
THE SENATE DEBATES

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2013 – 2018

THE SENATE

Wednesday, June 14, 2017

Senate met in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings on Wednesday, June 14, 2017 at 11.00 a.m.

PRESENT

Her Honour Senator Miss Kerryann F. Ifill, B.Sc. (Hons.), M.B.A. (President)

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

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

Senator Dr. the Hon. E. R. Byer-Suckoo, M.B., B.S. (Minister of Labour, Social Security and Human Resource Development)

Senator the Hon. D. W. Boyce, B.Sc. (Econ.), M.B.A. (Fin.), CMA, F.C.A. (Minister in the office of the Prime Minister)

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

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

Senator J. Ince, J.P., B.B.A., M.B.A., DIP (Mgmt.) (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs)

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

Senator R. A. Hunte, J.P.

Senator Rev. Dr. D. L. Durant, D.D. (Hon.)

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

Senator W. A. Abrahams, LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C.

Senator Prof. Emeritus Sir Henry Fraser, K.A., G.C.M., B.Sc., MBBS, Ph.D., FACP, FRCP

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

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

Senator J. A. Watson

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

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

Senator Sir Roy Trotman, K.A., M.A. D.D. (Hons.)

Prayers were led by Rev. Father Errington Massiah.

MADAM PRESIDENT: The Senate is in Session

ANNOUNCEMENT BY YOUR HONOUR THE PRESIDENT

MADAM PRESIDENT: I have received excuses from the following Senators:

1. Senator Durant, who will be here later today.
2. Senator Walcott, who is out of the country on business.
3. Senator Abrahams, who will join us later this morning.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Colleagues, at this time, we remember all those countries who are going through turmoil and distress. At present, we are most touched by the trials of our colleagues in the United Kingdom. They have suffered many, many tragedies over the past couple of months including the deaths in March, the bombing in Manchester, the recent fatalities on London Bridge and as recent as today, the fire in the Grenfell Tower high-rise complex. I therefore ask that we stand and take a minute silence in remembrance of those who have lost their lives and at that time to pray to an end of senseless death of these people.

One minute silence was observed.

MADAM PRESIDENT: May the souls of the faithfully departed rest in peace.

I have received an excuse from Senator Abrahams who will be joining us later this morning as well.

PRESENTATION OF PAPER

Senator M. MCCLEAN: Madam President, I am commanded to lay the following:

1. The Barbados National Oil Company Limited Annual Report 2014.
2. The Chief Medical Officer's Report 2010 to 2012.
3. The Income Tax Automatic Exchange of Information Regulation 2017.
4. The Loan Agreement No. 35/0R-BARR between Caribbean Development Bank and Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. dated March 27, 2017.
5. The Child Care Board Financial Statement for the year ended March 31, 2016.
6. The Sugar Industry Sugar Workers Providence Fund Order, 2017.
7. The Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemption) St. James Atlantic Incorporated Order 2017.
8. The National Conservation Commission Fees (Amendment) Regulation 2017.
9. The Barbados Economic and Social Report 2016.

REVERT TO ANNOUNCEMENT BY YOUR HONOUR

MADAM PRESIDENT: I am in receipt of the Minutes for May 17, 2017, are they any errors or omissions. There being none, I ask that these minutes be confirmed.

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

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Senator the Hon. Ms. MAXINE P. O. McLean: Madam President, I beg to move that Standing Orders 25(1) and 45(2) be suspended for the remainder of the day's sitting.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed on.

Sequence 1

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Senator the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: To my mind that does two things: (1) it exposes young people who in their homes are very influential to the issues not only of firefighting but more importantly I am sure fire prevention which is an important issue for our young people, and (2) it also exposes them to a career option as well because they get to understand, as I said, the science of firefighting and the importance to the community and so on, so what we have seen, Madam President, is an effort on the part of the institution and, of course, on the part of the Government to do something.

We also would have seen investment in new equipment, so we are talking about making sure that in addition to physical buildings we also have the state-of-the-art types of fire tenders which can fight a mixed of fires because we are into a new era of the kinds of things that people have in their homes like the chemicals and whatever and the size of buildings and how we address buildings of a certain height, et cetera.

Madam President, what I want to signal is that we have had as part of this vesting preparation to ensure that there was an enhancement of the Arch Hall Fire Station. Madam President, when we think of the northern part of the island, an important development was the expansion of the operations there. I also believe that it has also been utilised in terms of not only firefighting but an ambulance bay and that again is important when we think in terms of response time.

Overall, Madam President, I see that what we have here is a situation where proper attention has been given to ensuring that we are able to address the calibre of officers employed, the familiarisation of our young people to the valuable service that persons in that profession render to the country. We recognise that as part of an ongoing process and programme of the enhancement of working conditions. When I say a programme of working conditions, I do not restrict it to the Barbados Fire Service, I make reference to the Royal Barbados Police Force as well.

Madam President, if I could digress a bit, as a person who grew up in Black Rock and spent all of my school days going down Eagle Hall and seeing that nice old coral stone building, when I look around this room and I see a similar thing, I see now that that building has also been restored. I remember having to take my son there not because he was a trouble tree but because somebody had stolen his bag and phone and so on and we went to report it and I remember seeing the then dilapidated state of the Black Rock Police Station, and that was a short time before they moved across the street. What I can tell you now is that having relocated the officers from there across to the other side of the street, they have now renovated that building but it will continue to be used by the Royal

Barbados Police Force as I understand it, and that to my mind is important.

Madam President, I have digressed, but I have to contextualise the work at Arch Hall within a context of a commitment of this Administration to address the quality of work environment for our employees. In another life I used to be involved in a small business in Bridgetown, that would have been in the late 90s early 2000, and we had a break-in and I remember having to go Central Police Station to report the matter and seeing the absence of basic things like chairs and so on and seeing the extremely difficult conditions. I know that physical conditions are not all but physical conditions as I said before are conducive to an employee's ability to function, and therefore as we look around us the facilities for our key officers providing safety and security to the population are important and therefore any effort to improve the conditions available to such officers is important.

In addition to the physical facilities, I mentioned training and development and going hand in hand with training and development is the importance of recognition. One of the things that I am happy to see is that there are efforts to award staff in terms of performance, tenure, et cetera, and we would have heard from time to time of the recognition ceremonies utilised by the Barbados Fire Service.

Overall, Madam President, in looking at this, and I do not plan to spend a long time on it, I want to suggest that there has been a consistent effort, and to date it has proved to be pretty successful, to ensure that there is proper upgrading of the conditions in terms of building, equipment, et cetera, and the capacity in terms of officials, staff training and development. I would probably just use a term that was used by the Chief Fire Officer who only last month when there was the re-opening of the Arch Hall Fire Station and the opening of the Barbados Fire Academy, because we have seen all of those plans referenced in 2008 come to fruition and what we now see located at Arch Hall is not only the fire station but a Barbados Fire Academy, obviously welcomed what he saw to be something that was long in coming, but we certainly would have done what we could under this Administration to make sure that it happened, suggested or cautioned that there was going to be no mediocrity allowed at the new Barbados Fire Academy. This would have evolved from what was previously the Barbados Fire Service Training and Development Unit. In April last year that would have transitioned into an academy. In looking at that, Madam President, I simply wanted to establish that what happened and what was made possible by this piece of land is that it was utilised in efforts to enhance the expansion and the improvements that would have taken place at Arch Hall, with Arch Hall being one of the central or key fire stations in the country. It is also as I said not only a fire station but

the home of the Training Academy for the Barbados Fire Service. It also facilitates responses to medical emergencies as well. It sits in what I would call a very key location when you think in terms of the access from there coming south to the area that I live in in St. James. It also takes you north into the parishes of St. Peter and coastal St. James.

Madam President, I therefore certainly believe that this Resolution to vest this land at Arch Hall in the National Housing Corporation is important to the purpose of ensuring that we address the matter of the ability to support our fire service and our fire officers in ways that maximise their efficiency and ultimately their effectiveness in carrying out their responsibilities, and with those words I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Fraser, you have the Floor.

Senator Prof. Emeritus Sir Henry FRASER: Thank you, Madam President. I would like to support this Resolution although I do have a couple of queries. I would have liked to see, as I always say I would like to see when land acquisitions and land vesting resolutions come to the Senate, the site plans which are invariably described in the Resolution but are only occasionally provided. I think it is important for us in order to have fully informed discussions on vesting on lands to see those site plans, and so once again I am very regretful that we cannot actually see the site plans to see what land we are actually talking about.

Senate D10 Sequence 3

11.55 a.m.

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Senator Prof. Sir Henry S. FRASER: Madam President, it is important for us in order for us to have fully informed discussions on vesting of lands to see those site plans and so once again, Madam President, I am very regretful that we cannot actually see the site plan to see what land that we are actually talking about.

Madam President, there is one other query which I am sure that the Leader of Government Business will address in the wrap-up and that is in relation to the fact that the Resolution refers to the acquisition for residential purposes but I am drawing the conclusion that it is related to an extension of the Fire Station, so that I do not know whether in the drafting of these Resolutions that these things are important or not but it does not seem from the discussion of the Fire Service, that it is a residential purpose, Madam President, that may be just picking bones but I think it is important to make that point.

Madam President, the Resolution does give us the opportunity, as the Leader of Government Business took, of addressing the issues of fires. I have been amazed by the frequency with which we read in the news and we see on the television news, night after night after nights, sometimes twice weekly, fires that have taken place at people's residences and we never see any analysis, any research done, any reports on the subsequent causes of these fires and this concerns me greatly.

Madam President, in the old day's people built their stoves and their ovens and their cooking facilities often in outside external structures apart from the main house, or at the end of a long kitchen there will be a fireplace so that the possibility of burning the house down in a fire was reduced. Madam President, I am extremely concerned with the frequency with which we see people in small homes, sometimes wooden homes, quite often stone houses in which fires are taking place and their entire possessions are destroyed, sometimes with loss of life.

This is something which seems to me is passing over the heads of our authorities and our researchers and I would ask that a serious attempt be made to analyse the cause of these fires and to do something about it.

Madam President, I am concerned with the extent to which people use gas. I am personally afraid of gas and in my house we cook on electricity because it does seem to me that an electric stove is safer than gas, but at the same time electric fires also occur and the problem of old wiring, the problem of old equipment leading to electric fires is a very serious one. My wife and I were victims of a house fire because we had a very, very ancient fan which one morning ceased to work and when switched on it did not come on and instead of being sensible enough to pull out the plug, the fan was left with the motor on but not working. I took a house guest to the airport, returned home, my wife was descending the steps to the car and she said that she smelled something burning as she came down the steps. I wondered what it was and I thought it was an external fire because in those days people did have outside fires. I went into the house, I ran up the stairs to have my own shower and to get ready for my early morning descent to the hospital and at the top of the stairs I heard a bang. The bang was the fan because the plastic body of the fan had been consumed by fire, it altered the centre of gravity of the fan and the fan fell to the floor. When I descended to the kitchen looked into the kitchen the flames were reaching the ceiling. This was an electric fire caused by an ancient fan. We have subsequently had fans which have ceased to work and they have been discarded immediately, because that fire had destroyed half of my kitchen.

Madam President, however, my wife is very good at preventive medicine, at the entry to the kitchen was a fire extinguisher and I was able to put those floor to ceiling

flames out with the fire extinguisher, mind you, the chemical powder covered the entire house as a result but the point was that we sustained \$22 000 of damage, destroying most of the kitchen cupboards and a great deal of the kitchen so that everything had to be refitted and the insurance payment -- and I have to commend United Insurance whose people came the following day and I received an estimate and the cheque was paid within a couple of weeks.

Madam President, I then carried out my own investigation, because I am a professional researcher, and I asked the next 20 people whom I met in my own research centre, the Chronic Disease Research Centre and at the Faculty of Medicine over at the hospital, if there was a fire extinguisher in their house. Madam President, only one in five people answered yes. Madam President, I do not know if I am allowed to do a survey of Honourable Senators here and ask how many of our Senators will raise their hands and say yes that they have a fire extinguisher in their house. Madam President, I am only seeing four hands going up. This is a serious problem, Madam President, the issue of prevention is so hugely important so my concerns are multiple, Madam President. We are having an epidemic of house fires in Barbados. There is no explanation for this huge increase in frequency in house fires. There appears to be no analysis or no report. There may be an analysis, maybe the Fire Service has this information but we are not looking after the preventative measures, we need to find out the causes and do something about it.

Madam President, another of my hobbyhorses about public education is the fact that we have an extremely confident, competent, well-staffed, well-structured Government Information Service which is not fully utilised in the education of the population on issues like this. Madam President, my third point is to bring the Barbados Fire Service, to bring the researchers and to bring the Government Information Service together so that we can have a solution to the many, many, many house fires that we do have in Barbados.

Madam President, although I have some questions about this Resolution which I am sure I will get the answers to, I very much appreciate the opportunity that the Leader of Government Business has given us to discuss the issues of fires and fire prevention in Barbados, to give praise to those courageous fire fighters who are very well-organised, very, very committed and to ask that we do something about the prevention of house fires, the loss of life, injury, possessions, livelihoods, and everything else that goes with it. Madam President, I thank you.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Todd, you have the Floor.

