that is administered by a group consisting equally of the Government, the labour movement and the employers, so for 50 years we have practiced this notion of the Social Partnership and we started to practice it firstly in an area that sought to provide a social safety net for the people of this country who were most vulnerable. Those persons are the poor, the unemployed, people who got injured on the job and all the various categories of persons who need assistance, and who get assistance from our National Insurance Scheme. Madam President, I am sure

you have heard me said before that perhaps, the most important part of our society including our economy are the social institutions and the social relationships which enable us to continue to have an economy that is based on peace and is based on good relationships that allows our tourism and our international business and all those areas of our economy that depend on human relationships and the experience in our country to do well.

Madam President, the social safety net does not however relate only to the financial side of things, it relates to everything, so if we behave in ways that cause children, that cause orphans or abandoned children not to get the care that they need and deserve, we are punching a hole in our social safety net. If we behave and do things that cause our own people who are dependent on us not to be able to get the care and attention that they deserve, we are also punching a hole in our social safety net. Madam President, if we behave in ways that deprive the very poor of the means to earn an income howsoever small, we are also punching a hole in our social safety net.

Madam President, if we stop those same people from getting the little wage that they are entitled to when it is due, we cause pain and hardship to those people. Madam, sometimes we like to see these things only in terms of the financial issues. Our safety net is more than financial issues, our safety nets includes those youth camps that we run in summer to help to protect our youngsters especially the children of those people who do not have the resources to pay for them.

Madam President, when we take action that reduces the quality of the performance of our public sector, when we take action that reduces the productivity and performance of our private sector it does not hurt anybody outside of Barbados, the only people that it hurts is we who live in this country. When we go to a Government office to get a transaction done and it takes us twice as long as it ought to, it hurts us, it hurts our employer and it hurts our country. When an investor come to Barbados and it takes him twice as long to get a matter sorted out for whatsoever reason we do not hurt the rest of the world, it hurts us in Barbados.

Madam President, the essential thing I am getting at here is that the National Insurance Scheme is all about making sure that we provide the protection for our people where it matters most and it gives life to the view we hold that Barbados is more than an economy, Barbados is a society and it is because we were a society that we have been able to succeed without the material resources that most countries would have.

Madam President, I raise that and I join with Sir Roy in calling upon all us who were party to the discussion and party to the dialogue and conversations of the early 90s to

help those conversations going again. We may have to get into the heads, minds and hearts of the people involved, the ethos which kept us going during those conversations but those conversations have to be held and they have to be held without sense of ego and the sense of vanity that now seem to pervade so many of us at this time.

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Madam President, I am going to spend a little time on a couple of other things to do with the National Insurance Scheme. A little bit on the economics and a little bit on the finance.

Madam President, an important part of National Insurance Schemes everywhere is to generate resources for the economic development of the country. Typically, much of the infrastructure that is required in an economy to make it ripe for development by the private sector has to come from the Government and for the Government to make those investments it has to borrow the money. In our countries, ordinarily the individuals in the private sector has not been as well-endowed or as well inclined to provide all those resources as in the larger countries. National Insurance Schemes are therefore important as the mobilisers of savings in the country and to help direct those savings into the vision of infrastructure that is important for the country. National Insurance Schemes have to be concerned to receive investments occurring constantly in infrastructure and infrastructure that supports the growth of private business as well because National Insurance Schemes succeed when employment is created. They succeed when incomes are generated and our National Insurance Scheme is prepared to take the investment in long term assets because it takes quite a while for those assets to generate the kind of economic buoyancy which we need in an economy. When you need roads, or you need industrial estates, or you need an airport or a seaport, or you need a school, or you need water resources, those are areas that a Government invests in in order to enable the private sector to be able to go ahead and do what they have to do with their businesses, the hotels and whatever else that they have to do. A National Insurance Scheme has to keep its eye focus on support investment of that sort that increases the capacity of a country to do more. Madam President, whenever a Government invests in the infrastructure in a country it generates employment during the construction of that infrastructure. When that infrastructure has been completed, businesses then locate along that infrastructure and they then generate employment and it is that generation of employment and the continuation of contributions of that new employment that enables you to keep a National Insurance Scheme going so that you have more money coming in for contributions than going out. People have to understand this is part of why you have a National Insurance Scheme, to mobilise savings in the country that can then be directed

to providing that critical infrastructure that our country needs for development. Think of a Barbados that did not have a National Insurance Scheme providing funds for the developments that we have had over the last 50 years and think about what kind of Barbados we would have had if you did not have that kind of investment in us. Those of us who are 50 and change can tell you that when we have friends and family come back from overseas they do not recognise Barbados. They pass the old places and they do not know where they are because the infrastructure has been so provided that the place has just changed. Madam President, there are youngsters who have descended from Barbadian grandparents or great grandparents who are constantly applying for citizenship in Barbados because they love it here and they want to make sure that if they do not get an education elsewhere they can come to Barbados and get one for almost nothing. That does not come just like that. It has come because we have directed the whole country's affairs in such a way that we have this infrastructure, both the concrete type and the soft ones like the education system and the health system. All of those things go to make this country a much better country.

Madam President, because the National Insurance Scheme always has long term liabilities, in other words, it has to pay money out for a long time and the people who contribute now do not get anything back from the insurance scheme until they get to be 65 or 67 or whatever age it is, and that is a long time. Then they may live for a long time after that so you have to be able to keep on giving them their pensions. National Insurance Scheme therefore, like to invest long term. They like to know that they have investments there that will yield them a steady stream of income every year. National Insurance Scheme all over the world like to invest in Government Paper. Governments tend to put out Bonds and Debentures that are long term and have a fairly good interest rate on them and every year you get your coupon. It is good management to do that and you if that you throw out the risk associated with doing equity investments. They do some investments in private companies too but generally they tend to have less of that than you have in Government Paper.

Madam President, when you invest in private companies you also face the risk of investing in those private companies and where you have private companies where you have a situation where there are not many private companies listed on the stock exchange where there is no liquidity particularly in the stock markets where you cannot control whether a dividend is paid or not then you obviously have other risks associated with it as a National Insurance Scheme. When people make the comments about too much investments in Government Paper they sometimes overlook all of these other issues. The risk of investing in Private Paper completely and the risk of investing short term that you have if you do not go into long term Government Paper.

Madam President, there are a couple of other things I want to raise about the National Insurance Scheme and one of them, of course, has to do with the issue of the growth in our labour force in the country. The demographics that Sir Roy had mention indicated that by 2030 we are going to have some challenges maintaining our labour force. How are we going to deal with that? Deal with it we must. It has been dealt with in the past by extending the age by which pensions will become payable and it has been dealt with to some extent by raising the rates of contributions to the Scheme so there are limits now to how much more you can raise those rates without them become now a drag on business and a drag on employees and there are limits to how much higher you can carry the age for retirements so we have to find a way to get more workers into the scheme.

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Madam President, some of my colleagues have suggested some ways of getting more people to come into the scheme but what this brings to us is that we are going to have to deal with a matter of migration and deal with it boldly and without fear, but we cannot have that migration managed us, we have to manage that migration to make sure that we get people in the right age ranges and that we get people with the right skills, and that we are conscious of maintaining the balance in the society, to which some of us have already referred, but we have to deal with this matter of migration. If we do not deal with it and our labour force begins to decline, then we actually will face a situation where our economic growth will stagnate or will also begin to decline, unless we are able to so get and so adapt technology and use it that we can keep on using it to increase the productivity of our country.

Madam President, when I mention productivity it brings me to the issue that we face today, not only in Barbados but in all of our Caribbean countries where none of us is doing well on any of the doing business performance matrix, some of us are doing slightly better than the others but none of us is doing well, none of us is up there among the top ranks in the world of doing business well, none of our performance matrixes in Government or in our private sector is encouraging to say that we are dealing with this matter of productivity well in our countries. Madam President, so that when you have that situation staring you in the face, and when you have very attempt being made to reduce further the productivity of the country, Madam President, it seems as if the whole region is bent on destroying what we have spent the last 50 years in trying to build up in our countries. We are all suffering from low productivity and we are all seeming to do things that reduce that productivity even further, then we would expect to get more businesses investing, then we would expect to get more growth in the economy, then we would expect to get more employment, then we would expect to get more wages and more profits.

Madam President, as I have said many times, there is no free lunch, if we want to get the increase in jobs, if we want to get the increase in productivity, if we want to get the increase in labour, we cannot do everything that destroys the incentives for people to invest in the country and for people to employ labour.

Madam President, we see all the time efforts being made by companies, businesses and by Governments to seek to improve the processes that we are using in our country. We see efforts being made to adopt technology, and we see the efforts that are being made at training but Madam President, we are not seeing the results in terms of productivity and performance of the country overall. What we are seeing are further attempts to pull that down.

Madam President, I mentioned just now the matter of the financial investment in long-term Paper and let me go a little bit further on that. Ma'am, when the National Insurance Scheme makes long-term investments, one of the worst things that they can have is the income coming from those investments to fluctuate wildly from year to year, they want to know what is the steam of income, they want to know how much they are going to get, what kind of return that they are going to get each year on the investments that they have put out there, that is why they like to go for Bonds as opposed to equity, that is why the prefer Government Bonds as opposed to other bonds because there is more assurance of that.

Madam President, sometimes we hear also that the National Insurance Scheme should make foreign investments, sometimes because the interest rate or yield might be sometimes higher but Madam President I always question the fact, when you raise savings locally, how much of those savings that you would want to take up and invest in somebody else's economy to grow theirs rather than to grown your own. Certainly, Madam President, I have raised, the question where there is a National Insurance Scheme earning foreign exchange, then for that National Insurance Scheme to invest overseas. What they do is that they essentially get the foreign exchange from the Central Bank's Reserves to invest overseas.

Madam President, the purpose of the National Insurance Scheme is not to do foreign investments, it is better for them to do investments that support growth in the local economy and to keep that local economy growing, so that you invest in the local economy to the extent possible, invest long-term to the extent possible, invest where you can get an annual amount certain every year to be able to pay your bills, and invest in areas that help the economy to grow because the growth in the economy will then redound to the benefit of the National Insurance Scheme for further employment and further contributions that they need to have.

Madam President, we also want a National Insurance Scheme to invest in those institutions and through the Government that will grow the skills of the country. Our country is only going to grow further if the people continue to get the level of skills that they need to have. The technology is forcing more skills among our labour force and therefore we need to have the investments in the institutions that generate those skills, for example, in computer science, in medical research, in biological research and in languages. Madam President, if we grew our tourism, if we got 500 or 600 new rooms every year and doubled the capacity of our tourism industry in the next 10 years, if we got growth of tourist arrivals of 6 per cent per year for the next 10 or 12 years, Madam President, we will have a fairly difficult time in finding the people with those skill sets for the tourism plant because the tourism plant is no longer bartenders, gardeners and maids, there is a set of youngsters behind the scenes who are managing the computer technology and the energy technology that goes to make up a modern hotel. Therefore one wishes to see the National Insurance Scheme continue to invest to help Government invests in areas that will generate the people with the technical skills that will allow our tourism industry and our International Business Sector to grow.

Madam President, we have the opportunity to make those things grow because we are seeing the interest that the Caribbean gives to tourism but it is not just for any kind of old tourism. It is for hotels and a high-tech tourism sector.

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It is for hotels which are luxury properties; and that brings us to the point of investment in the water resources of the country. Who better to invest in water resources in the country than a National Insurance Scheme? Once again, it is a long-term investment, it is a constant stream of resources, and it supports the growth in an economy. We have to begin to picture National Insurance as being part of the larger macro-economic scheme to grow the country, to help us grow the skill base of the country, help us to grow the infrastructural base of the country, and help us to grow in many instances the private sector of the country. Nothing I have said here says you should only invest in Government paper. A time comes when you have to invest in some private sector entities, and the National Insurance Scheme of Barbados has done that, and has been very instrumental in helping some of our leading businesspeople to make successes of their businesses. Sometimes the NIS does not get the credit for doing that but they do it. That is what a National Insurance Scheme has to be, because in the final analysis we can only build a strong and sustainable social safety net when we have built a strong and sustainable economic safety net. The growth in the economy and the distribution of incomes in the economy; those are the things which would help us to maintain that social safety

net, to help us continue to be more than just the economy but to help us continue to be that society of which we are all proud.

The time has now come for us, having got 50 years under our belt in building up and giving people things which they needed to have, to say to them, "Now is the time for you to begin to show us what you can do for yourself and for the country with the resources and the help that we have given you, including the help of the NIS over all these years." Madam President, I am much obliged to you.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Husbands, you have the Floor.

Senator H.A. HUSBANDS: Madam President, thank you very much. I welcome the opportunity to make my usual hour-long contribution to this debate. I think the debate has come at a very good time. The National Insurance Scheme is celebrating its 50th anniversary, and that dovetails well with the recent celebration of the nation's 50th anniversary as an independent country. It allows us the opportunity to focus on several of the things which we do well in this country that we all love so well. There are several. The National Insurance Scheme (NIS), as has been pointed out by previous speakers, I think represents the best in Barbados. We have, along with this, the educational system and the quality of the health services that we provide. I think these adequately describe and represent the kind of country -- with all the challenges and the problems -- that we have built as an independent nation, and we are continuing to build well into the future.

I think the existence of the NIS for these 50 years also gives a lie to the view that anything which Government is involved in is not properly done. The NIS is one of the better run institutions, whether we select private sector or public sector institutions to analyse. I think the evidence would show that the NIS over these 50 years is one of the better run institutions. I think we ought to spend some time in this debate, as has been done by others, recognising this and paying tribute to all those people who have worked solidly over the last 50 years to bring this institution to the level it has been brought to. I have reached the age now where I always relate my feelings and experiences about these things in some stories. The challenge I have is that some of the stories get repeated over and over, and I must have said in this Chamber already that I was first introduced to the NIS in a rather dubious or roundabout kind of way. My father was an extremely strong supporter of the Barbados Labour Party, and I do not know if I remember it as it happened at first, but I remember that over the years he was always very hostile to the NIS. When it began and deductions started from his salary -- he was like me; tall, big, with a loud voice and liked to hear himself talk -- he said to anybody

who would listen what a bad thing the National Insurance Scheme was, and that “these people only robbing you”. I lived long enough to see on his retirement when he started getting the cheques that his tune changed dramatically, and he said, “I must admit this is the only useful thing Barrow ever did.” As I said, this is how I was introduced to the NIS, but the fact was that he came around -- this is the point I am making -- to that position when he actually saw the benefits and he began to live the benefits of this experience and recognised them. Just as he had given the criticism earlier, he was willing to publicly recognise how valuable this NIS was. When he saw the benefits, he wondered what he would have done had he not participated in this Scheme. That is by way of a practical example of the importance and value of the National Insurance Scheme.

Madam President, I was to encounter the NIS some years later. I noticed that Senator Ince spoke about the staff of the NIS from the point of view of being a co-worker and the Chairman of the Board, but I was able to encounter the staff of the NIS from the perspective of a client. I must have said in this Chamber already -- I like to tell stories, as I said -- that I am probably one of the only people in Barbados who served on the Board of the NIS one day and was in the unemployment line a few days later looking to register and collect my unemployment benefit. I have several distinctions and they are, again, dubious kinds of distinctions, and that is one. I served on the Board one day and the next day I was in the unemployment line. My experience, I tell you, is to speak of the quality of the staff. Senator Ince spoke about it, but I remember that the day I was to go to register as unemployed, I drove past the building in Culloden Road on several occasions, looking at the building, not brave enough to go in.

4.17 p.m.

Madam President, I remember that the day I was to go to register as unemployed, I drove past the building in Culloden Road on several occasions looking at the building not brave enough to go in. Madam, obviously, let us be frank, if you were a Board member one day and the next day you are unemployed, you bound to feel a way so I must admit that I felt a way and I drove up and down there looking at the building several times before I built up the courage to go in and register but Madam, do you know, those workers treated me with such dignity and respected. I expected people to snigger or pointed and I thought I was getting special treatment having been on the Board and having to go there on several occasions I observed how other people were treated because, bear in mind, especially when you are going for unemployment you are at a low point in your life however that unemployment came about. The business may have closed, you got fired, whatever you are facing a critical point in your life and it is then that you need professional guidance and assistance. You do not

need people passing judgements on you or making snide remarks. I noted how the staff treated every single person that came through that door. They got the same treatment that I got, highly professional and very considerate, understanding if they had to direct you, or if you did not understand, they were extremely patience with all the people.

Madam President, since we are celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Scheme. I want to say again publicly that I owe those people who dealt with me during that critical period of my life a debt of gratitude. I can repay them by saying what I am saying right now and I only hope that level of service continues to this day and anybody who is facing that critical period in their life do not have to feel ashamed or embarrassed because you have contributed, this is your to claim and I am confidence that the staff at the National Insurance Scheme will treat you with the same dignity with which I was treated.

Madam President, there are several other quick points that I want to make. I think that Senator Boyce dealt with one of them much more clearly than I could ever do. Madam, this issue of the investments and what should be invested. There is a national debate and I am not annoyed by the fact that there is vibrant debate in the country about how the National Insurance Fund should be used because that is how it should be. There is a back and forth, you should do this, no you should not do that but I like debates that are informed and not just people sounding off. I will tell you again another story. When I was on the Board, I remember one year as they did annually, a representative from one of these Wall Street investment houses came down and made the usual sales pitch as to why the funds should be invested with his organization. Now, I sat there and to be honest with you, I did not understand much of what he said but they had all these people around the table, bright, young people who asked a lot of questions and they seemed to understand what he was saying based on the questions they were asking and so on. Madam, do you know that less than a year after he made that presentation the investment house he was representing collapsed in the financial meltdown that occurred that we are still to this day struggling to get out of. I often wonder what has become of him, if he living somewhere in the south of France in a jail somewhere or cutting canes in Florida. Madam, he passes through my mind and I can still see him because all this talk that he was talking, all of the things he was going back and forth with and guaranteeing this and that, he could not see apparently what was going to happen a few months down the road when the bottom fell out of the international money market and his very institution was brought to its knees. Madam, when we discuss these investments and what should be invested, of course nobody says your investment portfolio should not be diversified because it should be. Madam, the old people would say that you cannot put all your eggs in one basket. You would not

find that written in any economic or finance textbook but we take that as a reality. Why would you do that? You spread your risk but people take part in this discussion as though if you invest in the markets overseas that you are not taking risk and that you are not likely to lose your shirt and sometimes your underwear. This is not case made out for not investing overseas but it is part of the reality that we face. The point that we must make in relation to the National Insurance Scheme investing in Government affairs and Government projects is to highlight what those projects are. I know there was a time when the National Insurance Scheme invested \$12 million in helping to make CBC digital. The \$12 million was gone and CBC is still not digital.

Madam President, look at some of the things that are going on, the Citizens Security Project, where the National Insurance Scheme has invest \$70 million in upgrading. We talk about the fight against crime and people only see the fight against crime as policemen on the street with guns. They do not see the enhancing of the facilities available to the police force as a critical investment. You pass in Lower Baxter's Road, Tudor Street, and the work that is being done to the old barracks, the police station that is being constructed in Worthing to replace Hastings and Worthing's police stations and at the same time that is being done, you are improving the wading in a serious way the fight against crime, giving the policeman better facilities and so on and so forth. Madam, construction is taking place, people are being employed, jobs are being created. Madam, then there is Cane Garden.

Madam President, I spent a few years of my life living at District D Police Station in St. Thomas and now you have the embarrassing situation where you go to Hometown Police Station and there are two policemen sitting behind the desk and one is for St. Thomas and the other one is for St. James and the other areas, and that situation has been going on. Madam, we talk about fighting crime but fighting crime is simply just not guns and amnesty and so on, it is about improving.

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The money that is being invested by the NIS is being invested in important productive projects and we could go through the various areas so it is not just a debate about whether it is overseas or not overseas, it is critical that, especially at a time like this, our development ought to be guaranteed in a way that we are following bearing in mind, that is a reality that you cannot put all your eggs in one basket but there comes a time when this is the, I think, correct approach to use.

The other bee in my bonnet ... Can you imagine me in a bonnet? The other bee in my bonnet has to do with, having served on the board for a few years, the

construction of the Board. I made this point in here before and I am going to repeat it. Senator Boyce made the point, which I had noted, that the NIS has led us in tripartism. We came to tripartism but the Board of the NIS has been tripartite. I remember the days when I used to go to the ILO representing employers. The employers rep every year, there was always someone from some employer organisation who would seek me out to find out how he has heard about this National Insurance Scheme in Barbados that it is managed by a tripartite board, how does it work and so on. We had a lot of exchanges over the years especially from countries that were now going into the establishing of social safety nets and so on. It is tripartite but I want to be able see more, not a change in the tripartite nature but a rotation of the specific member who serve on the Board and I will say why I hold this view. It is personal. When you see of the NIS you are exposed to very critical information about businesses Barbados. If you are an investor, if you are a business owner yourself, you could get a lot of information legitimately given to you about your competitor. If your competitor did not pay his NIS for two months, you get to know and that gives you an idea about the state of your competitors business. If the NIS is planning to invest some money in some hotel or some business somewhere, there is a process that the Investment Committee -- and I have to say the time I was there I was very impress with the quality of work that the Investment Committee of the National Insurance Scheme does. The produce detailed analyses of all proposed investments of the NIS of an extremely high quality. It is regrettable that those people in the Investment Committee who do that work if they were working the private sector doing a similar thing they would not be paid civil service wages. That is another challenge that the NIS has because it has a Board but the employees are traditional civil servants so you have that challenge. These people are gifted in their field and you have a challenge of keeping many of them in that employment. My point is when you are a businessman or an investor or you have investments you are exposed to critical information about other people, the NIS decides to invest money in X, Y or Z company, you see that and I think that there is evidence that when the NIS decided to invest in X, Y or Z company some people got to X, Y and X company before the NIS based on the information that was generated by the NIS. If our business management arrangements were better and quicker organised, or let me put it this way, if we were in the United States of America or a more developed financial market, somebody might have gone to jail already. We have a thing in this country and we talk about corruption and corruption for the average Bajan only involves politicians, it does not involve trade union leaders. It may involve trade union leaders who have been politicians ...

Asides.

Senator H. A. HUSBANDS: But you get my point so I think that going forward for the next 50 years. There are two large investment entities in Barbados, the NIS is one and a private insurance company is another. How in Heaven's could one person serve on both Boards? It cannot happen elsewhere? These are issues, I think, we need to clear up as we proceed to the next 50 years.

Let me round off my contribution, the Honourable Minister in her introduction of the issue and I ought to congratulate her, she was really flowing and she thought she was entitled to two hours but she did very well and we could have listen to her for the two hours and also Sir Roy. They both discussed an issue that is also critical to me, this issue about the future of work and what work is going to look like. Senator Boyce also discussed the issue about what work is going to look like and how technology is going to intersect with this thing but as we go forward and technology, right now they are testing fairly far advanced testing of driverless vehicles of all kinds, cars, cranes, trains, buses, and they are saying, these people who are investigating this, that they are pretty close to perfecting that technology. Think of the effect that will have on employment, not only people that you hire but self-employment, taxi drivers and so on. It is not farfetched. As we are speaking there are people working on this and have worked out already what is the appropriate amount of money that you should pay people to stay home? What is our social safety net or our decent work agenda going to look like in that context? All of these people who make a living out of driving vehicles, if you do not need them, how much money do we pay them to stay home?

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Madam President, there are actually mathematicians, economists and sociologists working on these equations, what would it take to pay Senators to stay home and not come here on Wednesdays and talk, so this is the kind of challenge that we face.