SENATOR the Hon. P.M.T. TODD: Madam President, I rise to support the passage of this Resolution to approve in accordance with Section 5 of the Crown Lands (Vesting and Disposal) Act, Cap. 225, approve the vesting in the National Housing Corporation of the parcel of land, the property of the Crown situate at Arch Hall in the parish of Saint Thomas in this Island for residential purposes.

Madam President, as I understand it, the land would have been utilised for residential purposes but a small section would have been utilised to ensure proper access to the Arch Hall Fire Station.

Madam President, as the Leader of Government Business in introducing the Resolution to this Honourable Chamber mentioned, as part of this Arch Hall Project is the fact that at least one ambulance of the Crown will be located there to assist in the decentralisation of the Emergency Response Ambulance Service in our island. Madam President, I would wish to take this opportunity to congratulate this Administration for pressing ahead with that initiative of decentralisation of the ambulance service because, Madam President, although Barbados is a small island measuring 21 miles long and a smile wide as we say, we know that minutes can save lives, that is, the faster the emergency response medical team can arrive at the scene, in the case of a medical emergency, the faster that they can start emergency measures.

No.D10 (4)12.08 p.m.

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Seq. 5

Senator Hon. P.M.T. TODD: ... The faster the emergency response medical team can arrive at the scene of a case of a medical emergency, the faster they can actually start emergency medical interventions and save lives; and the faster they can transport the patient to the hospital for further treatment, that question of minutes saved can save lives. Madam President, I am no medical expert but as I understand it, in emergencies such as heart attacks the issue of CPR (cardio-pulmonary resuscitation) can save lives. In the case of stroke and, as I understand it, in the case of a heart attack, one intervention is crushing a full-strength aspirin and ingesting it rapidly. The faster that is done, the greater the likelihood of the patient recovering from the myocardial infarction, or heart attack, they tell me. We have doctors in the house who can correct or elaborate, Madam President. Of course, even in the case of a stroke as well, again the faster the patient can be treated, the greater the likelihood of a full recovery and the reduction in the probability of life-long complications from that stroke in terms of the inability to use limbs, speech and so on, Madam President.

Madam President, I was but a lad in the 1970s when CBC-TV was black-and-white on Channel 3 -- I think it was Channel 3 before it was Channel 8 -- and I remember a popular programme on afternoons called 'Emergency'. We also had a similar programme called 'Adam 12' focusing on the work of uniformed police officers. 'Emergency' dealt with the day-to-day work of fire officers, and the reason I am making that point is because in the 1970s in the United States -- that was the setting of the television programme -- in each fire station not only were there fire officers with their appliances such as the vehicles used in fighting fires, but there were also emergency medical technicians (EMTs) stationed at the fire station. Oftentimes these EMTs had to respond with the fire officers to the scene of fires or other incidents, and where there was a medical emergency the EMTs had to administer CPR, mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, and use the electrical defibrillators by placing them on the chest of the person who would have suffered a heart attack. Those persons would have been given one or more electrical shocks in an attempt to resuscitate the heart which had stopped beating, thus saving a life.

Madam President, I remember there was a live radio connection between the hospital to which the patient would have been transported and the emergency medical technician. As a result, the medical doctor at the hospital would have been able to advise the EMTs step-by-step, having reported to the doctor the state of the patient at the scene. The doctor would then have been able to advise the EMTs on what medical interventions could be made at the scene. I remember one doctor telling the EMT, "Start an IV with D5W and ringers." I understood later that D5W was saline solution which would have been administered intravenously to rehydrate the patient and so on. Madam President, I am saying that these are the interventions which well-trained EMTs in Barbados would be able to make. This is saving lives as a result, Madam President. I would wish to take this opportunity, therefore, to congratulate successive Administrations for moving to upgrade the Emergency Ambulance Service personnel.

Madam President, I can remember watching a Central Bank-sponsored television programme a few years ago outlining the development of Barbados from the 1950s or the earlier part of the 20th Century to modern times, and one part of that documentary showed footage of ambulance personnel in Barbados in the 1950s. In those early days, life expectancy was much lower than today, and there was such a crude approach where the emergency ambulance personnel were simply strong men who would lift the patients on stretchers which did not even have wheels, and these men were clearly not trained to administer any emergency medical intervention. Madam President, we have come a long way. I also remember just a few months ago attending a meeting sponsored by CARICAD (Caribbean Centre for Development Administration) in

Antigua. It was a meeting of Ministers of the Public Service in the region, and at the Jolly Beach Hotel where the event was held we had police officers for security and well-dressed emergency medical response technicians. I spoke to these uniformed technicians and asked them a few questions, such as, "Are you trained in these sorts of emergency medical responses?" and they said, "Not to the extent, certainly, that (our) officers are trained in Barbados." We are really progressing well in Barbados in this regard, where again the EMTs who man the ambulances are trained in these basic medical interventions, thus saving lives.

Therefore, this decentralisation of the Ambulance Service, where an ambulance would be stationed at Arch Hall, is consistent with this philosophy of reducing the time taken for the emergency ambulance personnel to reach the patient and to start emergency medical interventions that can save lives, Madam President. I am very happy about this. I remember that although I would have been born in the urban area in Chelston, close to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH), I would have worked at some time in St. John -- in fact, I went to school at the Lodge School - and I would have worked at the Alleyne School and other rural areas and lived in Chancery Lane in Christ Church. I would therefore have been cognisant of the fact that in the case of an emergency, I would have been at this remote location and the time taken for an ambulance -- if I had a medical emergency, God forbid -- to reach me coming from the QEH in Martindales Road, Bridgetown, and then return to the QEH from that rural area would have been doubled. The logistics of having ambulances placed at strategic locations, such as polyclinics or fire stations -- in this case, throughout the island -- would therefore make the emergency medical response very efficient and save life and limb, Madam President.

I really wish them well, and I would also take this opportunity to congratulate the other paramedical personnel in our island who volunteer their services; be it through the St. John Ambulance Brigade or the Barbados Red Cross Society, Madam President.

12.13 p.m.

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Senator P.M.T. TODD: (Seq 6)(Read)

... personnel in our island who volunteer their services be it through the St. John Ambulance Brigade or the Barbados Red Cross Society. You see them well turned out at the annual Remembrance Day parade or the Independence day parade, or at public events be it at the National Stadium for sporting events or other public events, Cropover and so on and again these personnel are trained in these emergency medical interventions that could

save lives. We have heard medical personnel in the private sector just a few days ago publicly making the point that there are a number of heart attacks persons would suffer from time to time and therefore, even with the schools and so on as we get girl guides and other persons, cadets, scouts and so on, when we get more of these persons trained in these areas then it would make up more prepared. Madam, again, we have just completed the annual Tradewinds exercises with the armed forces and we would have utilised this opportunity to also do some role playing in terms of drills to help us to be better prepared for disasters where emergency in terms of medical emergencies would have to be responded to by actually being proactive and going through the necessarily scenarios in terms of this role playing drills would make up better prepared.

Madam President, sometimes you see in these drills persons painted in red to mimic what blood would look like and to try to keep it real what the experts tells us is mental exposure to these scenarios reduce the likelihood of panic in the event that a disaster occurs be it a hurricane, fire, flood, tsunami and those persons have to respond quickly. Madam, by having those preparatory drills, will reduce the likelihood of panic in a real life scenario. I congratulate those hundreds of Barbadians who would have heeded the call of the Barbados Defence Force coordinators to actually volunteer to offer themselves to be part of that exercise.

Madam President, I also would wish to congratulate the hard-working members of the Barbados Fire Service, who are really brave men and women when you look at the fact that as part of their mandate they are often required at any time of the day or night to respond to emergencies particularly fire where they may have to actually climb tall buildings to rescue persons trapped in tall building. Madam, these officers risk their lives. I have seen them in action over the years going into burning building with oxygen tanks risking their lives, and they are humans not robots so they can get trapped in a fire and lose their lives, so these fire officers must be congratulated for risking live and limb to save persons who may be imperiled in case of an emergency such as a fire. Madam President, I know when I served as Minister of State in the Ministry of Education a few years ago, we would have met with personnel from colleges in North America who over the years would have established relationship with our local fire service training our personnel to improve their skills so that modern best practices would be garnered by these fire service officers to improve the quality of the service provided by these personnel. Of course, I would wish to congratulate this Government for providing the necessarily financial resources to ensure that modern appliances in terms of vehicles used by these fire service officers are procured in a timely manner. Madam, with the advent of high-rise housing solutions be there Valery, Dalkeith Woods and so on, be it Country Park Towers, four storeys, six storeys and the real possibility of high-rise hotels ten

storeys and more, then these appliances, like those turn table ladders that can reach those high elevations. Madam President, as was just mentioned a few hours ago, in Britian, we had an apartment complex over 20 storeys tall where we had that fire, so that certainly we have to be prepared to ensure that our fire service personnel are properly and trained to handle responses to fires at those high elevations. I am sure this Government is putting the necessary measures in place to address these issues. I join with Senator Professor Sir Henry Fraser in calling on Barbadians to be proactive and to ensure that we have our fire extinguishers at home, our smoke detectors, our sprinkler where necessary in offices and other public buildings as well as a simple garden house. How many of us have a garden house. We may not have a lawn but a garden hose would be very useful to the homeowner to be able to deal with any small fire and reduce the likelihood of that fire actually engulfing their property or the neighbouring property. Madam, a bucket of sand can go a long way as well, Madam President, because as I understand it with an electrical fire you would not just put water but maybe a bucket of sand might be a better response.

Madam President, in conclusion, I would also wish Madam President, to congratulate this Government for working assiduously at addressing the tremendous demand by the working class Barbadian public especially, for State sponsored housing solutions including house spots in the form of the \$5, five hundred lot programme (7:46), which is brain child of the late Prime Minister, David John Howard Thompson, where we look around the island to identify parcels of land that could be made available very quickly at low cost, at \$5 a square foot to applicants who would have applied to the National Housing Corporation for housing construction, where we identify parcels of land where the necessarily sites and services were already in place in terms of roads, utilities, water, electricity and so on, so that areas such as Pool in St. John were identified and lots are being allocated there, Madam President, and other areas in our country like Applewhaites in St. George area is one of the areas identified, Branchbury in St. Joseph and the list goes on. Madam, hundreds of low cost \$5 per square foot plots that many working class Barbadians have been very grateful for this administration for providing them because we know that land can go as high as \$30 or \$40 per square foot in many of our urban and suburban districts in our country. Of course, we would have provided housing solutions at Country Park Towers, which would have left abandoned by the Barbados Labour Party when we assumed office...

Sequence 6

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Senator J. A. WATSON: I know that the National Housing Corporation has various methods, and one little area that I want to mention is this question of starter houses. I mentioned it in here before and I will mention it again because I have seen some houses being built that can be considered starter houses only because of the size of the house and it would be very difficult to do anything with that house after. I want to suggest that a starter house is really an incomplete normal house rather than a completed small house. In other words, the room sizes should be regular sizes and there should be enough space in the land area for recreation and even some agricultural production so that when we are planning housing for low-income persons as it is said I believe that those considerations must be given. We must not make rooms so small that it is difficult for living. I think that all human beings, whether they are low-income, middle-income or upper-income require the same recreation and therefore the sizes of the rooms must be of minimum sizes. You could build that house by leaving off parts of it, you could design a three-bedroom home but you might only build one bedroom and then you can extend the house afterwards, that to my mind is what is a starter home. If we are building smaller houses, if you want to call them bachelor houses where you are only expecting people to use them for the time when they are single and not to expand into a family then I could understand building that type of house, so that is one thing I would like to suggest.

The other area with land that is of interest to me is the question of agricultural land. We have been passing Resolutions to acquire land for residential purposes and I think we need now to move towards acquiring land for agricultural purposes. I think that we now have to look at getting those Barbadians who are interested in producing for themselves to own land and to be able to put a structure on the land. One the constraints I am told with some of the agricultural projects is that even though you are giving people land they are not able to put a structure on the land so they live five miles away from the land and they have to move back and forth to work the land.

I remember a Resolution in here that had to do with land somewhere in St. Joseph I think it was, which I thought was ideal, where you could have two-acre or three-acre lots that would be able to be given to people who are themselves interested in agriculture. I think that is the kind of development that I would like to see. I am not sure that would be under the National Housing Corporation or whether it would be under the Ministry Of Agriculture, Foods, Fisheries and Water Resource Management but the fact of the matter is that in that kind of development people would be able to put a structure on the property and also I think that the authorities would then be able to put in whatever is necessary to ensure that the sewerage and whatever other problems could arise are working. In other

words, we could have treatment plants if it is agricultural land and you do not want it to be contaminated in any way.

The other thing about land, Madam President, is that there is always a difficulty in land transactions which I think is a very popular subject now, but I think it is something that needs some attention in more than one ways. I always remember when I was going through the process of buying a small piece of land in my early days and it was taking extremely long and I went to what you call a solicitor at that time and asked him why it was taking so long, it is only a small piece of land and he said to me you do not buy land like you buy a tin of corned beef, there is a lot of checks. In fact, when I saw the document after I understood because there were about 20 or 30 transactions up to the point. I believe that some of that is being dealt with now because I think there is some registry that is taking place and therefore titles are a lot clearer than they were in the past. Those are the sorts of things I think, Madam President, that we need to do in order to help our people to progress more. I mean it is okay to have the ability to buy a piece of land but you may not have the ability to pay for all of the costs that require you to get that land.

The Barbados Fire Service and the connections to fire, I believe that the Resolution gave some opportunity to talk about fires, the fire stations and the operation of the fire stations. Madam President, I believe that all of our security forces and other operations in Barbados need to be running as efficiently as possible. The reason for that is that we are still dependent very much on tourism and I believe that when people come to Barbados they want to feel safe, and therefore the police stations and the operations of the Police, and they also need to be sure that our fire stations and our Defence Force and all of those agents are well-trained and can respond very well. I believe that over the last week we would have had some exercises in that area. Without the Caribbean intervention I believe that on a regular basis our local forces would continue to do the same training because it is very important for people not only visitors but Barbadians themselves to feel very safe. Now, I had an experience a few months ago. My sister lives in an area where there is a lot of bush and she called and when she was trying to explain to me what was happening I thought her house was burning down but in fact it turned out that it was a bush fire but it was getting pretty close to her house. The Barbados Fire Service was called and they were taking a little bit long and eventually when they came the fire officer explained exactly what was happening. Prior to that they were in that area for about six to eight hours because there were bush fires all over the area and they were just going from one to the other, and my sister at her age was really panicking, and of course I being a brother was more harsh than I should have in terms of getting her to realise that there is no problem, but the young fire officer just came and spoke to her in a completely

different tone and I was surprised at the way how when he spoke to her she became calm and there was no problem because he was able to explain to her everything about the fire, he took her and showed her that the fire was dead, that it could not rise up again and all of that and I was very impressed so obviously the Barbados Fire Service men have gone through some very good training. I believe that we always have to be commending our police, our fire service, our nurses and our doctors but, Madam President, we need as much as possible to give them all of the resources they need to make sure that they maintain that quality of service.

Senate D10 Sequence 8

12.43 p.m.

Wednesday, June 14, 2017

Senator J. A. WATSON: Madam President, we need as much as possible to give them all of the resources that they need to make sure that they maintain that quality of service. I remember in here some time ago talking about the police stations. I do not remember the exact figure but there was a substantial amount of vacancies within the Barbados Police Force and I am sure the same thing exists within the Barbados Fire Service. Madam President, with those sorts of services I think that we need to put whatever resources possible behind them to make sure that they are able to keep up that good service and to continue to protect Barbados and Barbadians.

Madam President, that is all I wanted to say because I realise that the Resolution is a worthwhile one, wherever there is housing, wherever there is anything to do with social development of Barbados it is always welcomed. I believe that the provision of low-cost housing is an important aspect of our development. We have spent a lot of time and money on education and I think that we need to pay some attention and to help develop our people holistically, and those people who can offer assistance in anyway should be able to do so. I think when we look at the rising cost to Barbados, low-cost housing is really not low cost anymore but it still has to be as low as possible and I think that very often our designers or our planners need to check out the most efficient and best ways of bringing housing to the low-income groups.

Madam President, with those few words, I will support the Resolution. I am obliged to you.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Ince, you have the Floor.

Senator J. INCE: Madam President, I rise to support the Resolution that is before this Honourable Chamber, a Resolution that seeks to vest in the National Housing

Corporation of the parcel of land, the property of the Crown situate at Arch Hall in the parish of Saint Thomas for residential purposes. Madam President, I want to use this opportunity to appeal to Barbadians to have insurance coverage for their homes. Madam President, when we speak of housing development it seems as if we always speak of the cost of construction and of all the other things, for example, the challenges in housing but we need to speak about insurance coverage, especially in those areas the houses are in close proximity to each other.

Madam President, too often you would read the newspapers or listen to the radio and there would be a house fire where that house fire could damage the neighbour's house or it could damage a number of houses based on its proximity. Further, when the question is asked whether or not the property was ensured you would hear no, but then you would hear, well, we have recently built it. Ma'am, most of the time it is what we call chattel houses, wood and wall, or you would hear that we have just done repairs in the amount of \$10 000 or

\$15 000, or that we have done some extensions to the house. Madam President, it is really heart-wrenching because sometimes you watch everything being destroyed and the only thing that individual now has is what we term, the clothes on his back or sometimes furniture.

Madam President, I had a conversation with some insurers and what was highlighted to me was that the cost of insurance, believe it or not for some of these chattel houses, could range from \$150 to \$200 per year. Madam President, that is less than the cost of cellphones in Barbados and you see persons with their cellphones costing between \$500 to \$800, depending on the type of cellphone. Madam President, I am saying if you had to work it out and look at the insurance premiums for the coverage of a chattel house, and some insurance companies do allow you to pay over time, and you divide that into 52 weeks you would see that really it is not costly.

Madam President, the thing about it is that fires are unexpected, nobody goes out there and says that most or 98 per cent of time... What happens is that within that coverage some of the insurers would be able to tell you that you also may have coverage for what you call temporary accommodation. They could also supply you with items of food, clothing and shelter. Ma'am, you would hear representatives, all of us who are politicians because once you are contesting a seat you are a politician and a representative and a representative like Senator Abrahams and I, once we have a fire persons in our constituencies are going to approach us for help and we have to provide that help and if an insurance system is not in place then you call the Ministry of Housing, Lands and Rural Development.

Madam President, the reality is that it happens under both parties that because of the pressure and the limited spaces, when you call the Ministry of Housing, Lands and Rural Development or other authorities they may not have the available accommodation, that means that then you or other persons may have to help that person to find temporary accommodation and it can be costly, so that I am appealing to Barbadians to please insure their homes, it is important, this is where you are going to live, spend time with your children, your grandchildren and especially as I said, it is heart-wrenching when you read the papers and see chattel houses that have just been repaired or just been built being burnt down, the persons having no place to live and the final word you hear is that that person does not have insurance coverage. Madam President, I am just using this opportunity to appeal to Barbadians to make it a priority, just as how we make a cellphone a priority let us make home insurance coverage a priority because based on your size of the square footage of the home condition it is insurable when you talk to insurances. Madam President, I am appealing please and this can minimise the cost of temporary accommodation to Government, it can minimise the cost to persons who are around you because believe it or not it can be stressful when you do not have insurance coverage. Ma'am, it could also lead to other things such as mental disorders or to a whole range of things, including persons wanting to commit suicide because it is that important but with insurance coverage, as expressed by the Senator Fraser, the whole idea of having that coverage when the fire occurred at his home which would have minimised a lot of his cost. Madam President, I do want to appeal to Barbadians, along with the fire extinguisher, one of which I have at home, please insure your homes, let us work together and minimise this exposure because fire and the destruction of fire and the destruction of accommodation and all of your possessions is not an easy task, especially in these challenging economic times. I am obliged to you, Madam President.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Adams, you have the Floor.

Senator Alwin A. ADAMS: Madam President, I join to lend my support to this Resolution to move the passing of a Resolution to approve in accordance with Section 5 of the Crown Lands (Vesting and Disposal) Act, Cap. 225, approve the vesting in the National Housing Corporation the parcel of land the property of the Crown situate at Arch Hall in the parish of Saint Thomas in this Island and more particularly described in the Schedule to this Resolution hereto for residential purposes.

Madam President, it was only last night that my son was dealing with the modern technology, I think it is called streaming. I was invited to a lecture at Cave Hill and I could not make it as I had some visitors but nonetheless I was able to see the Principal...

No.D10 (9)1.05 p.m.

Wednesday, June 14, 2017

Seq. 10

Senator A.A. ADAMS: ... I was invited to a lecture at Cave Hill and I could not make it because I had some visitors, but nonetheless I was able to see the Principal Sir Hilary Beckles speaking about the plight of Barbadians in the post-Emancipation period. He was stressing, in the part that I saw, the notion of our people as a landless people, and he went on to say in a nutshell that this landless situation of Barbadians led to a series of difficulties in relation to their development. It was also drawn to my attention quite recently a report in one of our early newspapers. I do not want to really quote newspapers per se, but essentially it was in 1939 when one of our trade unionists was actually speaking in Queen's Park and saying that, notwithstanding our reference to the precipitation of the riots and the causes of the disturbance, the underlying cause was landlessness. This was stressed by this early trade unionist addressing a very large meeting in Queen's Park, and he said that his reading of history suggested to him that the cause of the disturbances lay in the landlessness, the landless situation of Barbadians. In a way, it was not only in Barbados but throughout the Caribbean that the estate owners, in many cases here in Barbados in particular, actually passed legislation to ensure that the ex-slaves -- the Blacks in Barbados -- could not own land. In fact, when the plantations ran into trouble, the Court of Chancery kind of indicated that the lands had to be sold as plantations and not essentially cut up.

Madam President, we have a long history of a situation where Barbadians were not in possession of land, and this of course led to the concept of the chattel house and the tenancies. Therefore, you will find that Barbadians essentially, if you go far back, all of us either lived or had relatives who lived in chattel houses, and that historic reason was the cause of that. Indeed, up to 1970 a survey on the house stock in Barbados indicated that 73 per cent of the homes in Barbados were in fact chattel houses. Over the years, that has receded and we have had more and more wall structures. I think in 2000, the Report indicated that there were about 45 per cent of wall houses in this country. Of course, that would have increased in recent times as people became more affluent. Obviously, the concept of insurance, which has been mentioned already, would be important here in the sense that at one time the chattel house owners could not get their homes insured. I believe that has been rectified to some extent, and therefore appeals which have been made here in relation to the insurance of homes should also, in fact, include the chattel houses. Chattel home owners should, in fact, be advised to look into that aspect and see to what extent they can actually have insurance. That is the point which I wanted to start

with; the notion of linking the ownership of land with home ownership.

Madam President, the other areas which I want to touch on deal with the concept of the fire station itself, and I want to say that this is perhaps a kind of a teaching moment in the sense that the Fire Service can in fact be looked upon now as a regional training service. We have been informed by the Attorney General, I think, when the building was opening, that we would now have a regional training fire service there and it would include persons from the other islands -- the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) -- coming to Barbados. This, in fact, is a very good thing in the sense that, I believe, the training would not be free and we could earn some income from that. It is also telling us that the Fire Service will now have to look -- indeed, they have been doing that for some time -- for not just brawn, but the level of entry qualifications would in fact increase and the entrants would now have to come in with CXC (Caribbean Examinations Council) qualifications; not only CXCs but CVQs (Caribbean Vocational Qualifications) and NVQs (National Vocational Qualifications). Therefore, it would mean that the scope for our young persons coming into a prestigious organisation like the Fire Service would indeed be enhanced.

It goes further than that, Madam President. We have a situation where the new academy will in fact be linked with international academies in the areas of accreditation, and in that respect it means now that our ongoing training of our firemen will indeed be enhanced. After having that training, they may be able not only to serve here in Barbados but to serve regionally; maybe go and take over one of the Fire Service organisations in one of the islands or even internationally, because of this additional training. We would therefore want to commend the Government and persons involved in that regard.

Madam President, the other point I want to make in relation to training and so on is that a public relations exercise ought to be looked into in relation to the prevention of fires. This has been mentioned before, and therefore the Government Information Service (GIS), the radio stations and of course the television station should be heavily utilised. Even more than that, we would like to see the Chief Fire Officer sending out his officers into the schools; starting with our primary schools, then into the secondary and even the tertiary institutions. I always mention that when you go to the primary schools, one of the things which actually will happen and which do happen is that the children go home and say to their parents, "This is what we have learnt in school." In so doing, the message is disseminated across the length and breadth of the country. We would like to see an education programme in that regard whereby our institutions, particularly our educational institutions and indeed other organisations,

would benefit. Now that we have centres across the country, we can go to the various community centres and have people sensitised into that level of information. We hope that we can see that happening relatively soon.

Madam President, the other point I want to make is that when we speak of housing and the Vesting of lands, we want to make it clear that the time is nigh and is at hand when agricultural land should no longer be utilised for housing.

1.02 p.m.

Wednesday, June 12, 2017

Senator A.A. ADAMS: (Seq 16)(Read)

We want to make it clear that the time is nigh and is at hand when agriculture lands should no longer be utilise for housing. We believe there is enough land in this island if properly planned and utilized and so on without encroaching on agriculture lands. We say that, Madam President, because of the notion of the concept of food security. We already have a survey on our land and so on and it has indicated that about 30 000 acres of land is very important right now to be utilised in agriculture in order for us food security in the country. The latest figures I saw indicated that we were down to about 28 000 acres which is somewhat below that threshold and therefore, we need to put a halt to that and, secondly, although we are not dealing with that part of it so much, we need to get the land that we have back into production. We believe that there is enough rab land that is suitable for housing in the country that can be properly utilised in various different ways and to suit different categories of persons in the country. When houses are being built now in relation to Government's housing there needs not be one size fit all. We need a situation where a variety of ideas can be put forward and the notion of starter homes is important. I also mentioned in an earlier debate that we have a concept where house spots can be given to persons and through community efforts persons have been able to build their houses. Madam, historically in Barbados I believe one of the first type of Government housing in Barbados is between Clinketts the area between St. Peter and St. Lucy actually took place. I remember as a younger seeing that on the mobile cinema being utilised there. Madam, people came together and helped one another in relation to the building of their homes. I think what would happen too is that it would tend to move away from these sprawling housing estates that we copied form the metropolitan countries and what we find from experience is that these massive sprawling estates tend to degenerate into areas of social problems because a number of things have not been done in order to prevent that and we need in looking at our housing in the modern day to get to the stage where we involve the communities in relation to what we want to do, find out what is quite for us and

bring the expertise and then we would be able to give that level of housing that would be suitable for the particular categories of people for which they are used.