Madam President, in the meanwhile Senator Boyce raised the issue of the expanding labour force and the challenge that we in Barbados will face. We talked about the expanding workforce but technology is moving so fast, this artificial intelligence is moving so quickly, where the labour force expands or we will have a large number of people whom we have to pay to stay at home. These are the kinds of debates that I think that we are about to have as we talk about the social safety net, the National Insurance Scheme and so on and so forth, so that a National Insurance Scheme becomes even more critical in an environment as technology gallops on and on.

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

Senator H. A. HUSBANDS: Madam President, let me end by again saying that the National Insurance Scheme as we heard in Barbados is a good representative of the finest of things in this country. We ought to be proud of the work it has done, we ought to be proud of those people who have led and worked at the National Insurance Scheme, they have done this nation and its reputation a tremendous good, it is difficult to find a way to repay them but the best way that we can repay them is through proper and efficient management to take care of this system for the next 50 years. I thank you very much, Madam President.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Todd, you have the Floor.

SENATOR the Hon. P.M.T. TODD: Madam President, I rise to give full support to the passage of the National Insurance and Social Security (Amendment) Bill, 2017. Ma'am, I would wish to congratulate the National Insurance Scheme on the occasion of the celebration of its 50th Anniversary of its existence and in so doing I would want to thank the vision of the early Democratic Labour Party team that would have conceptualised this National Insurance Scheme for Barbados. As the Minister of Labour, Social Security and Human Resource Development in leading off the debate today mentioned it was the 1961 General Election Manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party that promised, among other visionary policies, the introduction of a National Insurance Scheme by Government and in just a little more than six years after being swept to power in December 1961 General Elections the Democratic Labour Party Administration having been reelected in 1966 was able to bring this to fruition by 1967.

Madam President, moreover, as the leader of this Resolution mentioned, this Democratic Labour Party Administration would have been responsible, since we were in office in 1971, for the improvement of the National insurance provisions to include long-term benefits for self-employed persons and in 1973 for severance payments to be made to displaced workers, then in 1974 for short-term benefits to be provided for self-employed persons. In this entire period the Democratic Labour Party would have been in office and then having regained Government after 2008 General Elections, by the year 2010 we extended the programme to include the Retraining Fund to assist displaced workers in retraining and retooling so that they would be in a better position to transition into further forms of employment to provide for themselves and their families, so that the Democratic Labour Party can stake claim to the tremendous success of this National Insurance Scheme. Madam President, we are a caring Government, we are a dear loving people and this programme is a tangible example of the visionary policies and the democratic socialist ideology of our Democratic Labour Party Government.

Madam President, I would also wish to congratulate the staff of the National Insurance Department. I myself had the honour of acting as Minister with responsibility for national insurance on at least two occasions when the National Insurance Scheme was engaging in its annual awards gala and dinner and dance. I had to officiate on at least two different years and would have seen the tremendous energy, commitment and enthusiasm of the staff, from the highest levels of management down to the most basic general worker positions as they all saw themselves as one cohesive unit playing a very important part in the national social structure of our society, the whole area of social protection, the social safety net. They saw it as their national duty to ensure that they fulfil their mandate to ensure that the various claims were processed so that the cheques and other disbursements, be they unemployment benefits, maternity leave or sickness benefits, et cetera, are paid out to qualifying recipients in a timely manner, because as the Minister mentioned this could be a matter of life and death to those pensioners and the others who are relying on that timely disbursement of these funds through the National Insurance Scheme programme for their survival, it further enables them to be able to have a meal and not to go hungry. Madam President, these are really bread and butter issues and I really salute the staff of the National Insurance Scheme for their commitment over the years to fulfilling this very important civic responsibility to the masses of people in our country.

Madam President, I would have seen on those occasions former Directors of National Insurance Schemes, former Board Chairmen and other members coming out to these events. Ma'am, this is not mandatory, we see on some occasions people retiring from agencies and refusing to participate in any retirement party, when they leave they do not want to visit that institution ever again because of bad blood and so on but here you have that really cohesiveness within the National Insurance Scheme where as I said on these occasions such as gala awards, ceremonies and such like, these former retired persons who were involved in the National Insurance Scheme in the past are very happy to come and fellowship with the current workers, themselves feeling very proud of having made their contribution.

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The list salutes the first Director of the NIS, the late E. Humphrey Walcott. You would see his photograph mounted in the building at the corner of Culloden Road, Collymore Rock and Pine Road. I knew him personally. Our families were very close, and I know that he was very well respected as a model public officer who would have risen through the ranks and, really, as the first Director of the NIS, would have led that organisation in its fledgling years to consolidate and to lay the foundation upon which

successive administrators of the NIS would have built. I salute the late E. Humphrey Walcott, as well as his successors and other pioneers who would have made their contribution to the development of the NIS in our country. As other Senators have mentioned, we are the envy of many developing countries in the region and farther afield, Madam President. When you attend international conferences, you see that. I remember attending an Organisation of American States (OAS) Ministers of Social Care meeting in Cali, Colombia two years ago and a Ministers of Education meeting of the OAS in Quito, Ecuador, and on both occasions when we were able to indicate the various programmes which we have in Barbados -- taxpayer-funded education and other social services provided by the State -- countries with millions of people in terms of their population size were unable to boast of having similar programmes, Madam President. We are decades ahead of many other developing countries with more natural resources than little Barbados; 21 miles long and a smile wide. That is why a former Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, would have mentioned that we punch above our weight as a country.

Madam President, I would also wish to add my two cents' worth to what Senator Husbands, Senator Boyce and others would have mentioned in terms of the important role played by the NIS in terms of providing loan financing to assist the Government in its capital works programme and other developmental projects. Senator Husbands would have mentioned the citizens' security programme; over \$70 million provided by the NIS in loan financing to ensure that, along with projects mentioned by Senator Husbands, in that package you have the proposed construction of a new complex for the high command of the Royal Barbados Police Force located in the Pine area. It is being developed in a futuristic way so that it would not become inadequate in the short term, but provision is being made for projected expansion over the short to medium term, Madam President. Currently, the police high command is located at rented accommodation at the old Barclays Building at the corner of Roebuck Street, Palmetto Square and High Street. Prior to that, they were renting a building at the corner of James Street and Coleridge Street, Madam President. What we are doing in this citizens' security project is providing accommodation, as Senator Husbands mentioned, for those hardworking members of the Royal Barbados Police Force and also reducing the need for Government to pay exorbitant rents to the private sector to accommodate Government workers, Madam President. The same thing can be said in terms of the financing provided by the NIS in the construction of the two multi-storey Government buildings in the Warrens area: Baobab and Warrens Towers.

Madam President, we know that the whole issue of occupational health and safety is very important to the workers of our country, and over the years we would have

heard and seen the various trade unions agitating on behalf of the workers sometimes by way of industrial action to press Government to improve the working conditions. We have situations where you may have what we call sick building syndrome, where old buildings not properly maintained may have leaking roofs that could cause moisture to ooze into coral stone walls like those we have here, giving rise to mould infestation which can, in turn, give rise to serious respiratory issues that threaten the health of workers in terms of asthma and the mould actually getting into the lungs. These can create serious respiratory challenges which can even be life-threatening over the long term, Madam President. This Democratic Labour Party Administration makes no apologies for taking that caring decision by way of assistance from the NIS to provide modern, state-of-the-art buildings to house those thousands of Barbadian workers who are employed in the Public Service of Barbados. A number of the workers who would have been employed, for example, by the Electoral Office and working at the old NIS Building just to the south of us here at Fairchild Street, have all actually been able to move from that building which has some issues in terms of the conditions, and they are now housed at one of those new buildings alluded to before at Warrens; built with the assistance of NIS financing, Madam President. This is nothing for us to be ashamed of, because now these workers thank this Democratic Labour Party Administration for thinking about them to improve their working conditions, Madam President. I visited the Baobab Towers recently for the first time and they even have a modern cafeteria with wide-screen television mounted on the walls, air-conditioning, and a wonderful view; so those workers can really work hard but still be in a relaxing ambience as they take their lunch and watch CNN and other foreign channels as well as our local Channel, of course, and then get back to work after that relaxing break at lunch in these modern facilities, thanks to the Democratic Labour Party Administration with the assistance of NIS financing, Madam President.

Moreover, Madam President, it is said that the interest rate which central Government has to pay to NIS in terms of repayment of loans is quite high compared to what one can get from competing financing agencies; so the return on that investment in terms of the financial arrangement of lending to Government is significant and beneficial to the NIS. It is a strong investment. Moreover, Madam President, in some of these arrangements the central Government has to pay rent on a monthly basis through lease arrangements to the NIS, so then the NIS actually is generating residual income monthly and yearly in that arrangement, so it is a win-win situation. The Government is able to execute its capital works programme, keep people employed in terms of construction workers and there is a ripple effect because then when those construction workers are employed, they have to buy provisions from the supermarket, the mini mart, patronize

the restaurant and the persons selling from their vans and so on, buy clothings, buy pharmaceuticals and those suppliers are able to keep their staff employed, increase employment and then these increased number of employees as other would have mentioned pay National Insurance contributions thereby shoring up the National Insurance Fund reserves and there is a win-win situation keeping the economic activity of the country stimulated.

4.56 p.m.

Madam President, this Democratic Labour Party administration has nothing to be ashamed of. In fact, the Barbados Labour Party when they were in office would have utilised the National Insurance Scheme in this regard not as effectively as we did but certainly we are consistent with that policy. Madam, when you look at the Barbados Hilton Hotel, the Barbados Labour Party when they were in office imploded the old Hilton Hotel. I would have opted to have a different scenario where you could have built a new hotel at a green site and renovated the old Hilton Hotel but, of course, the Barbados Labour Party was playing little games as far as I am concerned by imploding the old Hilton Hotel. They were trying to wipe away the legacy of the Democratic Labour Party which would have built the original Hilton Hotel just after gaining Independence, the late Wynter Crawford would have conceptualized that whole idea. The first banquet after during the Independence period in 1966 would have been held at that original Hilton Hotel. Madam President, the point I am making is that the Barbados Labour Party in that rebuilding process, when they rebuilt the Hilton Hotel, when they were in office would have utilised National Insurance Scheme financing in terms of investing the funds of the National Insurance Scheme to execute that project, so the Barbados Labour Party is not in a position to criticize this Democratic Labour Party administration for ensuring that the NIS contributions of the workers of our country are able to be utilise to some extent to develop the economy of our country, the infrastructure of our country rather than taking this money and developing by way of investing abroad in countries instead of ours.

Madam President, I would also congratulate the Government of Barbados for seeking to revamp the National Employment Bureau. Madam, I would have acted as Minister of Labour on a few occasions and I remember on one occasion touring the Labour Department and the National Employment Bureau and I remember making some suggestions that maybe we should develop more brochures. I know they have some but develop even more to assist persons seeking employment to identify possible areas of employment be it here or even abroad working on cruise ships or in the guest workers programmes in the United States of America, Canada and so on. Madam, I am very happy to hear that we are now upgrading and rebranding the National Employment Bureau so that it

would include within the name the whole concept of being seen as a placement unit.

Madam President, I remember as a young man as a teacher that you would get an assignment maybe substituting for someone for a term who is away on leave or on maternity or study and so on and you would be in between jobs. I remember going down to the National Employment Bureau, it was located at that time at Verona House in Bank Hall. This is decades ago, Madam President. It has now been renovated to house the Government Electrical Department. Madam, when they were heavy periods of unemployment sometimes the line would snake right out almost to the road and if the rain fell you had to seek shelter, so in recent years we would have seen improvements where at the building at the corner of Collymore Rock and Pine Road and Culloden Road, you would have had workers going in to register for unemployment and get their unemployment cards stamped. They had air-condition in the room, comfortable seating and even some television to watch and so on. Madam, as Senator Husbands was mentioning we should treat these people with dignity and not scorn and not really give them not a handout but a handup in terms of assisting them to get back on their feet and be gainfully employed.