Madam President, I also want to mention in relation to derelict housing that the statistics show that there about 1 500 to 1 800 in the St. Michael area alone. I believe that the time should come when we ought to get our experts to look into the best way that we can deal with those derelict building and bring them into the housing stock. I would like to suggest that we should have a number of young architects in this country and I think that they ought to be commissioned to look into how these derelict buildings can be reconstituted and be brought back into operation. Obviously, we will have to look at the ownership of the properly but essentially, that kind of project given to young people, we might be surprised to see the extent to which they may come up with very innovative ideas in order to help to solve that problem and it will probably also take the burden off Government in the sense that you can get a situation of public/private partnerships operating in that way. Madam, indeed, if you find some of the owners of the land they may be very happy to work with Government to rehabilitate these particular buildings. Madam, I think that is another area that we ought to look at. While the concentration of those properties are in the Bridgetown and St. Michael area, there are certainly other areas in the country where that could be done although the problem would not be as acute. Madam, that is another thing that I thought we could actually consider.

Madam President, having heard most of the ideas, which obviously I concur with it, there is perhaps not a lot of other areas to mention here in relation to that. I have mentioned the qualification and so on but I think too I ought to mention the housing area around the fire station. I, myself, grew up in an area as a teenager, not as an elementary school boy, in the Weston area where there is fire station and I was very attached to the firemen and so on there. The point I want to make is that station was on Highway 1, which was a very busy highway and the other station is on Highway 2A, which is also very busy and one of the things we need to consider is congestion and the notion as to whether you can get a rapid response at whatever time of the day in relation to a call that comes to the fire station and whether in terms of the egress, whether there is only one way out and things of that nature. I hope that in the planning that would have been taken into consideration that whenever the get a call they would be able to move at quick notice and save a calamity.

Madam President, we also want to look to find out, and we do not know for sure but I am almost sure that would have happened that in the building and in the extension of that facility the builders would have taken into consideration the concept of renewal energy. I would be very surprised if photovoltaic panels are not there or wind

energy and that the lighting and so on inside of that station would be of the modern type, the LED lights et cetera so that when young children go to visit the fire station, part of the sites and so on that would be explained to them would be the concept of renewal energy.

Madam President, aft, the fact that it is a fire station I believe in fact that it should consider not only water harvesting but water storage. For example, when I was the principal of the Coleridge Parry School and the Chinese built the new hall there, underneath the hall I believe might be tens of thousands of gallons of water right underneath the hall but persons just looking at the hall would not recognise that the water is there. I believe that at a place like the fire station rather than having the water stored above ground that in fact it should be stored underneath the ground and in case of an emergency the fire men would be able to access to that level of water. Madam, we should take those things into consideration in relation to that particular Resolution. It is a Resolution that is worthy of support and I want to lend my support wholeheartedly to this Resolution.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator the Hon. Ms. MAXINE P. O. McCLEAN.

Senator the Hon. Ms. MAXINE P. O. McCLEAN: Madam President, I rise to wrap on this Resolution and I want to take this opportunity to thank all those who would have spoken. I do not propose to go over any of what was said. I think that importance of the land to the work of the Fire Service was...

Sequence 11.

Insert s12 juliette

Wednesday, June 14, 2017

Mr. DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Watson, you have the Floor.

Senator J. A. WATSON: Mr. Deputy President, like any other business when you find that you have over-drafted your limit you have to go and renegotiate with your bank for an extension or you have to find ways of lowering your present overdraft. In a business, how some of us would try to do that would be by rushing out and doing as much sales as possible to bring in some cash and I believe that Government does a similar thing through taxation. Mr. Deputy President, the experience is that if you continue to have to renegotiate your overdraft limits sometimes your bank puts a stop to it and then encourages you to get a loan so that you could reduce your overdraft and can have a fixed repayment programme to reduce that loan.

Mr. Deputy President, I said that to say that in terms of Government, I think that there is the effort of either borrowing or the effort of stimulating the economy so that more taxes could be collected, or more earnings could be made by Government. I believe that this could be done through a lot of the stimulation of business and industry because as I understand it our economy is - Senator Ince said import-driven but I prefer to say -- consumer-driven and therefore the more activity that we have the better off the economy would be. Mr. Deputy President, the problem with that is that the more consumption we have, then we have a lot of pressure on the foreign reserves and that then creates another problem because without the foreign reserves then we have the threat of pressure on our dollar, so we need to find a way of creating some sort of growth in the economy. Mr. Deputy President, with that growth I believe that we would get more income into Government. Where would that growth come from? Mr. Deputy President, my belief is that it would come from the Small Business Sector.

Mr. Deputy President, I believe that there has to be an effort to really stimulate the activities in the Small Business Sector, especially the ones that have the potential for earning foreign exchange. Mr. Deputy President, there are a lot of small businesses at this time that are involved in the technology area that are actually creating a fair amount of foreign exchange. I think that that is an area of growth in our economy where incentives could be given to drive it a little more. Mr. Deputy President, there is a lot of innovation in the Small Business Sector and I believe that efforts have to be made to unleash some of that innovation and make it into productive returns.

Mr. Deputy President, Senator Ince made mention that we do not have any natural resources, that we have our people, but I believe that we started out by having natural resources. I believe that when we started out we had a lot of land and we had a lot of sugar, sugar was a premium crop at that time.

No.D10 (14)3.13 p.m.

Wednesday, June 14, 2017

Seq. 15

Senator J.A. WATSON: ... I believe that when we started out, we had a lot of land and we had a lot of sugar. Sugar was a premium crop at that time, and we made tons of money. Barbados was probably the richest country around the world because of the sugar which we produced. The question is: What happened with the proceeds of that sugar which we produced many years ago? That was the asset we had. We have to understand what happened with that money. I believe that a time came when the money was not there, and Government was called upon to refinance

plantations. That was a waste of money. It is not sometimes what we think we do not have. It is sometimes what we need to do with what we have, and today, as Senator Ince said, we have a very good, strong human resource. I think we need to make the best of it. We have a very good product in tourism and we have to make the best of it.

Madam President, in terms of tourism I think we have to decide that tourism must give back to Barbados much more than it is presently giving back. I think Barbados has put a lot into tourism. I believe it is the only industry where the marketing is done for it. Barbados spends, I believe, over \$60 million or \$70 million in marketing Barbados for the benefit of the tourist sector, and therefore a lot of that has to come back to Barbados in a much bigger way than it presently is. There is a lot of expenditure in the tourism industry. Very little of it is supplied by Barbadians, and I believe there has to be some control over the spending of hotels in terms of foreign exchange. I believe there are some countries where, if you want to import something for your hotel, you have to show that it is not available locally. I think that has to be part of our Tourism Act where, if you want to import a product that is likely to be made in Barbados, you have to demonstrate that it is not available in Barbados before you import it. From experience, I know that people will come to you a week before, and then the reason given is that you are unable to meet a deadline or a delivery time. Those sorts of excuses need to be stopped.

Madam President, in terms of the contribution of the private sector as well, I maintain the position that Barbados' economy is private sector-led. I am more and more being convinced that this is not really true, but that it is really Government-led, and it should not be. It should be private sector-led. When suggestions are being sought about what can be done to revitalise our economy, you get what the Government should do. I think that we need to get the private sector to start saying what they should do, and I have suggested in more than one meeting and I will suggest it here: The private sector needs only to do two things. They need to earn and/or save foreign exchange, and earn does not mean just earn. Earn means earn and deposit it in Barbados. The other thing they have to do is provide, as much as possible, good employment to our people. We are spending millions of dollars on education and our people must be able to be productive in the private sector.

I have mentioned it here before: Many years ago, I went to what I think was the first or second National Consultation, and at that time the issue was productivity and the goal was to increase our productivity by five per cent over some period of time. I believe since those 20 years ago, our productivity has not moved one or two per cent. Why is that? There has to be a reason for that, and I have a feeling that this productivity improvement would have to come more from the private sector than from the

Government; even though you expect Government to do it as such. I would expect that there is a lot of opportunity for us to improve the economy through activities in the private sector. I agree that there are hindrances by the public sector as well. As a matter of fact, I believe that the Government itself would admit that readily. As a matter of fact, I have heard one or two Ministers continuously complain about some of the things that hinder the private sector by the actions of some public workers. I believe that could be remedied, but more than anything else, I think that we need to have a culture developed; a culture of entrepreneurship, a culture of reasonableness.

Mr. Deputy President, I read, not really with horror but with some disappointment, of an issue that took place recently. Mr. Deputy President, I believe that the Laws of Barbados must be followed. I believe that laws should not be broken willy-nilly, but there are circumstances where things happen, and I am referring to this skating rink somewhere in the agricultural station or somewhere in Rendezvous. This was Government land, and apparently there was some oral approval to use the area. The young people put their money together, they put their ingenuity together, and they created a park, a skating rink, and it was demolished. Even though what was done was legal -- in other words, I think the Ministry had all rights to remove it so you cannot say they were doing anything illegal -- I believe sometimes that discussion and talk can solve those problems, and some arrangement can be made. You cannot really get so hard in situations where there is a grey area. You could probably do something about it.

Mr. Deputy President, I say that because a lot of officers, not only in Government but in statutory corporations and officers even in commercial banks, would have benefited tremendously from our educational system.

I say this again because it is something which I firmly believe in: Education was another step towards economic enfranchisement. It was not just education to get a degree and to go and lord over anybody. It was a move towards taking us from being labourers to being managers to being owners to being investors. That is the kind of idea I believe the creators and makers of the educational system had in mind, so that we would move from the cane fields to the boardrooms. I believe that was the process for education, and that process should have continued to make sure that we became owners; so that when you become a professional accountant, your job is not to come and demean me because I do not understand accounting.

3.12 p.m.

Wednesday, June 14, 2017

Senator J. WATSON: (Sequence 16)(Read)

Your job is to try to coach me in a way that I could understand and benefit from the knowledge that you have gained as a professional. I think that is the culture that we need to create among our people. I believe that too many people who are professionals today do not try to understand the plight of the smaller business people that they are consulting. They expect me and non-professionals to understand what they are saying or what they want me to do in the same way that they understand it as a professional but it does not work that way. It cannot work that way and I believe that is why there are so many complaints from consultants and professionals that when they work with small business people they do not listen, they do not do what they want.

Madam President, I am not straying. I am saying those things because it is all part of building a private sector, it is all part of expanding our economy so that the idea of having to borrow consistently become unnecessary. I have said in here some time ago that we needed to reach to the stage where we are discussing not what we are going to borrow or whether or not we should to the IMF or anything like that but we should be discussing how we are going to move from foreign reserves of 24 weeks to foreign reserves of 30 weeks, or we should be talking about how we are going to bring unemployment from 8 per cent to 5 per cent, those are the sort of places we need to get to but we have to get there and we are not there yet.

Madam President, I support the Resolution because it is necessary. I understand Government's, I want to call it a predicament but I would prefer to call it a situation. It is not an easy situation. I believe that the suggestions that have been made regarding whether you should have a homegrown programme or whether you should go to the IMF is a discussion that needs to be had. I have my views and my views are very simple, you need to consolidate debt and when you are consolidating debt, you need to consolidate debt with the lowest possible interest rate and wherever the lowest possible interest rate is, you should go, and in simple terms that place is the IMF.

I believe that you have always have to negotiate with somethings that you have made up your mind that you will not give up. I learn that from some of what Mandela had to say. If you are negotiating with anybody including the IMF, we must not devalue our dollar as part of the negotiations. The other thing is that we must not pay unbearable burdens on the citizens of Barbados especially the most vulnerable. Sir, with those two things we must not give up, is what we should negotiate with.

Mr. Deputy President, I think I have said all that I needed to say. I think the Resolution is necessary and I hope that the next time we come to discuss something like this that we would be talking and saying we no longer need

to have an overdraft limit of \$4.75 billion but we need not more than \$2 billion.

Mr. Deputy President, I am obliged.

MR. DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Abrahams.

MR. DEPUTY PRESIDENT vacated the Chair and MADAM PRESIDENT assumed the Chair.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Abrahams, you have the Floor.

Senator W.A ABRAHAMS: Mr. Deputy President, I rise to give my opinion on the Resolution to approve the amount of \$4.75 billion as the amount to be raised by Treasury Bills, et cetera. I heard fully well what the good Senator Ince had to say and how he explained that the fact that we are seeking to raise the limit to \$4.75 billion is not that we are seeking to \$4.75 billion but the limit is already us \$4 billion, so we are just seeking the breathing room of another \$750 million, if that is what I understand him as saying.

Madam President, the reason it was so easy to follow was because we had a similar when we say earlier in terms of this Senate to raise the limit to \$4 billion. Madam, at this point in time the same argument that was being used today that we do not want to approach this piecemeal, piecemeal and have to keep coming back, so you apply for a substantial enough raise in the limit so that we do not have to come back and do it again, that explanation was made today and it was easy to follow because that explanation was made the last time, that we were here to raise the limit to \$4 billion. Madam, at the point when the limit was raised to \$4 billion early in the term of this Senate, we had a bit more of robust debate because by my count, only three people would speak on this this afternoon. We had a number of people weighing in on the last occasion and there was some horror at the fact that the limit was going up to \$4 billion because \$4 billion is a large number for a small country. I was trying to actually wrap around how many zeros is \$4 billion. I know a million has six zeros, it a number and then six zeros and, Senator Ince, an American billion is one thousand million, is that correct? So we are talking about ten or eleven zeros so that number is a staggering amount.

Asides.

Senator W.A ABRAHAMS: Oh. I have never claimed to be an expert on mathematics but whatever it is, Madam President, it is 'nuff, nuff', plenty zeros behind the number, four, seven, five and plenty zeros. When do we stop? The reasoning was given the last time

but I never expected to be back here to debate this again because the cushion at that point in time was argued to be sufficient and that we would not have to come back here and deal with this again but yet, here we are.

Madam President, the Government has to do what it has to do. I cannot argue. I am not in the Government. I am not sitting in the Cabinet and making the decisions that increase our debt. I am not party to the deliberations of Cabinet that have result in one ill-advised fiscal policy after the next. I am not a part of the Cabinet that is levying the largest burden of taxes ever levied on the Barbadians Cabinet. I am not a part of that Cabinet but when we got there in the last Budget then it is obvious the money has to come from somewhere.

Madam President, Senate Ince also sought to distinguish between debentures and Treasury Bills and the term to maturity, and the longer the investment and whatnot but the reality is that you choose your instrument based on what you think the market is going to buy. If the Government now has to pay off outstanding bills, then it has to choose an instrument that would allow them to get sufficient money to pay off the outstanding bills.

Sequence 16

Insert s17 juliette

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Senator W. A. ABRAHAMS: Fear takes over your ability to endure when the tunnel becomes too long, when the light appearing to be at the end of a tunnel is just a light in the tunnel showing you that there is more tunnel to come. It is too hard. If the Government does not know it and they have not heard it then let me say it for the people of Barbados: The people in Barbados are hurting, I am hurting, and the people I talk to are hurting. We are sucking salt. Some people want to support this Government. Some people want to be positive but it is hard to be positive when every choice by this Government seems to be the wrong choice.

This borrowing to pay off debts as they become due is a vicious cycle. It is unsustainable. Senator Todd is a fine one for this one, Senator Todd always links the running of the economy of a country like his mother budgeting for a household. I heard it from him once before and it sounded so simple. Yes, the same way that a housewife budgets for her household, she knows what she owes, she knows what she has to buy and she balances... If you have three or four loans from three or four different people then perhaps it makes sense to take one loan from one person at a lower interest rate and cover those ones. That is household economics. We know it makes no sense to keep borrowing to pay off a debt because you would never get on top of it

you would always be playing catch up and the interest becomes more and more expensive, but that is what we as a country are reduced to doing. Our deficit is increasing, it is widening. Our foreign reserves are perilously down. We are seeking in this debate to raise the limit for the Treasury Bills to \$4.75 million but I would like to know from Senator Ince when he wraps up what are the bills that are now outstanding, what is our actual liability within the next year, the next 12 months, in relation to outstanding bills or Government Paper. I would like to know that because then if I had that information I may be able to take a more favourable position with respect to the proposal or the Resolution on the table but this Resolution has been brought in a vacuum. Senator Ince who is well-known for using up all of the hour when he is presenting and all of the half hour when he is speaking from the Floor introduced this Resolution in his second shortest introduction to date. I think we are owed a little bit more than that. If you are seeking to raise the limit you must know what is due because you are raising the limit to be able to pay them when they fall due, so tell us what is due, tell us what is due in the next round, tell us what is due for the next 12 months, and let us have a full idea of the exposure of our Government in relation to the outstanding Government Paper, let us be able to brace ourselves for what is to come so that we can be able to inform the public when they ask us questions. I feel quite ashamed when people ask me what is the true state of the economy and I have to say to be quite honest I do not know.

When the Government changes the first thing we are going to have to do is to try unravel the mess and find out what exactly is the true state of the economy in Barbados. We are not being given it from the Government. It is as if all of the resolutions to raise money, to raise limits, to borrow money, are almost now brought with a sense of embarrassment. They are not brought for grand and noble objects like or building roads or schools or doing something that you could see the capital infrastructure of Barbados being enhanced or that you could see our people being developed. They are put forward almost apologetically as if the person bringing them is ashamed to be bringing them, like this one.

Madam President, Senator Ince said that we in Barbados would be affected by inflation in the price of commodities which we use. We in Barbados are being affected by more than that. If the salaries of people were rising naturally in the course of things then perhaps we could take that on face value but we have a situation where the cost of living in Barbados has gone up 40 or 50 per cent in the last 10 years when in many instances salaries have not moved, that means the ability of the housewife to manage her household has been diminished, the ability of business people to keep their businesses afloat has been put in jeopardy and the ability of the average person to budget and to function has been cut. You hear of the stories of

people now going to the supermarket, people you would not expect, price comparing. Maybe it was time for Barbadians to get a little more responsible in what they consume, maybe it was time for Barbadians to concentrate on buying more local or maybe it was time for Barbadians to budget better, but no amount of budgeting can help the person whose salary has not increased but their cost of living has gone up by 50 per cent. At some point in time the ends just will not meet. The rope is literally too short to join and tie the ends.

Madam President, what about the 2 per cent of foreign exchange transactions? The difficulty that we keep getting is that the Government makes pronouncements but then there is unclarity as to how the enforcement is going to take place, so we have a Government of pronouncements which is lacking in enforcement. The Minister of Finance has shown this throughout his terms as Minister of Finance, grand pronouncements that do not happen, hinging the revenue of Barbados on projects that do not materialised and calculating our deficit on fictitious figures. Nobody believes the Minister of Finance anymore. The Budget was met with such scepticism it was unreal. Nobody has faith in the Estimates that we debated. The Estimates have been shown year in year out every year to be a fiction. The Budget spoke of a reduction in Government expenditure, but it was a blanket statement. There was no policy or no idea. Does the Government mean to cut a percentage off of each ministry? Are they targeting certain policies? Are we looking at restructuring? You do not know. Coming out of a Budget where you are attempting to levy almost \$500 000 000 dollars in taxes, there should be some more certainty than that otherwise you would think that the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs probably had a couple possible Budgets and he just picked one. This is almost Government by stealth.

Madam President, \$750 million is 18.5 per cent of \$400 billion. It is important that we calculate it as a percentage because things often make sense to persons by virtue of comparisons. It is only if you know how much it is as a fraction of what it was that you can appreciate exactly what it is you are doing.

Senate D10 Sequence 18

3.44 p.m.

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Senator W. A. ABRAHAMS: Mr. Deputy President, it is only if we know how much it is as a fraction of what it was, then can we appreciate exactly what it is that we are doing. We are trying to raise our Treasury Bills limit by 18.75 per cent, that is a huge jump when we consider that in this term of this Senate we had another huge jump that was supposed to have taken us through. Madam President,

18.5 per cent is a lot of money, that is a percentage more than VAT, so that if you look at VAT on your Bill and you see what a 'chunkner' is, consider it to be a little bit more of that, just to put it in practical terms.

Madam President, I would like to know what is the plan to get Barbados out of this mess, because we are in a financial mess, we are in an economic mess, the mistakes of this Government have now become catastrophic liabilities to the people of Barbados. It is alright to make mistakes when there are no consequences. We are talking at lunch about the West Indies losing to Afghanistan, about a young bowler making mistakes, that was horrific but that was a sport, but this is real life. The errors and missteps of this Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs and this Cabinet and this Government have proven to be catastrophic to Barbados and to the people of Barbados. Madam President, right now what this country needs is direction, we need a firm plan and we need to have confidence that we are going to get out. Madam President, this Government has no clue as to what it is doing and it cannot lead us out.

Madam President, I understand the position in which Senator Ince finds himself. I understand why it is necessary to raise this limit because the bills that are due and outstanding have to be paid or have to be serviced. You do not want a situation where the Government defaults and cannot pay when the bills reach maturity and the payment falls due, so that the Government has to do what it has to do. I am saying that this Government did not have to find itself in this situation. We are now nine years into the term of this Government, it is not sufficient to say global economic recession anymore. If it were the global economic recession then you should have started to lead us out. The job of a Government is to govern, you have to govern with whatever it is that is in front of you, you have to govern through all of the situations. Actually, a good government is measured by its ability to govern in bad times. This Government has failed the people of Barbados.

Madam President, in summarizing, I would like Senator Ince to actually advise us what the true is... Sorry, I cannot go there. I would like Senator Ince to advise as to what are the Treasury Bills and Government Papers that have to be serviced within the next 12 months. I would like the Honourable Member to give us a figure, let us understand whether this would be enough or whether or not we are expected to come back here. I would like Senator Ince to take caution because the whole purpose of getting a high overdraft is to be able to use it and I fear that it is going to be used badly again and that we are going to find ourselves deeper in the hole because we have given this Government more room to dig that hole and to heap the mud on top of us.

Madam President, with the lack of information, with the track record of this Government, and with the shame with which Senator Ince presented this Resolution, I am sorry, Ma'am, but I cannot support it. I thank you.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Fraser, you have the Floor.

Senator Prof. Sir Henry S. FRASER: Madam President, when I saw the statement shared this morning, that we were going to debate this subject of \$750 million in Treasury Bills, et cetera, I did not think I was going to have anything to say about it because I just did not understand why we would be doing this at this time and I could not reconcile it with the budget speech or with what has gone before but there are a number of things, Madam President, that have been said that I think do merit related comment that are relevant to the financial situation that would have led to this Resolution.

Madam President, the first thing was the comment by Senator Ince which was amplified further by Senator Watson about the resources of Barbados. Senator Ince said our only resources are our human resources, that is, to some extent, true, but we do have a significant past of productivity and I think that is one of the things that is worrying me. Madam President, we used to depend on sugar but we also, as those involved or as those who know the history of agriculture, would know that the agricultural practices of Barbados included spending at all times between one-quarter and one-third of the agricultural land in food, so that we had sustainable agriculture which sustained us even during the period of the WWII when very little food could come into the island, we grew our food crops, our ground provisions and we lived on them. I know that today people consider food crops and ground provisions to be 'poor' man's food but they do provide the calorie intake, sometimes too much, that we need, but it is worthwhile thinking about the fact that our sugar used to be profitable and it no longer is profitable.

Madam President, the fact that our National Hero, the late Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow did say that he hoped to see the day when there would be no further cane blades in the famous cane blade speech in Barbados and that day may be very close, but what has happened is that we have not substituted for the cane blades. We have not converted our lands into productive agricultural lands. In Israel and Saudi Arabia they grow many, many things in the deserts, they irrigate the deserts and they have dairies, they have plantations, they have orchards, they have vineyards in those countries. We on the other hand allow our agriculture land to grow river tamarind and women's tongue.

Madam President, I know the last time I mentioned women's tongue in the Senate I was criticised for going on

dangerous ground talking about women's tongue but the fact is that these trees that have no productive utility and no economic benefit for us in Barbados, and I very much doubt that the river tamarind ever will, actually, these things are not producing economic gains for us.

Madam President, the second thing is that there was a sugar windfall in the 1970s which was not reinvested into the sugar industry and that is why we have our current factory which is not a state-of-the-art factory but is, in fact, a second-hand factory imported from Antigua 30 years ago, so that our sugar industry is not doing what it should, even though there are people who still want to continue growing sugar and I contrast this with the marketing of our sugar.

Madam President, another problem was giving it away in bulk for decades while in Mauritius, a country only twice the size of Barbados, another little country in the middle of the Indian Ocean produces sugar and markets that sugar successfully in one-pound, two-pound and five-pound packages with beautiful labels all over the supermarkets of Britain. We have lost that opportunity and we have not replaced it with anything. Madam President, what has concerned me is that the public discourse in Barbados in the last few weeks has occasionally commented on things like buying local and eating local which is very, very important, and I congratulate the producers of a beautiful advertisement recently which is several minutes of explaining how and why we should eat local and all of the things that are being done for the local economy, that is wonderful but we are not having the dialogue about increasing our productivity.

We spend almost \$90 million on marketing our tourism. We spend only 10 per cent of that on developing our tourism product and I say this every time we have the Estimates being debated that we are spending all the money in marketing and not enough on tourism development. Madam President, the expenditure on marketing our tourism is more than twice, I believe, of what we actually put into the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and Water Resource Management and so our agriculture has really been treated as the poor relation of governance and development in Barbados and we lose the opportunities.

Madam President, a lot of effort has been going recently into the development and the diversification of our rum industry and our rum industry is winning the goal medals...

3.56 p.m.