Madam President, I know that this multimillion dollar loan which the Government through the Ministry of Social Care, was able to secure from the Inter American Development Bank in terms of a concessionary loan which is now giving rise to an extension of the IC Bridge Programme which we would have sort of followed the Chilean model where in the last phase of it, prior to this IDB Loan, we had 30 families, one from each constituency in Barbados being assisted in a comprehensive way in terms of financial assistance, housing, education for children, counselling and so on. Madam, in this IDB multimillion dollar loan which includes the revamping of the National Employment Bureau within the Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Community Development, you would see hundreds of Barbadian families being able to get this multifaceted assistance from the State as I have said not to give them just a handout but a hand-up seeking to get them out of what we call inter-generational poverty where we see grandparents, parents, children stuck in that cycle of perpetual poverty, so by empowering these persons and providing them with the necessary skill sets by way of training and retraining and building self-esteem and career guidance and so on, and by the revamping of the National Employment Bureau, these vulnerable groups would be able to get the necessary career guidance and counselling that would guide them on a case by case basis based on their interest and realities, that we can guide them in the path of least resistance in terms of enabling them in the shortest period of time possible to get meaningful and legitimate sources of income to support themselves and their families through employment in both

the Government and the private sector but also through entrepreneurship.

Madam President, I remember for example, as part of this IC Bridge Programme playing my part in a small way but in a bipartisan way being called upon to assist a family in the City of Bridgetown who were participants of this IC Bridge Programme and they were being provided with assistance in entrepreneurship.

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They were not able to secure jobs but I was able to assist in terms of helping them to develop a small business raising chickens and they were able to build self-esteem and actually earn income in that process, Madam President, so these are very tangible and meaning initiatives of the State to really empower citizens to stay out of deviant and illegal behaviour; criminal activity ...

MADAM PRESIDENT: The Honourable Member has two more minutes.

Senator the Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Thank you, Madam President, and being gainfully employed by way of being employees of Government/private sector but also if they so decide to be involved in entrepreneurship to be able to help develop the country, earn legitimate sources of income to support themselves and their family, Madam President, so this revamping of the National Employment Bureau is very timely and will go a long way to ensure that more and more Barbadians are able to be reintegrated into mainstream society.

I would also take this opportunity in the few moments remaining to encourage Barbadians to plan for their retirement. We have many options, do not just rely on the State in terms of even the National Insurance benefits on retirement because sometimes this does not equate to the income which one would have received when one was working so that we can look to augment this by way of participating in retirement savings plans available, be it investments in credit unions, for example. They pay an annual dividend to members which is much higher than the low interest rate prevailing in the commercial banking sector so that credit unions are a viable option but save for a rainy day. Do not just, Madam President, think of today but look at down the road when we are retiring and we need to continue to maintain the standard of living and quality of life that we would have enjoyed while being employed, therefore, I support those other Senators who have called upon self-employed persons to contribute to the National Insurance Scheme because there is no longer the non-contributory old age pension available to new applicants. The current cohorts, as they expire, additional persons who have not contributed to the National Insurance Scheme would not be able to get a non-contributory

pension which of course currently is just \$310 every two weeks, \$155 per week. Of course, this Democratic Labour Party (DLP) Administration, notwithstanding the economic crisis was able to actually give increases on more than one occasion to those non-contributory pensioners over the years but if you do not contribute to the NIS then the most the State can offer is the person going to the Welfare Department and pleading a case for some small grant which is not mandatory and can be stopped at any time so really and truly, Madam President, the self-employed persons should realise that it is not an imposition but it is really an investment in your retirement to contribute to the NIS and more than that. Self-employed persons can get sickness benefits so if you are a self-employed doctor, dentist, plumber, electrician, carpenter or mechanic, if you are sick the nature of vocation is you would not get income so by contributing to the NIS you can make a sickness claim and get that benefit in the short term so, Madam President, I really congratulate the National Insurance Department on its 50 anniversary and really encourage Barbadians to continue to buy into this very important social security framework.

I thank you.

SUSPENSION

Senator M. P. O. MCCLEAN: Madam President, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 5.30 p.m.

The question that the Senate do now suspend until 5.30 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and MADAM PRESIDENT suspended the Sitting accordingly.

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RESUMPTION

MADAM PRESIDENT: Good afternoon, Honourable Members, this Sitting is resumed. Senator Worrell, you have the Floor.

Senator A. R. WORRELL: Madam President, I rise to support the amendment to the National Insurance and Social Security Bill, 2017, Ma'am, this amendment comes about in terms of allowing for the waiver of interest and penalties for those persons who would have defaulted on their National Insurance Scheme payments, we are giving them an opportunity to bring the payments up to date, hence this amendment. Madam President, this just goes to show the ways in which this Administration has tried to hold the hands of persons in this country throughout this economic period, in terms of helping to bring your books up to date and recognising that we all have been going through some very tough economic times. I would like to commend the Minister of Labour, Social Security and

Human Resource Development for piloting this debate this morning and for giving us an opportunity to speak in terms of the overall general contribution that the National Insurance Scheme has made to the development of Barbados and to this nation.

Madam President, we would have made use of the National Insurance Scheme from time to time from 2008 when the recession hit because in the early days we did offer an opportunity where private sector companies could also seek some sort of cash flow mechanism while utilising the services of the National Insurance Scheme. These were all put in place so as to maintain the employment levels in Barbados and to minimise the impact of the economic recession on the people of Barbados, because we always said that throughout this recession we wanted to reduce the impact of the recession on the people of Barbados and I think that in great measure our efforts have worked in terms of stabilising the economy of Barbados.

Madam President, if you look around the Caribbean and take into consideration the unemployment rate, today Barbados has an unemployment rate of under 10 per cent which is not a feature that is common throughout the rest of the Caribbean. In other Caribbean jurisdictions you have unemployment rates that are above 10 per cent, generally, in some cases it is above 20 per cent, while 15 per cent is the norm. Madam President, that is because when the recession hit many of those countries took the decision that they had to let persons go, because the recession generally impacted the tourism industry first because obviously if you are having a financial crisis in our source markets those persons would not be able to travel as freely as they would want. You would have also seen the closure of a number of hotels in the Bahamas and in other part of the Caribbean as well, but here in Barbados we took the decision that we would try to maintain our employment numbers and through the public sector maintaining its employment numbers, that allowed those in the private sector who had to make some transition and some changes, the room, breathing space and financial flexibility to make those changes and adjustments, then to come back with a stronger entity. Madam President, these are all things that we did. We also benefited from the support of the National Insurance Scheme in doing this.

Madam President, to stick to the National Insurance Scheme and to what this debate is all about, I remember a few years ago having played a part in a play at the Democratic Labour Party which highlighted the contribution of the Democratic Labour Party to the development of Barbados. I do not think that we could have done justice without having a portion of that play dedicated to the implementation of the National Insurance Scheme. Madam President, this scheme is something that we all should be very proud of and we should study it carefully because it came about from very modest origins,

in terms of the scheme when started back in 1967 it was not a big institution as it is today but if you look at it at how it has grown throughout the years, the National Insurance Scheme was collected especially since the majority of the workers at that time were on plantations and sugar workers and the contributions were actually collected in the form of stamps where persons had cards and employees from the National Insurance Scheme would go around to the different plantations or the work sites and each week the person would purchase a stamp to be place on the card to show that you had paid your particular contribution for that period. This is how this scheme has developed over the years with that small way in terms of paying your contribution, to the modern system that we have operating today, with one of the most magnificent building in the Bridgetown area, in Culloden Road, that building is heavily computerized and very sophisticated so that you no longer have that stamp process but a modern sophisticated operation of that National Insurance Scheme.

Madam President, you also have to look at what we as a country have been able to develop over the years and it should give us a sense of pride and a sense of hope to recognise that as Barbadians we have always been playing ahead of the game, we have always been very innovative, creative and working above and beyond our ability even though we are considered as a very small nation with a population of less than 300 000 people and a space of 166 square miles but some of the things that we have been able to accomplish and to do, I think it is a marvel to persons who live in areas with far more resources, land space and people than we have. Madam President, this is something that we should always commend ourselves for and always recognise that in Barbados amongst our people that we have the ability, the ingenuity and the intelligence to craft solutions and create structures to deal with our challenges and to move ourselves forward. Madam President, this is something that we should pat ourselves on the back for and recognise that if we look at the National Insurance Scheme today and what it has grown to...

Madam President, in terms of the National Insurance Fund, the information before me in 1967 when you look at it, it was roughly about \$2.4 million at the end of December 1967 but over the years that fund has continued to grow. I think in 1993 the Fund was at about \$586 million and now today that Fund is probably one of the largest financial funds in Barbados and stands at about \$4.6 billion. This was built because of the vision of the people of Barbados way back then from 1967 where they saw the need for it and how it could benefit the people of Barbados.

Madam President, to show that we are ahead of the game, many of the benefits that we claim through the National Insurance Scheme do not exist in countries such as the United States of America or even throughout the Caribbean. Ma'am, I remember in the early 2000 when I

was in Jamaica the whole concept of sickness benefits, even maternity benefits that you would normally get there but these are things that we had in place from as early as the 1970s where we had some of these benefits in place, so that the benefits that we get under the National Insurance Scheme such as the disability benefit, the sickness benefits, the severance payment benefit, unemployment benefits, there are some countries that you do not get unemployment benefits. Ma'am, if you are fired from a job that is it for you, you do not have anywhere to go for six months where you can get some sort of income as a sort of a bridging period until you find another job. If you lose a job, that is it for you. You are expected that while you are working you should develop a nest egg so that you can provide for yourself.

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Even in terms of the whole idea of pension benefits, there are many places where the whole idea of a pension benefit is not guaranteed for you, but if you make contributions through the NIS you are guaranteed a pension benefit here in Barbados. These are things which show that we have the ingenuity, the creativity and the innovation to speak to the challenges that we face and address them not only for the national issues in Barbados, but we can be a model and an example for the rest of the world. I think that we have been a model and an example for the rest of the world with many of the things which we have developed in Barbados. The National Insurance Scheme is one, the Social Partnership is another. Again, there are some of the other benefits such as the retirement benefits and funeral grants. I can only think about what these contributions would have meant, especially starting back in the 1960s, to those persons who made those minimal contributions. You were operating in an environment in that day where you were exposed to greater risks than now; in terms of working the fields and in the factories. Just by someone dropping a tool by accident or through carelessness, someone could have easily lost a life, be disfigured or be unable to work. Because things like National Insurance came into play, you then had some sort of benefit or recourse; so that a wife who got the sad news that her husband had died in the field now would be able to benefit from a funeral grant in order to make the funeral arrangements. Many people even up to this day look out for that funeral grant in terms of helping to make the payments so that their loved ones can have a good turnout, as they would say. Things like that are still sought after and depended upon by a number of families today.

Madam President, when we have something as good as that, I think we need to be very careful, very jealous with it, and do everything that we can in order to protect it. I think that the message has gone out there by the National Insurance Board encouraging people not to exploit or abuse the benefits which they receive through the National

Insurance Scheme. You would have heard recently the Minister of Labour making reference to the high number of sickness claims that we have. It affects the productivity. Just because as a country we have a Scheme which entitles you to X amount of pay if you go to doctor and you are sick, it is not something which you should abuse. You should not abuse that benefit; in that you run to the doctor in every situation and request a week or two weeks home, or in some cases the doctor may ask you "how much time do you need?" We do not need to abuse the situation. Yes, there are genuine situations where you will need these benefits so save it until that time.

I think that the National Insurance also needs to educate persons as well; that each and every one of those claims which you take out is subtracted from the benefits which you should receive at the end. Be very mindful of that. It is not something that we often see, but that calculation is done so be very mindful and jealous of it because if you want to have greater benefits at your retirement when you need it most, try not to abuse it in the days when you can actually forego taking up some of those benefits.