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Senator Professor Sir H.F.S. FRASER: ... A lot of effort has been going recently into the redevelopment and the diversification of our rum industry, and our rum industry is winning the gold medals all over the world. Again, I have to be careful talking about rum, because there are people who say I should not be promoting rum, but rum is the iconic Barbadian product. Rum has made Barbados famous. Barbados made rum famous. Barbados is where the name “rum” developed, with the name “rum bullion”. This is where rum really took off; in Barbados, in the 17th Century, nearly 400 years ago. We are producing perhaps not quite as much as we can, but we are not even producing enough sugar to make enough molasses to make enough rum from our own molasses. That is a problem which we have. Madam President, the point I am making is that except for rum, we are not promoting the potential for increasing productivity out of Barbados. We have exotic products which we could be selling overseas. I have constantly said that Barbados pepper sauce should go viral in the way that Heinz Tomato Ketchup went viral, but we do not work very well in partnerships so we have 20 little companies, cottage industries and others making Barbados pepper sauce and people come to Barbados and buy it in hordes. I know one person who I saw last week and who told me they were taking back a half-dozen pint-and-a-half bottles of pepper sauce, and I know someone who comes from Britain every January and takes back one dozen pint-and-a-half bottles of pepper sauce. We could be selling pepper sauce in massive quantities and improving our export income.

We have many other exotic things, including Barbadian candy, many of which are unique, and Barbadian fruit, even the breadfruit. Jamaica is exploiting the breadfruit industry now to some extent, and several other countries are because there are several hundred varieties of breadfruit and it actually eats rather well. You can do wonderful things with breadfruit. In fact, the breadfruit chips that are now being made on the local market, I think, should completely replace the large number of potato chips we import. We should be doing that. We could be making many things out of Barbados mahogany furniture, which in the 18th and 19th Centuries was the most prized wood in Britain for the exotic cabinet-making which went on there.

Madam President, my point is all we have heard about in the last few weeks, apart from the parlous state and the crisis state of our economy, is increased taxes and increased borrowing and nothing about increased productivity. It has been said that we have had many hindrances to development by the private sector. We only have to hear some of our top people involved in private development; some of the big names which you see in the newspapers all the time talking about development and industry and the long delays sometimes of several years

and applications going for approval to develop this or develop that. There are huge issues.

Aside.

Senator Professor Sir H.F.S. FRASER: There are issues here in relation to things like Town and Country Planning and other problems that make development difficult, but I am not hearing the dialogue and the discussion on where we should be increasing our productivity by orders of magnitude. We are not talking about those things. We are only wondering where we can get the money from.

Madam President, we have had a lot of discussion about the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and there is a myth and a belief still prevalent that the IMF's behaviour of 30 years ago when they forced countries like Guyana and Jamaica to devalue their currency, is the way the IMF operates today. We are reliably told that this is not the case. We have had ongoing dialogue with the IMF, and as Senator Watson so ably pointed out, there is no possibility of any loans of lower interest rates than the IMF; so it is better to practise prevention rather than to get into a desperate situation where we are forced to devalue because, as “Doctor Watson” said, and it is a no-brainer, we must never devalue our dollar. Devaluing our dollar is, as for Jamaica and Guyana, the beginning of the end; so this is something we must not do.

Therefore, Madam President, it does seem to me that we have not heard the discussions and recommendations which the Social Partnership's special committees were asked to deliberate and to come up with. We have heard brief comments coming out about that but we have not really heard about these recommendations. We understand that they have not been incorporated into the Budget. They have not been made fully public.

Aside.

Senator Professor Sir H.F.S. FRASER: I do not know how correct that is. That may be a misunderstanding but I understand that they have not been taken too seriously in the Budget. Madam President, if, as I am hearing in an aside, that is not correct, I do apologise, but certainly one would like to think that the other truism which has been expressed today is that you cannot tax your way out of a recession. I think that is widely acknowledged. Sometimes it is said that economists should not have two hands, because most economists in giving advice say, “On the one hand this is the answer, but on the other hand that...”, so if economists had only one hand, perhaps they could agree very firmly on which was the right way to go. It does seem to me that there is a consensus that you cannot tax your way out of a recession, as Senator Watson said. I would have to conclude with the statement that IMF consultation,

as the Prime Minister did say -- he was quite prepared to have that dialogue -- is something that we should be considering since we must not devalue our dollar, and to recognise that we cannot tax our way out of a recession.

Madam President, I would like to conclude by saying that it is clear that we must not be ostriches and we must be talking about how we can: (a) save our foreign exchange, and (b) increase our earning of foreign exchange. I think it is really sad that in these several months of discussing our budgetary crisis, we have had no serious discussion about how to increase our productivity, apart from a few displays at BMEX. Thank you, Madam President.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Ince, you have the Floor.

Senator J. INCE: Madam President, I rise to, as I would put it today, wrap up this Resolution, but before I do that it is important that I reply to some of the queries -- I call them queries -- which were put before this Resolution and put to this Senate. There were statements made about taxing your way out of a recession, the burden of taxation placed on the people of Barbados, and the level of that taxation, Madam President. I do not know if those who make those statements make them for the public gallery or, as I call it, opposition politics. Madam President, all of us should be aware that this economy grew by 1.8 per cent for the Financial Year 2016-2017. Every financial year ends March 31. We are projected to grow over the next financial year by 2.0 per cent.

Madam President, I think what is disappointing is not the Budget and the taxation; it is those who ran around Barbados saying to the people of Barbados that this Democratic Labour Party Administration was going to bring a Budget where bus fares were going to go up by \$4 and that we were going to send home another 5 000 public servants. This is what the Opposition and others wanted to see; this country fall apart prior to the Budget. What is disappointing is that we came with a Budget based on the principles on which we said we were going to manage this country. That is what is disappointing to those persons; the whole idea of water rates going up, taxes on medication, increasing school meals. It never happened.

Madam President, it is important. I always hear never send a child to do a man's job, and I have to reply to Senator Abrahams when he speaks to taxation. Madam President, on Tuesday, April 25, 1995, in a growing economy where Value-Added Tax (VAT) was \$945 million in a financial year, in a growing economy that was restructured in 1994, a former Minister of Finance increased taxes at the stroke of a pen -- this was a Budget -- on a public sector transportation system of Barbados. That

is why I said to Senator Abrahams, "Read." You should never send a child to do a man's job.

4.01 p.m.

Wednesday, June 14, 2017

Senator J. INCE: (D10: Sequence 21) (Read)

... on a public sector of Barbados, a public sector transportation system of Barbados. Madam, that is why I said to Senator Abrahams to read. You should never send a child to do a man's job.

Madam President, they increased licence to drive a public service vehicle and from 1995 until now, that sector has been under pressure and this Democratic Labour Party has reduced the fees to the public sector vehicles in order to bring back some stability. Let me give Senator Abrahams a little idea of what those fees were at the time. Madam President, they moved the taxi from \$10 to \$20, a maxi taxi of 300 per cent increase from \$10 to \$40. Madam President, omnibus 100 per cent, mini bus \$300. The annual renewal fee from \$1000 to \$2000 but what was ridiculous was the mini buses permit move from \$5000 to \$7000, over 100 per cent. Madam, conductor licence increase by 400 per cent at the stroke of a pen in a Budget and, Madam, do you know what was the purpose and what made it ridiculous? This is in a growing economy, a fiscal deficit of almost one per cent and they said the purpose was to meet wages and salaries negotiation. This is here and it says:

"Therefore, Mr. Speaker, the net gain in the revenue would be \$4.3 million which would contribute towards meeting the cost of any salary increase which will be completed later this year with the trade unions."

Madam President, Tuesday, April 25, 1995, after Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford and the Democratic Labour Party set this country on 10 years of economic growth and yet you are going to have statements made about draconian taxation. Madam, this is what it is.

Madam President, let us speak to the Treasury Bills. In 1993/1994, the Barbados Labour Party came into office and found a Treasury Bills limit of \$700 million. Madam, do you think we get to \$4.7 billion overnight? Do you think we got to \$4.7 billion by voodoo? Madam President, this what the Barbados Labour Party did with Treasury Bills? And then we are going to go to the National Insurance Scheme because instead of using the Central Bank of Barbados to hide their debt, they ran it through the National Insurance Scheme and I will explain, Madam President.

Madam President, in 1995/1996, the Barbados Labour Party -- I would say to this Senate that when you

roll over Treasury Bills at majority, you roll over, you liquidate and you roll over. Madam, in 1995/1996, \$515 million three hundred and twenty eight thousand five hundred worth of Treasury Bills. In 1999/2000 \$574 million and fifty one thousand five hundred dollars worth of Treasury Bills. This is the Barbados Labour Party with an economy that was growing and they want to give the impression that have Treasury Bills that this Democratic Labour Party is committing some sin, that the country is going to fall apart. Madam, we came to office in 2007/2008, \$498 million three hundred and forty nine thousand and thirty seven dollars in Treasury Bills. Madam President, over that period the Barbados Labour Party would have roll over \$1 billion five hundred and eighty seven million seven hundred and twenty nine thousand and thirty seven dollars in Treasury Bills. Madam, I will repeat it, \$1 billion five hundred and eighty seven million seven hundred and twenty nine thousand and thirty seven dollars in Treasury Bills. Madam President, I hear this thing about the debt and that the Central Bank of Barbados at December 31st had no debt to the Government. Madam President, this Government came to office in October and in December 31st the National Insurance Scheme had \$18 million worth of Treasury Bills; \$3 017.3 million in debentures; \$13 million in development bonds; \$78.7 million in Treasury notes. Madam, this is in 1994. There were no long-term loans. Madam, not a long-term loan went through that National Insurance Scheme Fund. In December 2007, when you hear the current Leader of the Opposition saying that the Central Bank of Barbados had no debt belonging to the Government of Barbados and with regards that statement as Senator Abrahams would have it about the debt and what we are doing with the debt and the Treasury Bills, Madam President, by December 31, 2007, the Government of Barbados had debentures in the National Insurance Scheme of \$838.2 million. Madam, when we speak of debentures, that would be a difference of \$520 million and that tells me that \$520.8 million was added to the debt of National Insurance Scheme between 1994 and 2000, so do not walk in here and try to convince the people of Barbados that this increase of debt to the National Insurance Scheme only came about since 2008.

Madam President, Treasury Bills moved from \$18 million to 120.8 million in December 31, 2007, which tells me that the commercial sector held on the Treasury Bills but a lot of it was rolled over and liquidated. Madam, that is why I gave you the amount that was used by the Barbados Labour Party \$1.5 billion.

Madam President, development bonds: \$13 million and by 2007 it was \$105.7 million. Who was in office then? Madam, long-term loans are the loans that were taken out of the National Insurance Fund, \$219 million. So when we look at the overall bonds that came out of the National Insurance Scheme between 1994 and 2008, it was \$1 billion 456 million one hundred and sixty seven thousand

seven hundred and sixty four dollars. Madam, that is what the Barbados Labour Party used out of the National Insurance Fund as at December 31st. Madam, I am going to repeat it, 1 billion 456 million one hundred and sixty seven thousand seven hundred and sixty four dollars. Madam, that is what the Barbados Labour Party did but now they want to tell people about managing the debt and the deficit. We are going to speak to these things and we are going to speak to the deficit also.

Madam President, what is also interesting is that the reason why we seem to have challenges with the debt is because at December 31st the Barbados Labour Party issued \$200 million in debentures and Treasury notes but what is important is the date. This is why I say that Barbados Labour Party committed financial terrorism in this country. They applied the theory of economics but it was financial terrorism.

Madam President, can you imagine with all the brains that this is what they did to the people of Barbados and this is what this Democratic Labour Party must face. When you see October 30, 2017, we have to look for \$100 million that was borrowed on November 23, 2007. Can you imagine that they saddled the people of Barbados with \$100 million in debentures to be paid within a 10 year period? It is economic madness. Madam, not only that, they went on December 20, 2007 and borrowed another \$100 million to mature December 2020.

Sequence 21

Insert s22 juliette

Wednesday, June 14, 2017

ORDER NO. 2 – NATIONAL SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY LEVY BILL, 2017

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Boyce, you have the Floor.

Senator the Hon. D. W. BOYCE: Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, last year when the Minister of Finance moved the Resolution for our Budget in the Other Place he moved the introduction of a National Social Responsibility Levy that would be imposed on imports and on goods manufactured or produced in Barbados not for export. That levy was at the rate of 2 per cent and it was expected in a full year to generate about \$80 million in taxes. As it was, the levy did not start until the 1st of September and therefore generated somewhat less than that. This Bill, therefore, seeks to regularise that levy and therefore it also includes a validation clause to legitimise the amounts raised from September last year until now. As you know, Madam President, when you do a Budget Resolution you are allowed to collect the taxes for

120 days thereafter and then you have to bring legislation or you have to validate what happens after the fee has gone up.

Madam President, the levy fell on imports that are used by the general economy but it has one or two exemptions. The Bill excludes clearly enterprises that are operating on fiscal incentives and the tourism sector and it includes transactions between manufacturer and manufacturing and it excludes those parts that are export. In addition to that, Madam President, the Bill provides that the Minister of Finance can waive those charges from time to time at his discretion. The levy would be collected at the Customs and it would be paid over when the VAT payments are made by the companies.