As was mentioned a lot, we also have situations where persons do not contribute as they should to the NIS, particularly self-employed individuals. What we need to let people know is that the NIS is not just there for you when you reach retirement age, but there are benefits which you can obtain from the National Insurance that you may need long before you reach retirement age, and benefits which you may never have planned for. There are a number of people in Barbados who right now, during the stage of their lives when they ought to be most productive, end up either medically boarded because of illness or disability. This disability may come as a result of a motor vehicle accident, an accident at work, or something as simple as a sneeze occurring at the wrong time. I know of persons with issues especially related to their backs and, I believe -- Senator Byer-Suckoo can correct me -- sciatica. Something as simple as a sneeze can disrupt that and cause you not to be able to function properly in terms of being able to work a full day. Then you may end up having to be medically boarded or being a recipient of invalidity benefits from the National Insurance.

We do not plan for these things, and a lot of self-employed persons may be going out there thinking, "I do not need the National Insurance Scheme because month after month I earn X amount of dollars, I earn \$10 000 which is more than enough to give me a salary". Consider that you may end up in an unfortunate situation where you cannot go out there and earn that \$10 000, but you have not contributed to the State during your productive years, yet the first place you will turn to when the savings you have in the bank have run out or appear to be going quickly is the State; to the National Insurance with the expectation that

something should be there for you. Even before you became self-employed when you would have worked five or ten years and you would have made a contribution to the National Insurance, you would still expect you should get contributions or benefits to the same level or extent as persons who had been diligently contributing month after month.

These are things which we need to be mindful of, and for that reason alone -- because no-one knows what tomorrow will bring to them -- it should be a benefit to self-employed persons to get on board in terms of making their contributions right with the National Insurance Scheme. I believe that the Scheme has worked in such a way that you may need to consider some innovative ways in making it possibly easier for those persons to actually make their contributions, or you may even have to consider going back to some of the systems of the past. I am not speaking only of those self-employed persons in the technical jobs such as doctors, lawyers and accountants and so forth, but there are also self-employed persons who are in the unskilled areas. You may have farmers, mechanics or labourers who are not as qualified or as technical. It should be made easier for those persons to make their contributions, because as an individual gets \$10 in his or her hand and needs to go and buy food, they are not going to be thinking about taking \$1.60 out of that \$10 to put aside for the National Insurance. They are going to think about the rice which they have to buy to cook when they get home in the evening, and maybe the salt meat which they plan to flavour the rice with. They would go and spend that quickly; but if we make provisions so that it would be easier to get that \$1.60 from them on a weekly or daily basis as they make the money, you may find that more self-employed persons, especially at the lower level of the scale, may be willing to make their contribution, especially if they can see how they will benefit from it in the end. As I have read, if you make a contribution on the minimum rate of \$21 a week -- I believe it is \$21 a week -- when it is time for you to retire, you get a pension or benefit that far exceeds what you would have contributed.

5.32 p.m.

I guess there is always room for a little bit more publicity, advertising and then for dedicated persons to get out there and form relationships to get that money out of the hands of the self-employed person before they go to take care of the needs that they seem to be pressing on the actual date, so we need to do a little bit of work with regard to that.

Madam President, there may be some creative ways too as well that may encourage self-employed persons to contribute because you have to see the National Insurance Fund just like any other pension fund or maybe a life insurance policy, for instance. Madam, some self-employed

persons may rather put their money in a life insurance policy because if the life insurance policy develops a cash value you can always go your insurance company and you can take out a loan or draw on the cash value so maybe it would be to the benefit of the National Insurance Scheme to look at the possibility of offering something similar to self-employed persons especially if a portion of the funds they may draw may go back into investment into their company as capital which would therefore, increase their revenue earning potential because at the end of the day any self-employed person would do things to make sure that that the business that puts food on their table would continue to strive so you many need to start thinking to necessarily the full contribution but separate a percentage of your contributions that you may be able to draw on. Madam, things like that would, especially the self-employed persons who are at the higher end, the sophisticated self-employed individuals like the accountants, the lawyers, and the small business owners would probably encourage those people to make those contributions if they can, in times of need, have access to some of that cash in a short term loan or whatever the case may be. Madam, all of these are things that would help to ensure that that the National Insurance Scheme remains viable.

Madam President, I want to speak to with regards to the disability benefit. We have to think about this in terms of productivity. There is an issue that I have with persons who received the invalidity benefits. Madam, once you received those invalidity benefits you are not allowed to work anywhere and in most cases the invalidity benefit that you would be receiving would never match the amount that you would have earned if you had continued to work but in most cases those persons who genuinely need the invalidity benefits cannot hold down a full time job for 40 hours a week because of the nature of their problems and why they needed the invalidity benefits. Madam President, in some situations you may have someone who may have earned salaries in excess of \$6 000 a month but your invalidity benefit does not even go anywhere close to that but you would have entered into certain contractual and loan agreements based on what you were earning before you have to go on the invalidity benefit so then how are you going to make the difference. Madam, in some cases, some persons who are on invalidity benefits it may be because of the pain and because of the pain they cannot hold down a full time job but intellectually their minds are still fully functioning because you may have people who could possibly be able to lecture or tutor at the University of the West Indies for two hours in the evening or anything of that sort or help a few children with lessons because you have persons who were former teachers that can have children coming to them on a daily basis or whatever and giving lessons and still earn some sort salary or they may be able to do things from at home that would help them to make up some of the income that they would have lost but

unfortunately the way how the Act is written for the National Insurance Scheme those persons as long as you are receiving the invalidity benefits you are not allowed to work or you could be disqualified from the invalidity benefits and many of them depend on those benefits because they cannot imagine how they would live without them.

Madam President, what I would want to recommend to the National Insurance Scheme is that they consider a way where such persons can still continue to the productivity of the country in terms of making whatever skills or services that they have available to the country in terms of developing and building the wealth and productivity of the country and still earn a little bit more income that would help them to pay off for some of the expenses they would have because oftentimes they have high medical expenses, they may have car loans and they may have mortgages to pay off and they still have children to send school through the school system as well.

Madam President, we need to find ways in terms of encouraging those persons to still remain productive to the society. We just do not want them to be a strain on the society taking the invalidity benefits and many of them do feel that way, that they can still be productive and contribute to the society but because they do not want anybody from the National Insurance Scheme turning up and saying you are working so why do you not go out and get a full time job and then take away that benefit from them. I think that you are robbing the society of talented individuals who may not be able to contribute on a full time basis but may still be able to make some valuable input to the country so we need to work at ways of getting around that. Yes, you may have one or two persons who may abuse the system and if you find those persons you need to have a strong penalty for them but there are genuine persons who can still work within the system and be productive as well. Madam, it is all about enhancing the productivity of the country and making the best use of our resources and the people. We do not want persons who have good talent just having to put it one side and not use it simply because they got injury or they became disabled for whatever reason.

Madam President, in terms of the abuse of the benefits as well, we also have to look out for that.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Honourable Member, you have four more minutes.

Senator A.R. WORRELL: Thank you, Madam President. Madam, recently I have noticed something, and I think it has been coming from the wrong quarters as well. Our problem here in Barbados has to do more with our level of productivity. We have developed to such an extent that it costs a lot to run this country and to deliver the

services that we need but the problem is that our level of productivity has not yet reached the level for us to sustain the services that we have become accustomed to receiving. Madam, when I speak about productivity, I am not talking about how many hours an individual works but you also have to look at the productivity in terms of the amount of revenue that is earned from our assets. Madam, assets being in terms of land and buildings. How much revenue are those assets earning on a daily basis?

Madam President, when you look around Barbados you would see there are quite a number of derelict buildings. Now, in 2008/2009, this Democratic Labour Party administration encouraged the National Insurance Scheme to embark on a project where they would have built two office complex buildings in Warrens to house civil servants. I thought that was a beautiful project and as a result the National Insurance Scheme owned property and they received a rental income from the Government. I believe that those two buildings are the best kept Government buildings that you would ever find in Barbados and I think that more of that needs to be done. Madam, what would have happened in that period is that you had a number of Government agencies moving out of old derelict buildings into these office complexes in Warrens and left a number of derelict buildings behind. I do not think those derelict buildings left behind are earning their full economic potential or they are not being productive. I think that this is where the National Insurance Scheme can play another role. I think that we should consider allowing the National Insurance Scheme to be the landlord for the Government. Madam, at a reasonable rate but I think that the money would go toward ensuring that the Fund earns a reasonable return on its investment but one thing that I think you will find is that the buildings will be properly maintained.

Sequence 31 (Done)

The problem is that buildings under central Government there is never a maintenance plan for those buildings but I am certain that those buildings owned by the National Insurance there is a maintenance plan. When you look at the building that the National Insurance is in currently, when you go into that building you do not get the sense that it is run down but you have other Government buildings which were built around the same time or even after and they seem very run down but you do not get the impression that building that the National Insurance is in is a building that is run down which mean that they know how to take care of their property and maintain the buildings therefore I think it would be a good arrangement if more Government offices were actually the property of the National Insurance and the Government actually pay them rent you would be guaranteed that 1) the National Insurance would be generating a good return on the investment which would be there for the benefit of all of us

who will be retiring and calling on the benefit to draw benefits from the National Insurance and the Government offices would be well maintained. That would be a win-win situation for the country and also a third benefit is that some of the properties which we often abandon the National Insurance might be able to restore and find some creative use for these properties and get them to be earning their full economic potential. There may be able to be offices for young entrepreneurs who need office space.

In terms of the revitalisation of Bridgetown it may help to bring more businesses back into Bridgetown because we have quite a few abandoned properties within Bridgetown and the only way that the capital city can be robust or have a lot of activities is if you actually have persons working in it and persons who stay in the capital city after working hours so you need to upgrade the facilities and get them earning at their full economic potential.

Because I am struggling to keep my throat moist I think I will end there. I will say that in terms of productivity, we really do need to think about productivity in terms of how best we can earn more from our assets, not just the people but the land, the buildings and we need to enhance them so that you can earn more and there is a lot of potential out there for that. I am hoping that is an area that the National Insurance can also pay some attention to.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member would want to wrap it up.

Senator A. R. WORRELL: One last thing. The National Insurance has billions of dollars in banks that they are not earning enough in terms of interest on because when you look at the interest that was earn in terms of, you collected revenue of \$500 million but the investment income was only about \$200 something million, there is something wrong there and when you think about having over \$4 billion in assets, this is over a year. The point I am making is that we need to find a way that the National Insurance can also make some funds available to persons to a gap in Barbados. You can never fund financing to start businesses. That is something that is need and if possible, I know that the National Insurance would need to have some sort of security for it but this is a way that would help to not only generate employment which would still benefit the National Insurance but finding ways of making funds available for the investment and the creation of business in Barbados.

With that I support this amendment.

MR. DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator McClean, you have the Floor.

Senator M. P. O. MCCLEAN: Thank you very much, Madam President. I rise to support this National Insurance amendment and it is good sometimes, Madam President, to have the opportunity to listen to the almost the entire debate and to speak just before the leader of the debate wraps up.

We would have had and we would have heard, Madam President, of the comprehensive coverage which benefits the workers of Barbados. I believe in her contribution Senator Byer-Suckoo would have established very clearly the visionary thinking and certainly the visionary action taken in anticipation of independence by the founding fathers of this nation and I must emphasize by a previous iteration for want of a better word of the Democratic Labour Party (DLP). It is by no accident or it is no coincidence that when we look across the landscape of Barbados and we review the many social benefits that accrued to Barbadians, when we look at the social safety net of which Senator Boyce spoke very passionately, and I know of his commitment to those things and, indeed, it is reflective of this Administration and previous Administrations of the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) government, that it was recognised that a small island state like Barbados, with limited physical resources and with a commitment to build a just society and I want to stress, coming into independence that it was felt if there was one thing that had to be done for the average Barbadian, for the worker in Barbados whether this be a private sector, employee or a public sector employee, that there should be some certainly in terms of protection in the near term and certainly, protection in the long term because what we really had, Madam President, would have been provisions, a comprehensive, overtime the National Insurance Scheme has evolved into a comprehensive set of coverage. I do not want to spend a lot of time repeating all that that Senator Byer-Suckoo would have indicated by she certainly listed all of the short term schemes and maternity leave benefits. Of course, we know that the old age pension is the long term one and the whole question of unemployment benefits. Traditionally it has been 26 weeks but I will come back to that point, but what we have before us is a Scheme that is 50 years old.