Madam President, the question may arise as to why you have to have the National Social Responsibility Levy, and the Bill sets out some of the purposes of it inside the Bill: For sanitation, the environment and so on. Beyond that, Madam President, those are some of the issues that were raised in the just concluded Resolution. It goes, Madam President, to how we close the fiscal deficit that has been the bone of much contention over the last three years. Madam President, the fact that we were able to put in place this levy helped us to bring down the fiscal deficit in 2015/2016 from 6.9 per cent to 6.3 per cent in 2016/2017. Madam President, there are ways you can bring down your deficit. One of them is to increase your revenue and you could do that in one or two ways: You can raise taxes and get an immediate injection of funds or you can wait for the growth in the economy. Madam President, notice that I say that you can wait for the growth in the economy. I say that, Madam President, because the Government's take in taxes out of the economy immediately is just under 28 or 29 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product, so if you had to close a gap of 1 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product, I am talking about your fiscal deficit, and you wanted to clear it in one year and clear it only on the basis of growth in the economy you have to have the economy grow by 3.5 per cent in that year, so if you are not growing by that amount, if you are not growing three and a half times the amount you need to close the deficit, then you have to find other ways to close that deficit.

Madam President, the other way of course is to reduce your expenditure. I have been to this Chamber, several times and quoted the figures inside here to show that the overall growth in our expenditure in this Administration, has been our principal growth, has come from the increased in our debt service, and let me get there to say one of the reasons why that has increased. Madam President, in 2010, I think it was, the Canadian Budget measure that gave Barbados sole exempt surplus treatment, in other words, Canadian companies in Barbados could send their profits back to Canada and not get tax on that, is

to have a Double Taxation Agreement. The Canadian companies in our jurisdictions, low-tax jurisdictions or ...jurisdictions such as Bermuda, The Bahamas and so on have to pay taxes on their remittances to Canada so the Barbados companies were in a preferential position. That changed in 2010. Madam President, at that time we were getting, I think, about \$400 million or \$300-and-something million per year in taxes from the international business sector that was employing close to 3 000 Barbadians and that was contributing net foreign exchange to the country of about \$900 million a year. Madam President, those companies then said that they can now go to Bermuda or the Cayman Islands or anywhere else and get exempt surplus treatment in Canada and said that if we wanted them to stay here in Barbados we would have to reduce the taxes on our international business companies, and we did that. We had to do that. We gave up that revenue but giving up that revenue meant that we saved the better part of that \$900 million worth net in foreign exchange a year so I figure that if we gave up \$200 million to maintain \$900 million, it is a tough thing to do but it is not an unreasonable thing to do, in order to save the 3 000 jobs of Barbadians who were employed in the sector, it really is not too bad a thing to do.

Madam President, even when we lost that \$200 million we could have taken the easy way out, or what some people might think is the easy way out, and said let us reduce staff, so if you take that \$200 million, and that is an annual figure, and divide it by an average of \$30 000 or \$40 000 as a salary for public officers, however you do it the figures are going to be very close to 5 000 people.

Senate D10 Sequence 23

4.34 p.m.

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Senator the Hon. D. W. BOYCE: Madam President, even if we allow it at \$200 million, we could have taken the easy way out, or what some people might think is the easy way out, and say to let us reduce staff, take \$200 million, an annual figure and divide it by an average of \$30 000 or \$40 000 in salaries for public officers. However, you do it the figure is going to be very close, nigh of 5 000 people. Is that the decision that we would have wanted a Government to take in those circumstances, to have 5 000 families go on the breadline because of that? Ma'am, we held on and tried.

Madam President, Senator Watson in his contribution earlier on talked about where the engine of growth should be. Ma'am, of course, Senator Watson is a very wise and experienced gentleman and also knows that the engine of growth in our economy has hardly ever been the private sector, so that if the private sector is not

showing growth who would have to show that growth and so it would have to be Government, but how does Government show growth? Government would have to go and borrow and borrow and borrow to be able to get the growth that you would want to get. Also, Government could not borrow in one year and then pay all back the next year it gets growth, but it has to keep that level of borrowing up so that you can continue with the growth in the economy, then you have to wait. Madam President, while you are waiting you have to pay teachers, nurses, policemen and all the others, so that you are going to have to do some borrowing.

Madam President, let me come back to the loss of that tax revenue from the International Business Sector. If you take seven years at \$200 million a year approximately and you add that interest cost that you would have to pay to service that, let us see if you do not get close to \$2 billion worth of debt. Madam President, those were the circumstances which we were managing.

We managed to grow the tourism industry but we were growing the tourism industry in circumstances where the source countries of the visitors were also having some problems and therefore they were not necessarily spending as bountifully as they might have spent before, so that you had to manage that situation. Madam President, the only way that you could manage it and not to have more people going home was to increase your taxes, while you try to encourage growth to proceed, that is why, Madam President, the tourism sector has been the beneficiary of some concessions to bring more foreign direct investment in to allow them to grow the economy.

Madam President, I know people worry about how much money you use to support the tourism industry and they worry about the absolute size of how much you put into the tourism industry but you do not look at what the yields to the economy... They must also look, I am not saying that they do not, but they must also look at the returns of the economy of the tourism sector. If you spend \$100 million or \$125 million to market the tourism sector, to do tourism development and so on, but your returns on net \$1¼ billion, then I think that you have not been altogether unreasonable in your allocations of funds. It further employs people, I think about 13 000 people.

Madam President, there has been some discussion about going to the International Monetary Fund. Ma'am, going to the International Monetary Fund is the cheapest source of funds, it consolidates your debts. I have not heard what period of time that you have to repay them, I am not sure about that one. Madam President, I am not going to deny any of those things in search of foreign exchange but even if it does not force you to devalue, it will give you some little benefits.

Madam President, if you were to consolidate the local debt that Government has and use money from the International Monetary Fund to consolidate that debt, a couple of things would happen. Yes, it would reduce your interest cost but it will also now create a liability in foreign exchange. You have far less control over managing your debt if it is in foreign exchange than if it is in local currency. Secondly, Madam President, you will have this wonderful body called the National Insurance Board with a few billion dollars on its hands in idle cash and getting nothing on it and with the requirement to meet actuarial determining a rate of return of somewhere around 5 per cent or 5.5 per cent. Let us think whether the National Insurance Scheme could survive that kind of surgery.

Madam President, there is a lot of talk about the National Insurance Scheme lending Government too much money but the highest rate of return earned by the National Insurance Board has been from Government Paper and from leases to Government, not only in this Administration but in the previous Administration as well, and at rates far higher than I think were necessary. Indeed, as I say in this Senate many times, I think that the lending rates, not the saving rates, to Government, to the private sector and to everybody else in Barbados are all too high.

Mr. Speaker, we have in this country the last Treasury Bill auction rate at 3.5 per cent, while in Trinidad and Tobago it was 2.5 per cent less, but nobody gets up and says these things and says that if we had pushed people for a low interest rate regime that we would have saved \$100 million a year in interest cost over the last seven or eight years. We behave as if the people who are outside making that kind of money are making that money at the expense of the people of Barbados because you need to borrow money or that we are gurus or are great magicians of finance. I just raised that by the way because you have to give some of this explanation to the people of Barbados.

Madam President, I do not try to explain medicine as I do not know anything about medicine. I do not try to explain theology as I do not know much more about that, nor do I try to explain law, though sometimes you have to explain to lawyers the financial implications of what it is that they are doing or what it is that you want to do so that they can advise you properly on how to structure it legally and because you are doing that you get to understand a little bit of law, a little bit of finance, a little of accounting and you come along well.

Madam President, I wanted to raise those couple of issues about this question of the Treasury Bills limit. Madam President, when you get close to the limit you have to have sufficient room if you are going to...

No.D10 (24)4.52 p.m.

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Senator the Hon. D.W. BOYCE: ... Madam President, when you get close to your limit, you have to have sufficient room. If you are going to retire and roll over \$500 million, you have to have enough room to have the funds raised to pay off that \$500 million. There might be a gap of a day or so between when you pay the money back and when you have to raise the new money. You need to have that little gap, that little range, so you can do your borrowing and you can handle your matters properly.

Madam President, this matter of fictitious figures that people try to raise in this Chamber all the time is getting out of hand.

Aside.

Senator the Hon. D.W. BOYCE: Thank you. None of us in this Chamber, none of who are labelled politicians or parliamentarians, have anything to do with preparing figures for the Government. They tell us what the figures are and we verily believe them. They are the same people and the same institutions who told all the other Administrations what the figures were and who were verily believed. Why are we behaving in this scurrilous way by accusing public servants of producing fictitious figures? In the same way when people in here call lawyers all kinds of bad names because of the actions of a few, and we take umbrage at that, we ourselves must ensure that we do not destroy people's reputations inside here by class action behaviour that seeks to denigrate those persons. It is inhumane.

Aside.

Senator the Hon. D.W. BOYCE: I will stop at inhumane. I would like to deal with the morality of these things. Madam President, this bring me to another point. We heard in here today that the deficit is increasing. The people who produced the numbers say differently. They have said for the last three years that it has been declining, and we have said it may be declining but not as fast as we would like it to decline, so that we can make sure we can find the money to fund the things. If we say you should not borrow from the Central Bank, how are you not going to borrow from the Central Bank except you generate the revenue? Once again, Madam President, the choice has always been that you have to either raise taxes and everybody pays some of those taxes, or you send home public servants and all the burden falls on the public servants. That is not to say that you do not push for growth; you push for growth too but growth takes time and the revenue from growth takes time. In the meantime, what do you do?

Madam President, this tax -- the National Social Responsibility Levy -- is a far easier tax to collect than income tax, because it gets collected at the Customs. I am going to say that because it is what is called an indirect tax on your revenue or your income, it is regressive and it hurts people; it hurts the poor man more than it hurts the wealthy person, notwithstanding that the wealthy person spends more actual dollars than the poor man but obviously not as large a percentage of his or her income. Madam President, I believe that there are several people in Barbados who earn good incomes but do not bother to trouble the tax authorities. I say it that way because I am not going to get accused again. They do not bother to trouble the tax authorities, so it is the people like yourself, Madam President, and Honourable Members here, and those who are salaried persons, who bear the brunt of taxation on incomes. Salaried persons in the formal sector pay their taxes and they bear the brunt of it. However, there is a lot of activity going on in the informal sector, which is not easily measured. I did not say "illegal". I said "informal". There are persons who run their little businesses very legally, but they do not bother to get involved in the tax thing.

What a tax like this does is causes everybody to contribute to the revenue. It shifts from the burden of the salaried class in the formal sector so that everybody pays a little something towards the revenue. If you cannot collect all that you should collect from income tax from direct means, you have to find a way to collect from those who do not otherwise pay. Otherwise, they are what you call "freeloaders", and we have to stop that. This tax is introduced so as to be able to deal with some critical areas and, of course, I believe that we have made good progress in the collection of it so far. We are working on some additional guidelines to make sure that there is extreme clarity in the way the tax ought to be applied so that some of the confusion which people have created through the tax is cleared up. We will have that discussion.

Madam President, there is nothing wrong with saying you are going to do a tax on something and then spend time with the persons who would get affected to make sure you iron out any kinks and to make sure that you do any carve-outs which you have to do for certain groups. There is nothing wrong with that. You can either do it before you announce the tax or you can do it after you announce the tax. The important thing is to get it done before you start the operationalisation of it.

Madam President, there is just one thing I want to mention; this matter of tax on foreign exchange transactions. As I recall and as I read, the Minister of Finance announced a tax on sales of foreign exchange by authorised dealers. My experience would suggest to me that this means when the commercial bank sells you foreign exchange, when you go to the commercial bank to

get a transaction done in United States dollars or Sterling, that is a purchase of foreign exchange by you and a sale of foreign exchange by the bank. The bank is taking your Barbados dollars and converting them into foreign currency. That is the sale of foreign exchange. It is when the country is actually using foreign exchange and you are using the country's foreign exchange. That is where the tax falls. When I read the Budget Speech and when I read the Resolution, it said, "Tax on sales by authorised dealers of foreign exchange".

Madam President, that would mean if people earn foreign exchange and bring it into the country, they do not have to pay that tax. It would mean that transactions which are all in foreign currency ought not to be subject to that tax, because the tax is a tax on the sale of foreign exchange by an authorised dealer. There is this thing that goes abroad that says there is a tax on all foreign exchange transactions; that is not what I read in the Budget Speech. I may well have read it wrong, but that is not what I seem to recall reading.

4.50 p.m.

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Senator the Hon. D.W. BOYCE: (Sequence 26)

... maybe I read it wrong but that is not what I seem to recall. I wanted to just clear up that one.

Madam President, this administration moved away from borrowing to support the foreign exchange reserve to trying to borrow for projects. Madam, we took that as a deliberate decision because when you do these borrowings often you get hit with lumpy repayments and it poses a challenge to you. We took the decision that we were not going to borrow to support the reserves as is normally has been the case because we were in difficult circumstances in the world with foreign exchange earnings because when the financial business sector went into that spin in 2008, we thought we safer by not going to borrow foreign exchange just to property up the reserves to engage essentially in consumption. Madam President, that means you show a lower level of reserves because you are not supporting them with borrowed funds. Madam, that makes us look like we are very low in reserves.