I spent a lot of time, Madam President, trying to understand what obtains in other countries and really and truly it would be useful if we could spend some time looking at some articles. I will cite a couple of them because I think that when we engage in debate, and I stress this, because those people who seek to influence policy, often from the outside, and when I say from the outside because if you are talking about Government policy and legislation, et cetera, while that is the responsibility, in the first instance, of Government and we may solicit in puts, et cetera, those people who seek to influence, not only policy but public opinion, need to spend some time looking at articles and understanding how Barbados compares with

the rest of the world. Sometimes when I listen to debates and I go back and I read articles, for example, recently in 2012, there was one article written by somebody questioning a number of decisions of the National Insurance Board as they made certain financial decisions but I want very quickly to say that when you start to do some reading you will find that we are, as a country, operating within the context of the National Insurance seeking to pursue good practice and best practice. I want to say seeking to do that because we know of some shortcomings and I may touch on a couple of those but I would want, Madam President, for the record, to ask some of the people who have been critical or who do not understand and who hold on to snippets of information to go and read, for example, the International Social Security Association 2008 Report "Guidelines for the Investment of Social Security Funds and the ISSA Study Group on the investment of social security funds.

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Madam President, if you read that, you would find that they set out in those guidelines what are considered to be best practice. I then ask you to go to the legislation that governs the Fund in Barbados and recognise that we have been following those, to a large extent.

Madam President, I really hastened to say, and I am happy to have heard Senator Byer-Suckoo speak to this this morning, that we were dismayed when we came to office and even before that... Madam President, as you might probably recall, I spent more than a decade hosting a call-in programme on Voice of Barbados and I can tell you that over the years you would have heard some criticism. Ma'am, when we came to office, I can tell you, basic bank statement reconciliations for an institution that is responsibility for over \$1 billion of funds were not done on a timely basis. If you go check the records of this Parliament where annual reports are required to be laid, they were not laid in a timely fashion. I am very happy to hear Senator Byer-Suckoo indicating that we should soon be having statements as current as 2015, because those are examples of areas of weakness in terms of governance. Ma'am, I am proud to say that like we have done in other areas and in other ministries we have worked very hard to address those things, so that if we think in terms of the management of the resources of the Fund, I would say to compare what we do with what those guidelines say and as I said that is the International Social Security Association and that was referred to in a 2012 article by a gentleman. Ma'am, I can tell you that what we seek to do....

Ma'am, one of the other things that they mentioned there in terms of the establishment of the Fund is what I would call multi-sectorial or cross-sectorial representation on the Board of the National Insurance Fund and that is reflected in Barbados, it is not a bunch of Government

officials and certainly it is not a minister of Government sitting on a Board but you have workers' representatives sitting there, we have the private sector sitting there and we have Government representative sitting there to ensure that the kinds of decisions that are taken are done in the best of interest, so that I would want of course to flag that.

Madam President, we often talk about the International Monetary Fund in very limited terms but like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund also spends some time focusing on issues which impact on national economies. For example, I would reference an International Monetary Fund Working Paper which was put out around October, 2016, called "National Insurance Schemes: Reforms in the Caribbean." If people would take some time to read it not only would they get information on what they have to say about our schemes but they speak of insurance schemes in Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, St. Kitts, Nevis, et cetera. Ma'am, it helps you not only to understand the state of our Fund but you can also do the necessary comparison.

Madam President, I believe that in talking about the issue of national insurance, the question of investment is one that is significant to national development as it relates to the governance of the National Insurance Fund and I go back to the guidelines. Ma'am, in talking about the purpose of investment it is simply a case of safeguarding, according to those guidelines, investment by the International Social and Security Association, they simply support the position that is known in Barbados, that the investments are to ensure the safeguarding of the scheme's ability to do a number of things, for example, to pay benefits, which we have been doing, to provide services to generate investment income that helps to finance benefits and services, et cetera. Madam President, those are the kinds of things that have been happening.

Madam President, Senator Boyce and others have made it very clear that there are a couple of things that are peculiar to small countries and to schemes such as these, for example, (1), we have a narrow private sector base. We have very few public companies which float or sell shares on the market. If you watch television on any given night and you contrast the activity of the Barbados Stock Exchange to that of the Jamaica Stock Exchange, for example - of course, the economies are different in size and so on - what you would realise is that we do have a very limited public company element of the private sector, those companies that have shared that are owned by the public. Therefore, when we talk about supporting economic development and about supporting the private sector, which is one of the recommendations and one of the practices that is common to developing countries social security schemes, there are limited private sector options. Moreover, because of the limited size of the private sector, the Government of Barbados has had to act as a catalyst to economic

development and therefore why should we invest in foreign Instruments to the detriment of investment in development in our own country? The whole development thrust is important but beyond that, there is the financial consideration which we heard of before. What we can earn of foreign investments that we are not earning here? Ma'am, I will give you an example. If you go to some of those reports you will see, for example, that there is an investment in real estate. In fact, if you go to the National Insurance Scheme at www.nis.gov.bb and look investments, as of 31 October last year you would see that approximately 7 per cent or 6.91 per cent to be exact of the National Insurance Scheme portfolio was in real estate, a total of \$307 608 032.

Madam President, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, as you know, has responsibility for a number of missions and offices overseas. If you go to New York, for example, you could ask yourself what does the Barbados Government have available as its options? Ma'am, we can go and rent a building that is owned by an entity in New York or in the case of what we now have, we can actually have the National Insurance Scheme in Barbados investing in such a building and we pay them that rent. Now, looking at some of the statistics that I looked at where in the case of one of the Caribbean islands a significant percentage of their holdings was in commercial bank deposits, let us imagine if we were to put that money in commercial bank deposits, let us see what we are now getting, we are getting less than 0.5 per cent at that volume, in other words, we are not getting anything. The National Insurance Scheme could not afford to part its money in the bank. Worst yet, even if it were paid 2 per cent or 3 per cent and left its money there, the Government of Barbados when it needs to finance infrastructure and so on, if it were borrowing locally, the Government would have to go to the bank and borrowed the same money that contributors, that is you, me and everybody else who would have been contributing to the national insurance would have been paying and would have been parking that money in the bank, so that you are going to borrow your own money to do what you want to do, while at the same time enriching a multinational corporation, because for the most part commercial banks in Barbados are not even regional, they have their role to play but if we look at the total scheme of things and you are talking about development you are putting money there and are earning less than that when you can lend it directly to Government in the form of loans to particular projects as we heard mentioned earlier in relation to the project to rehabilitate our police stations, many of which were in extremely bad conditions, so that you do that and you see the benefits as it addressed the physical working conditions under which our constabulary and others work, or we could have borrowed it from the bank where they would make a profit off our money while the National Insurance Scheme does not make the return on that investment, so that Government would be paying an

extremely heavy penalty. Madam President, if you work through that you would understand what I am saying.

Madam President, the other thing is -- and you have heard it before but I think that because I come at this stage it may be worth reiterating and it certainly suggests that a lot of what I want to say would have already been said - the National Insurance Scheme does not on a day-to-day basis earn foreign exchange, so that if I want to invest in US securities or US equities the National Insurance Scheme would have to go the Central Bank of Barbados to buy foreign exchange to invest. Ma'am, because I am conscious of the time I am not going to list a set of

interest rates and so on that they would earn but I recommend anybody to do a little bit of research and you would see that in fact if they did that, apart from using valuable foreign exchange which we need for other purposes, they would not earn the kind of return which they get when they look at what they paid to acquire the building that our permanent representative or mission or consulate in New York occupy, or our BTMI (Barbados Tourism Marketing Incorporated) people occupy, et cetera.

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That money comes back to the Government and people of Barbados. The Government pays money to the NIS, which allows it to earn a level of return substantially higher than if it had parked the money in the bank, and substantially higher than if it had invested in foreign investments at this time. Of course, I am not going to spend time on that but we also heard of the risks.

Madam President, there is another thing which I want to touch on very quickly, and which I think is critical in the context of all that I see playing out in Barbados. I hear people talking about disrespecting workers and not caring about workers, but I say this: If the Government had to take our investments and put them overseas in something in New York or London or Zurich or wherever, one of the major financial capitals of the world, in the context of things the amount of money we would invest is but a drop in the bucket, so to speak, in any international investment pool, that drop in the bucket which is perhaps a bucketful in Barbados would be lost to us and we would not be able to, for example, spend the money on the police stations, which creates work in the construction sector, or invest in other kinds of areas which continue to employ public sector persons. We would perhaps not have had the cash available to offer not just 26 weeks of unemployment but to move, not from 26 to 30 weeks or to 35 weeks, but to 40 weeks at a time when things were tight. I do not want to tell any lies, Madam President. The point I am making is that since taking office -- because we have to contextualise all that we are taking about -- this Administration has sought, through the use of some of the resources of the NIS along with the

resources of the Central Bank, to ensure that as the single largest employer on this island, it continues to keep people employed. I am simplifying it. Therefore, it would be interesting if those persons who are detractors or those persons who are trying to back this Government against the wall and push for early Elections and so on, would spend some time telling the public. I tell the public, "Do your research".

Madam President, I sat here and one of the things I enjoy when I am speaking last is that I can multi-task, so I can listen to my colleagues and I can do research either on my phone or in my notebook and look and see a lot of things. It would be interesting for them to look and tell us what were and are the recommendations put before the Social Partnership by the private sector in respect of Government's expenditure. We talk about National Insurance, which really is about collecting some of the earnings of the public or private sector workers of Barbados and pooling those resources -- it is a simple process -- to create a potential or actual investment pool to provide short, medium and long-term benefits for employees. While Government acts as a facilitator and a catalyst in creating employment, the public sector should not be and cannot be the single largest employer forever, particularly when people in the unions - for example I heard some young people, I think it was the young man who was the President of the National Union of Public Workers - are talking about inefficiency.

Pray tell me, Madam President, when the Government of Barbados is struggling to continue to pay and the head of a union can articulate publicly that there are inefficiencies in the Public Service, the Public Service is primarily people. He did not say inefficient systems, he said inefficiencies. My question would be, "Can we engage in a discussion -- the journalists and the unions in this case -- to talk about the nature of the inefficiencies and the recommendations to impact and eliminate those inefficiencies and enhance productivity?" As Government looks to cut expenses, there are a couple things which you have: You can actually reduce the numbers of people working and ask people to do more, or you can shift some of the services which you offered before from being free at the point of delivery to being services paid-for. If we are talking about the International Monetary Fund, for example, they will typically tell you, "We need to reduce the costs of providing a whole slew of public goods to the people of Barbados." We know, if I go back to the genesis of this National Insurance Scheme, that what we were doing then was for the persons who would have been five years old like me at that time. You wanted to make sure that when you reach the age that I am now -- you can do the maths, you know how old I am, I do not hide it -- that I can soon retire and receive a pension, having spent many years working in this country. If we go down the line that some of these people want us to go, we will find ourselves

in trouble. The notion that somehow workers are being hard done by does not stand the test when we look at this NIS. It does not stand the test when we look at the investment; the domestic component of the investment strategies of the NIS over the years, Madam President. Therefore, I believe it is critical that we spend some time talking about that, Madam President.

Those who question Government, show me the private sector entities that have got money from National Insurance on their own steam; not Government supporting something in the short term as they did with Four Seasons. In fact, perhaps I would be bold to say that Government perhaps was too good. It was a private sector entity and we could have left it there, but Government has to think of all the interests in this country. We also have to think about the reputational risks which Government not stepping into a situation like that might have caused in this country, or the impact of that reputational risk and those kinds of things.

Madam President, it is critical that people honestly look at this and recognise that at the end of the day it is not only the existence of this NIS and our social security arrangement but the operationalising of the philosophy of ensuring that we look out for the people and try to pursue a just society. As we talk about looking after some and ignoring others, because realistically if the unions are to get -- what do they want now? -- the National Social Responsibility Levy reduced from ten to five per cent and some kind of coping subsidy -- I almost said a coping study - or coping whatever, answer me this, Madam President. I do not know that you can answer me. That is rhetorical. Government is saying we are in control of the area of expenditure, which is the biggest area that is part of our challenge and the one we can best control. I will come back to revenue. We are in control of expenditure and we are seeing that if we go too hard down the line of cutting and if we follow the recommendations of the private sector, we would probably send home between 5 000 and 10 000 people. That would be catastrophic, Madam President. The National Insurance Scheme would lose overnight contributions from those 5 000 to 10 000 people, and we can do the maths. I am not a mathematician. My sister is the actuary, not me. We can do the mathematics and that is not an ad for the Minister to hire her, Madam President. She lives in Canada. When she wanted a job, she could not get one. She could not come back here so she stayed there, but anyhow the maths would suggest that if you did that, the very Scheme which we are talking about would lose those contributions overnight.

6.38 p.m.

The private sector that seems to want us to send those home would forget that overnight, those persons..... If you look at the structure of the public sector it is pyramidal

so that the lowest earning people constitute the largest number of persons employed. Madam, those persons, a lot of them would get sent home because you are not earning a lot the average working persons, including those low income earners do not have more than three to six months of savings in terms of salary saved if they are lucky. Madam, that means that a person who do not have a nest egg on which to draw will have to turn to this same National Insurance Scheme for unemployment benefits. Madam, while we may have extended them for 42 weeks, if you imagine that 10 000 people go home, you cannot extend it for 40 weeks in a case like that, you would be challenged to pay them 26 weeks especially when they behave in the way that was described that some people feel that if they are offered a job, having been severed, they are going to wait for 26 weeks before I go to work, so we start to look at the total picture.

Madam President, I am talking about benefits and the benefit is only a fraction of your pay. If you are cut, I cannot go down Bridgetown and buy shoes, I cannot go to the supermarket to buy food, I cannot go to the cinema, I cannot go to a Cropover event, I cannot do most of the things that I want to do, and there is an inward spiral that would come from there. Madam, I am not the economist, my brother was but you would see the immediate impact on this society. Madam, when people say they want a coping allowance and we want you to cut it at the same time, there was a time when institutions like the unions, represented by the spokespersons we are hearing now, they would have done the analysis and not say somebody in the Ministry of Finance tell them we can pay, that person may be like the person who might have worked for me and did not understand a bit of accounting that because today in the store that I used to operate about 10 years ago, might have sold X amount of dollars would say that she made a lot of money today but she forgot that two days before she did not sell a thing but out of that money you have to pay for the stock you are selling, you have to pay the person's salary, you have to pay rent, you have to pay your contribution to the person's National Insurance and, Madam, I could go on and on. Madam, my concern is that when we start to look at, my wish is that people would spend some time to really study and speak the truth about these issues and understand that in a developing State like ours where we have to put national development first, where we are operating in a society with a narrow economic base, where we have a lot of small companies and so on, that in terms of investment

MADAM PRESIDENT: Honourable Member, you have two more minutes.

Senator the Hon. Ms. MAXINE P. O. McCLEAN: Madam, I want to stress that where we have those things, we have in fact been able to date to utilise the resources at the National Insurance Scheme in a way that is maximally

beneficial to the widest number of persons in the country. We have attempted over the years to address the weaknesses in terms of administration and operations and we will continue to do that and it is largely transparent. You can go and pick up the documents and read them. I was on the website.... I remember I was in a conversation while we had the break with one of my colleagues and I was saying that you could probably find the information and I was about to show him the information on the website when I had to prepare to speak. Madam, this is an important institution in the country, it is one that offers benefits to Barbadians. I hope that we will continue to ensure that we elevate the standards by which we operate and that we are able to ensure continued good governance and transparency.

Madam President, having said all of that, I cannot end without thanking my colleague, the Minister of Labour for doing all that she has been doing to make sure that the National Insurance Fund and all of its elements continue to deliver to Barbadians. Madam, remembering of course, that in a couple of years, I want my pension and, Madam President, I know I will get it.

Madam President, on that basis, I beg to support this Bill.

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

Senator Dr. the Hon. E. BYER-SUCKOO: Madam President, thank you very much. This has certainly turned into a full debate and a fulsome debate as well as we had the opportunity to discuss all things national insurance. Yes, it was a simple debate as we look at the waiver and amended the National Insurance Scheme to allow for this waiver. Madam, I want to thank colleagues through you, Madam President, for the overwhelming support that was given to this particular amendment but also it would be clear now why I took this opportunity at this time to open up the debate so that colleagues would have the opportunity to opine on National Insurance and social security to give their kudos to this organisation that is now 50 years old and to express their concerns as well as their convictions about where they think National Insurance should go and what they think the National Insurance Scheme is perhaps not getting a grip on, in other words, to help to feed into the vision of the National Insurance Scheme. I did indicate earlier that we are at the stage of looking at a strategic plan for the next phase of National Insurance in Barbados and certainly this debate would help to inform that and several other important points were raised here today.

Madam President, certainly on days like today and as I have mentioned earlier, when I travel around the world and I talk about what the National Insurance Scheme is, it

makes me proud to be Barbadian. In fact, Madam President, when I talk overseas about a lot of the things that we have in Barbados I am so proud to be Barbadian because people from bigger countries, from richer countries, from developed countries often do not have what we have. I am sure that Honourable Members are aware that in the United States of America, in many States, unemployment benefits are unheard of and sickness benefits are unheard of in many States and there is no federal legislation at all, this is a State by State arrangement that they have going, so when countries even such as the United States of America hear what we are doing in Barbados. Madam, when they hear about our education system, about our health care, Madam, all of these make me so proud to be Barbadian as we celebrate 50 year of Independence. Madam, I also very proud to be associated with the Democratic Labour Party who has made this possible for us, things like National Insurance and so it is with pride that I know we stood here today and we were able to talk about the National Insurance Scheme.

Madam President, a couple of things were raised and I want to just quickly touch on those. One was when I mentioned the backlog of sickness claim. I did say I was not sure which figure was going around in my head where the zero was, was it \$25 000 or \$2 500. It actually is about \$25 000 sickness claims that is backed up so the Director has been mandated to make a priority of that as well as of the audits and financial statements those that are outstanding. The director has been mandated to make that a priority. Madam, as you would be aware the National Insurance Scheme is unique in its configuration. It is administered through a board, so the board will give instructions to the Director but the Director and the staff at the National Insurance Scheme are civil servants so they also do get instructions and directions through the Ministry as well. I can say that both the board and the Minister have mandated the director and the National Insurance Scheme to address the backlog of sickness claims and the delay in the audit and financial statements as a matter of priority.

Madam President, we had the opportunity today to put the National Insurance Scheme within the context of our social protection floor, again, an enviable social protection floor, or social safety net, those are two terms that are use interchangeable in the global but we had the opportunity today to examine some of the provisions within that social safety net. We realise again that what Barbados offers is second to none because in there is the health care, the welfare and the ICC Bridge Programme that Minister Todd spoke to as well.

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All of that is part of our social safety net because Barbados has seen to it that we put our people first and that we ensure that while we want development, while we want

our economies to grow, we have to ensure that our people who are our greatest resource are protected and that our people are encouraged to be able to develop themselves and their skills and they certainly cannot do that without education, healthcare, social protection and indeed, social security.

I do need to signal to Senator Sir Roy Trotman who raised two issues that I do have to look at. I cannot give him an answer right now. He mentioned a challenge with the maternity benefit and an ???edit??? that was issued by one of our agencies regarding maternity benefit. I am not aware of that and I will promise to do some research and to see what that is about but also a very important matter he raised and that is the sick leave to caregivers. We are aware that there are challenges that caregivers have in this country, in fact, around the world it is an issue especially for single parents when they have to take time off from work. One of the areas we attempted to address that is in the Employment Rights Act where we do have a provision that says it is unfair dismissal if you dismiss a caregiver who has an emergency with their ward, whether that person would be an older person or a child. Senator Sir Roy did express a concern that if that person had to take the day off to take someone to the doctor urgently that they would be laid off and that is now unfair dismissal since we passed the Employments Rights Act but the issue of sick leave and so on is not honoured. That sick leave for that caregiver is not honoured right now by the National Insurance and it is something that I would have to research to see what is happening around the world, what kind of impact it has, what kind of impact not getting this support also has on the caregiver so these are things that we have to look for. That is why I said that I am glad we had the debate today because it allows for these ideas to be thrown up and it gives me some homework that I have to do but it all for the overall improvement of our National Insurance Scheme.

We have come a long way, this National Insurance Scheme has provided a lot but we have all identified that there are areas which we can improve. One point that I will touch on is that of the future work and it was referred to by a number of colleagues. What does the future of work hold? I touched on it, Sir Roy touched on it, other colleagues, Senator Husbands spoke on it and others and the question is: will there be more jobs in the future because of automation, because of the fourth industrial revolution which is ongoing now? Will there be more jobs or will there be less jobs? The ILO is seeking to examine this. They had questionnaires and surveys done throughout their member countries as they will put this together for their centenary in 2019 because it is a concern to all of us. Will there be more jobs or will there be less jobs? How can we prepare for that? How can we accommodate those persons who may lose jobs? For this Government jobs have been a priority. We are aware that we live in a global environment where there has been jobless growth out of the

recession, many countries that are recording growth are not seeing a concomitant increase in jobs so there has been jobless growth.

Around the world we have noticed the phenomenon of a stagnation of wage growth and this is one that is quite topical in Barbados as well. Wages have not been increasing due in main part to the recession and those factors that prevent employers from saying here, let me increase your wages. This Government increased the minimum wage as part of a social protection flow not as high as we wanted it to go in the first instance but we did increase the minimum wage because we know that unless there is an active intervention by the Government to say, this minimum wage has to go up, left to market forces it is not going up all by itself so that was an intervention that was take and we also in this Senate approved the Minimum Wage Board in which we looked at terms and conditions and having done that I am about to name the actual members of the Minimum Wage Board so that they can get to work. Jobs are a concern. Jobs, wages, high unemployment continues to be a factor, high youth unemployment I touched on before.

For the National Insurance this unemployment has to be perhaps number one in their concerns because it affects the benefits they have to pay out, it affects the income that comes in, it affects economic growth, it affects everything that speaks to National Insurance. It is a threat to social cohesion and so it is a priority for Government as well. This Government since the start of the recession has articulated an employment policy and we have also embarked on active labour market policies that would have seen us increase the intensity of training and certification as well as career counselling as I spoke to earlier, placement, apprenticeships, all of these active labour market policies to encourage more persons to prepare themselves for the marketplace. We have been looking at demand driven education and training, again to help persons to actually take advantage of what job opportunities are there and also developing enterprises and small businesses and so on.

Everything we have discussed here, including all of those all speak to us trying to ensure that Barbadians can be looked after. We talked a lot and Senator Sir Roy continued my discussion on decent work, we talked about the need for employment and so on because we have been talking about social protection. One of the most important points of social protection is employment. Without employment it is hard to do anything else. It is hard to send your children to school, it is hard to buy a home everything else becomes difficult without employment. It is hard to be included actively in society and what society is doing without a job so jobs are important. That is why I am concerned. I did not speak to it earlier but every decision that we have seen this Government make in this recession has been about protecting public sector jobs and working with the private

sector to protect jobs in the private sector as much as possible also. In so doing, protecting jobs so that our people can look after themselves because without a job you cannot do anything and even in the face of that now you have incurred the wrath of the private sector because they want you to shut down the State-owned enterprises which means, essentially, sending home all those people in the State-owned enterprises and surprising you have incurred the wrath of the workers' representatives for trying to save the jobs of the workers. It really is baffling but it continues to be a priority.

Senator McClean spoke to the fact that when you are in Government you have to have a more global picture. You cannot just be tunnel vision and decide I am going to cut expenses. You have to have a global vision, you have to realise that every decision you make has consequences and you have to weigh in the ballots the consequences of each decision and decide where you are going and that is why we are where we are today because one of the decisions we took was that protecting jobs was key. Everything we are doing is about that and this is important too to the National Insurance.

Senator Boyce also spoke to the importance of National Insurance investing in those opportunities that would create jobs and we have seen that happening. We have seen the National Insurance investing in infrastructure projects. Not to repeat what Senator Boyce spoke to but he did mention some of the infrastructure projects, building office complexes. They are involved in the Citizens Security Project which creates jobs but also we spoke about the actually citizens security where our police now are being looked after and they have the capacity now in these new facilities. Projects in hotels, the National Insurance has invested in tourism projects as well so as to ensure that the economy continues to move along and to ensure that there are jobs for everybody because we all realise that without the jobs everything comes to a standstill. This is why the investment in retraining as well. The National Insurance has continued to invest.

Do not get me wrong. Earlier I said that our focus is not so much on investment right now but we are at a phase where we are focussing on customer service, on collection and cash flow management and so on but that is not to say that we are not to say that we are not investing, the National Insurance Scheme continues to invest its surpluses and it continues to get good yields on those investments as well.

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The return on investment is above what the actuaries would have stipulated as a minimum, so that they are getting good yields on their investment and they are investing surpluses because there are surpluses, so that for

all those who think that national insurance contributions are down, there are no surpluses. We do, in fact, know that there is enough money right now that if the National Insurance Scheme were to come to a standstill today there is still be enough to pay out benefits for the next few decades and so as far as our current situation goes, the National Insurance Scheme is actually holding our own.

Madam President, this investment is not just about investing for the sake of making money, we have a country that has its challenges, we have to invest also in our country, that is why we invest in the Citizen's Security Project, we invest in health, and we invest in training our young people. We are doing all of these things because we have to ensure that we look to the future and that if we do not do these things that there will not be people who are earning to support the National Insurance Scheme.

Madam President, I did hear a couple of suggestions also that I took note of, one being that the National Insurance Scheme looking at investing in small businesses and as Government has been putting emphasis on small businesses, I think that is something that bears looking after. Ma'am, the National Insurance Scheme does invest in large projects, for example, hotels, golf courses, et cetera, but I think that is something that bears looking after, looking at having that investment in small business where again there will be a return on that investment because there will be contributions coming out of that. Also, those small businesses can create employment for others as well and so help to boost the economy and the employment situation. Madam President, there has also been the suggestion about the Bridgetown revitalisation, so that there have been some ideas that have been thrown up today that I know that we can certainly use in the future.

Madam President, I would also want to say that I did not deliberately refer to the 15th Actuarial Review today because it is not yet out, it is being printed. I have heard others on the other side referring to it but it is not yet printed and therefore it is not a document of this Honourable Chamber, but I have given an undertaking to members of the public and also members of the media that when this report is ready, I will actually have a full Press conference and will do a full presentation highlighting what is in that report, including all of the challenges, all of the concerns, all of the successes and opening up for questions as well, because it is important that persons do not just take up the document and misinterpret that document.

Madam President, Senator Ince spoke to the various scenarios, the optimistic scenario and the pessimistic scenario. If this is not explained properly then somebody could simply take it up and say that this is not what the document says is going to happen without that person appreciating that that is just a scenario that is presented there as one particular option. Ma'am, we are going to be

doing that very shortly. As I said, the document is being printed and so as soon as I have that printed document you will hear more about it.

Madam President, the concern has been raised and it has been addressed quite fully by my colleagues about the investment in Government and in Government projects. There has also been a lot of talk about Government's indebtedness. I would want that when we talk about how much Government is indebted to the National Insurance Scheme for us to look at it in that light, realising that what Government owes the National Insurance Scheme is money from the National Conservation Commission, again which is keeping the National Conservation Commission afloat and helping with the jobs there. Also the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, an investment in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, that money that is owed is money that has gone into the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Ma'am, this is not money that the Government took up to send all of us on a joy ride, this is money that was used from the National Insurance Scheme to help to keep certain organisations going and to be able to help the jobs and keep the contribution going and all of that, so that the National Conservation Commission, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, the Sanitation Service Authority, the Barbados Agriculture Management Company are some of the entities.

Ma'am, when we talk about how indebted Government is, let us realise and put it in that frame that this is not money that Government said that the National Insurance Scheme is sitting on a lot of money and so give us that to flicker that money away, this is money that was used for the people of Barbados. Ma'am, as Senator Hunte said, the Government backs the National Insurance Scheme, the Government has backed everybody's insurance and the Government will back the National Insurance Scheme. Ma'am, as I mentioned just very briefly in passing this morning when, for example, the Unemployment Fund declined and there were measures that were being looked at to boost the National Insurance Scheme, in addition to shunting some of the Severance Payment Fund's contributions into the National Insurance Scheme, Government, instead took money out of the Consolidated Fund and did not say, here, write this off against what we have for you, Government took up \$10 million and said here, put this into the Unemployment Fund. Ma'am, there was no talk, no option of writing that off against what we owe you because it is in our legislation that the Government continues to back the National Insurance Scheme and that is a commitment that we have.

Madam President, as I said, even if the National Insurance Scheme were to stop today, there is no need for persons like my colleagues on either side of me who are closer to retirement or even for me who is a bit further off from retirement... I am confident that (1), there are funds there and that (2), we are managing the funds and that we

are looking to the future with wisdom and commonsense, so that we are managing it sufficiently well that we will have those returns, so that I can look forward to a pension and my children would not have to bear all the burden of having to look after me when I reach that age. Ma'am, mind you, I do warn my children that they are my pension plan, so that when they come up with these unscheduled expenses I say, well, just consider that my contribution to my pension plan. However, that goes both ways because when I say or do anything to them that they do not necessarily agree with they say, well, you know mommy, remember, we are the ones who choose your nursing home, so that that goes both ways.

Madam President, I think, all in all, we agree that, (1), this waiver was a good idea; that, (2), we should support the Bill that is before us; that, (3) the National Insurance Scheme is doing very well and has done very well for Barbados in 50 years; that it has been managed well and we give kudos to all those at the National Insurance Scheme. We also agree that we are on track to address those concerns that we see coming up on the horizon. We are looking at them, we are devising plans and we are on track to actually prepare for those and make sure that the National Insurance Scheme continues to be a lifeline. We are on track that we broaden the net of people that we cover, that we get more contributions, that we capture those in the informal sector, that we capture those self-employed persons and so on. Ma'am, all of these things we are looking at to ensure the future viability of the National Insurance Scheme.

Madam President, I would want to close by again publicly congratulating all those who over the 50 years have had anything to do with the management and administration of the National Insurance Scheme, they have done an excellent job and to say congratulation to them on achieving 50 good years. Madam President, with that I now beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

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

On the separate motion of Senator Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO, the Senate resolved itself into Committee on the Bill. Senator the Very Rev. H. E. CRICLOW, the DEPUTY PRESIDENT, in the Chair.

Mr. DEPUTY PRESIDENT: This Senate is now in Committee of Supply.

No.D11 (37)7.18 p.m.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This Senate is now in Committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 were called and passed.

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

On the separate motion of Senator Dr. the Hon. E.R. BYER-SUCKOO, the Bill was read a third time, passed and cited as the National Insurance and Social Security (Amendment) Act, 2017.

ADJOURNMENT

Senator the Hon. Ms. M.P.O. McCLEAN: Madam President, I beg to move that this Sitting be now adjourned sine die.

The question that the Sitting do now adjourn sine die was put and resolved in the affirmative without division, and MADAM PRESIDENT adjourned the Sitting accordingly.

7.12 p.m.

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

Prepared with the transcript; for checking against the recording and the Minutes.

EDITORIAL QUERIES

Points noted while preparing this report from the edited transcript. The text has not been altered except where stated.

Q1. Masthead. The session is not stated in the source, so no session line is printed.

Q2. PRESENT list. Senators J. Ince, the Hon. D. W. Boyce and H. A. Husbands spoke in the debate but are not named in the PRESENT list. The note ‘Prayers were led by Rev. Father Errington Massiah.’ is run into the ABSENT list. Printed as in the source.

Q3. Opening. The convening sentence reads ‘on Wednesday, the July 19, 2017’. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Chair during the evening session. Near the end of Senator A. R. Worrell’s speech the Chair is labelled ‘MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER’; Senator McClean is then called by ‘MR. DEPUTY PRESIDENT’ but addresses ‘Madam President’, and ‘MADAM PRESIDENT’ gives her the time remaining. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Committee on the Bill. The Deputy President announces ‘This Senate is now in Committee of Supply’, although the Senate went into Committee on the National Insurance and Social Security (Amendment) Bill, 2017. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Reporters’ slips. Several reporters’ slip references appear as lines of the debate text, for example ‘S: D11 (1)’, ‘Senate D 11 Seq 3’, ‘Sequence 31 (Done)’ and ‘No.D11 (37)7.18 p.m.’. Printed as in the source.

Q7. Suspension for lunch. The question reads ‘that the Senate do no suspend until 2.30 p.m.’. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The Senate met in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, on Wednesday, 19th July, 2017 at 11.00 a.m., with Her Honour Senator Miss Kerryann F. Ifill, President, in the Chair; prayers were led by Rev. Father Errington Massiah. The President read a message from the Governor General, Sir Elliott Belgrave, that he would demit office on retirement on 30th June, 2017, and wished Sir Elliott and Lady Belgrave a long retirement. She announced excuses for Senators Adams, Fraser and Lady Haynes and for Senator Abrahams’s lateness. Senator Dr. the Hon. E. R.

Byer-Suckoo, Minister of Labour, Social Security and Human Resource Development, laid the Electric Light and Power Fees Regulation, 2017, Standing Orders 22(1) and 45(2) were suspended, and the National Insurance and Social Security (Amendment) Bill, 2017 and the Offshore Petroleum (Amendment) Bill, 2017 were read a first time.

Senator Byer-Suckoo moved the second reading of the National Insurance and Social Security (Amendment) Bill, 2017, amending Cap. 47 to give legal effect to the 100 per cent waiver of interest granted from 1st October, 2016 to 1st March, 2017 to employers and self-employed persons in arrears who regularised their position, as a measure to help businesses with cash flow. She traced the Scheme from its introduction in June 1967 in its fiftieth year, and spoke of persons who drew all 26 weeks of unemployment benefit before seeking work and of the challenge of an ageing population. Senator J. Ince, a former Investment Manager of the Scheme, praised its staff, recalled a proposal to buy Treasure Beach when Sir Henry Forde was Chairman of the Board, and asked who other than the Scheme or the Central Bank would buy Government debt.

After lunch Senator Sir Roy Trotman supported the Bill, referring to the Declaration of Philadelphia and to employment creation. Senator R. A. Hunte spoke on the labour movement and on Margaret Thatcher and the strike that collapsed, and Senator the Hon. D. W. Boyce said the social safety net was not only financial. Senator H. A. Husbands called the Scheme one of the better run institutions in Barbados and asked how one person could serve on the Boards of both the Scheme and a private insurance company, the two large investment entities in Barbados. Senator the Hon. P. M. T. Todd congratulated the Scheme and its staff and recalled the improvements made by Democratic Labour Party Administrations since 1971.

After a further suspension Senator A. R. Worrell said the Scheme had been used to help companies with cash flow after 2008, described its project on derelict buildings and the revitalisation of Bridgetown, and called for greater productivity and better returns on the Scheme’s bank deposits. Senator the Hon. Ms. M. P. O. McClean, Leader of the Senate, supported the Bill with comparisons from other countries.

In reply Senator Byer-Suckoo addressed the backlog of sickness claims and explained that she had not referred to the 15th Actuarial Review because it was still being printed and was not a document of the Senate. She said that money the Scheme had invested in Government had been used for the people of Barbados, and congratulated all who

had managed the Scheme over 50 years. The second reading was agreed to without division; in Committee, Senator the Very Rev. H. E. Crichlow, Deputy President, in the Chair, Clauses 1 and 2 passed, and the Bill was read a

third time and cited as the National Insurance and Social Security (Amendment) Act, 2017.

On the motion of Senator McClean the Senate was adjourned sine die.