Madam President, this talk also that we have got about how badly off we are. The Caribbean Development Bank recently published a report. The review is on their website it is called 2016 Economic Review and 2017 Forecast. I do not know if you wish me to make it a document of the Chamber but, Madam, you can so direct if you wish in which the Barbados' growth in 2016 of 1.6 per cent was above the average growth in the region, which was actually a decline of .9 per cent, and that was decline

was driven by Suriname's decline and Trinidad's decline and some decline in Belize but the group of tourism dependent countries had this kind of growth somewhere between 1 per cent and 2.5 per cent and we were right in the middle of that.

Madam President, persons say how bad the economy is but when you look at the unemployment rates in the region produced by the Caribbean Development Bank's Economic Review 2016, Barbados unemployment rate is the fourth lowest in the region. The ones below that are Trinidad, Cayman Islands and Belize. Madam, many of the others employment rate is well into the double digits, 20 per cent and 25 per cent over, up in that range. Madam, we do not like the 9 per cent. We would love it to be 5 per cent unemployment. I only say that just to give regional references and to say, yes, we are not doing as well as we like to do but we are not necessary down at the bottom of anybody's pile either. Madam, yes, we have a high debt to GDP ratio but all the others except for a couple of them have had debt forgiven. Guyana had a lot of debt forgiven, Grenada, St. Kitts, Jamaica all had debt forgiven and had haircuts, and they are people in Barbados who had investments in those countries who had to take haircuts, who had to take reductions in the principal that they lent when that happened. We in Barbados have tried to take away from this matter of haircuts on Government paper. We do not feel that you should push haircuts on Government paper, where you lose principal because that goes straight against your balance sheet in your income statement and it causes all kinds of problems. How can you go and touch the principal on the bonds that National Insurance Scheme has by the kinds of amounts they have had cut in Jamaica and other places. (6:00) Madam, people make these calls for these kinds of actions without sometimes understanding what you do to your insurance companies, what you do to your commercial banks, what you do to your pension funds and what you do to your National Insurance Fund. Madam, ours is high because not a fellow has given us a yen of ease on our debt. We did not ask for it and we are going to get through the situation.

Madam President, I thought I would take the opportunity to give a little bit of explanation on it. The other thing I want people to remember is that the problem in the international business sector has not gone out of our way yet. Madam, for the last 10 years there has been incessant attack one after the other by the developed world on the international financial centres that are located in small countries. You have to meet all of the requirements that they have set up. They even requirements for lawyers to register as trust service providers and so on. We have done everything and each time you do something, they come up with another requirement and, Madam, that is not going to go away in a hurry. Madam, over in Europe, they just put a big fine on Apple saying that they are not going along with Apple's allocation of profits between Ireland

and wherever else. Ireland has a low tax and other places have high tax rates and they have decided that Apple has to pay more taxes and Ireland is now appealing that. When they began to hit Apple and Ireland, we have to be extremely careful because we are so tiny that we will get roll over.

Madam President, those problems are not going to go away and all of the commentary I have heard, I do not think I have heard one set of commentary that says this is the way we are going to deal with this whole set of fiscal issues and growth issues in the economy. What I have heard is sectoral vested interest saying do not touch us, touch somebody else, do not touch the people who buy from us, touch the other people, do not touch our income, touch somebody else's income. Madam President, you cannot run a Government by giving everybody incentives and have no revenue coming in to pay the staff and then buy the goods and services that you have to buy.

Madam President, when I lead these things off normally I would stick very close to the Bill at hand but since the goodly Senator Abrahams chose to interpret, with your kind permission, the last Resolution very widely. I thought I should maybe spend a little bit of time in bringing to the attention of people some of issues that you to have to consider when you look at these things and to correct any misconceptions that might have gone abroad in the market.

Madam President, with those relatively few words, I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

Sequence 26

Insert s27 juliette

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Senator R. A. HUNTE: Prior to the Budget we as senators and elected parliamentarians attended a meeting which they call a pre-Budget discussion. We did not know what was going to be in it but everybody was there to offer their views. There were also about four or five public servants who really are responsible for putting the programme together, writing it, Government of course is responsible for policy, so when you make those attacks on the Government about falsifying figures you are actually doing that to the public servants who themselves were former advisors to administrations of the past. It is a blatant attack when you look into the newspaper and see comments that persons who have very light hands are playing around with Government funds, a million dollars here, a couple thousand dollars there. I have never known of any Minister who writes a cheque. I do not know of any Minister who collects money at either port. I do not know any Minister who sits down at a desk or at a cashier's desk in the Barbados Revenue Authority or in any of the revenue

departments in this country collecting funds, so these attacks. When you want to be in politics or you want to replace a Government obviously you would use all kinds of charges and false accusations not knowing that one day you would be in that line of fire, and that is why, Madam President, I detest Opposition politics.

Madam President, I want to say at this point that I thought I knew a lot. I might know a lot about campaigning. I think I am a very good at that, but to understand how a Government operates I have learnt a lot of that since I was asked to serve in this present, and I wish to thank the Honourable late David Thompson because I am seeing it from inside.

Madam President, the name of this National Social Responsibility Levy indicates what it is really all about. Everybody in the country have been asked, this is our country, to put their hands to the plough. You cannot walk around with a hat or stay up by Nelson and ask somebody to put a \$5 here to help fix a road or put a \$10 here to help do this here. You cannot do that. You could do it, not you Madam President. That kind of primary politics which I thought had gone through the window a long time ago still exists in this country by people who should know better. They have not done anything to uplift politics in this country. They have downgraded it. Where else are you going to get the money from? The Government of Barbados have had to pay over \$67 million in interest payments over the last year but they could not stand up by Nelson or out by the Bridge with a hat and ask somebody to drop a \$5 or \$10 or whatever change they got in their pocket here. You do not run a country so.

We all know what China has produced and the level of standard they have reached in the world, but they owe away \$28 trillion and the United States of America owe away \$23 trillion. I never thought I would have to use the comparison of Barbados to those countries but I understand better in the last five, six, seven and eight years how countries and their economies operate.

An economy is really about the people. It is not the only thing. People is one of the things that drives an economy. People, goods and services make up an economy, not one and not the other, and that is why the question is being asked: What would you have done? We know what the great Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow of late has done. We know what Grantley Adams did and attempted to do, not a lot but anyhow he still did some things but I take issue with a lot of that too. Do the research on it and you will come up with a lot of different answers as well. We also know those who have come since, but you got people, oh this body built the highway, the next body did this and all of those kinds of things, but that is part of a Government.

I heard the Minister of Finance said that they had to pay a loan of \$62 million that was borrowed by the Barbados Agricultural Development Corporation since 2001. Not a cent was repaid on that loan borrowed in the Barbados Labour Party time. This Democratic Labour Party had to get into office and pay it sometime last year when the people called up their loan, but Government is a continuum. It is not a Barbados Labour Party or Democratic Labour Party loan. It was borrowed by the Government of Barbados and therefore the Government of Barbados whoever forms the Administration had to pay it back and that is why I say I do not like Opposition politics because it is misleading in a lot of cases and a lot of ways and it confuses the people of the country.

Madam President, we heard about the largest increases in taxes in one fell swoop whatever is the proposed, anticipated or expected amount as far as the revenue is concerned. We have not gotten there yet. There are some things that are very difficult to predict. All of those things are only estimates but it is the day when the time comes for the final figures that you would know how they turned out. Nobody knows. No one person is asked to bear the brunt of the responsibilities in their country. I read of Hercules and Samson but they were not leaders of a country and a lot of the people that I hear speaking - and we will get a chance to debate some of these things I am told in a week or two and that is where I will produce my information - that got all of this advice for Government have never been responsible for a country yet. Nobody is going to ask them to pay a loan that was not paid for for three, four, 10 or 15 years, the Government got to find the money to pay it because the loan is against the Government of Barbados, not an individual. The Prime Minister could die or retire and go home. He is not Barbados. If it were so the country would have gone with Tom Adams, Grantley Adams and Errol Barrow. The country is still here. It is not their country, they were only part of it and they did what they had to do...

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5.20 p.m.

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Senator R. A. HUNTE: Madam President, if it were so then the country would have gone with Tom Adams, Grantley Adams, and Errol Barrow but the country is still here, it is not their country, they were only part of it and did what they had to do as citizens of the country who asked for the responsibility and it as given them. Ma'am, the old people say, "what goes around comes around" and "wha' ain't catch yuh ain't pass yuh", but this trying to grind in the dust, grind in the dust, you do not know what you are doing, you do not know what you are doing, let us look at the man who is leading one of the largest

economies in the world, who thought that he knew everything, who now has the whole country confused. Ma'am, I never thought I would have lived to see these things, a country that people used to worship. I was too, up to a certain points, that is why I made visits to North Korea, Russia, Cuba, among others because I always felt that there was someplace and the opportunity came and I took that opportunity and I saw a different side of the world, so do not overestimate North Korea, I saw a lot of backing off recently, it is not going to be a walkover but anyhow let me stick onto this.

Ma'am, we have a tendency as though we know better than anybody else. The reason small countries like this will not attract other than probably the main political parties, the big ones too, America, England Canada and people stay sometimes to be tried and tested is because as in relation to Barbados which is a small population - you have a form over there, I am here with what I have; I ran over there by you, I come from where you stopped supporting, that is why third, fourth and fifth and all of these different organisations are not going to get anywhere, people are still going to vote either Barbados Labour Party or Democratic Labour Party, because everybody has their answers until they sit in that chair or in those chairs around the table to make the decisions on behalf of the Government, everybody is an expert, everybody knows everything but I have been around long enough to see that that is not necessarily so.

Madam President, we are so obsessed with having things done free that some of those persons... Madam President, there is a member in my family who borrowed some of the people's money from the Student Revolving Loan Fund to be educated, who did not pay back one cent but who has gone overseas. My family member has not repaid one cent back to the Student Revolving Loan Fund but is working for 'big' money is Washington. I do not hide up these things, you must get it free, it must be free, you must not pay it back, so that other people can borrow. Ma'am, there are people who are calling every day and I say to them that he does not live here, that he lives elsewhere. Ma'am, he is one of my nephews.

Madam President, there is that mindset that you must get everything free. I am glad when I can pay, I know the times when I could not pay, I could not even find two cents to rub together. Ma'am, there is nothing wrong with that but when I can pay I am glad to pay. I feel proud that I can pay because I know there was a time when I could not pay one cent, as I did not have it, but we are still with the attitude of 'keep what you got, catch what you can' in Barbadian terminology. That does not go down with me, that is why I speak as passionately as I do because I am a patriot of Barbados. I have seen from whence this country came, I have seen it with my own two eyes. When I hear a lot of "O, this, "we can't claim that", "we can claim this",

“it is not you all who have done this and that”, you are making sport.

Madam President, I know Senator Crichlow for more than 50 years and I had to remind him how I know him. He came to my grandparent’s humble home. I do not have to say what he came for but he came. I had to remind him about that. I have never really loss any respect for him. I might have disagreed with him on a number of occasions but not lose any respect for him.

Madam President, I wholeheartedly support this National Social Responsibility Levy Bill because I do understand what it is all about and people are throwing all kind of cold water on a measure even before it takes effect. Madam President, I feel very much obliged to you the Chair for allowing me to participate in this very, very, very important debate. With those few words, I thank you.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator McClean, you have the Floor.

SUSPENSION

Senator the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Madam President, I now beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 5.45 p.m. today.

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

No.D10 (29)5.35 p.m.

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RESUMPTION

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

Senator Dr. C. LADY HAYNES: Thank you very much, Madam President. I rise this evening to speak on the National Social Responsibility Levy. I have thought a lot about this levy since the Budget two weeks ago, and have had calls, of course, today. Through listening to the many thoughtful presentations around the Resolutions we have debated today, I have thought about it even further. Madam President, I fully understand the need that our Government has to cut the fiscal deficit, but as has been said in here several times today, we cannot really use increased taxation to create growth in an economy. I think this Budget, probably more so than many, has taught most of us a lot about finance and the economy. There has been probably much wider discussion on this Budget than I can recall

hearing before; whether it is in the print media, the call-in programmes which I hear sometimes when I am in the car, the social media, and from just walking around in our everyday lives. I think everyone is concerned about the implications of this National Social Responsibility Levy.

When this levy was introduced in September 2016, the Minister of Finance told us that it was imposed on goods imported into Barbados and on domestically manufactured goods, and was designed to finance the burgeoning cost of health care on the island and to assist with maintaining a clean environment. Madam President, it goes without saying that these are two priorities for our country, and I am sure all of us would support the importance of ensuring that both our health care system and our environment get the kind of support which they need. However, Madam President, I am concerned at how wide and how deep the repercussions of this levy go, and what I am really speaking on is not just the existing levy but the 400 per cent increase to ten per cent. It affects everyone. There has been a lot of discussion on what it has done to the middle class. There is the discussion on what it is going to do to the working class, and in fact, as colleague Senator Boyce spoke, it certainly even affects people who are in professional classes or in the corporate area or, in fact, the people who are making significant incomes. It touches on manufacturing significantly, because the imports and then all the inputs are then going to add onto the costs which are therefore going to be passed onto the consumer.

Let me use an example in medicine, which is probably what I am most familiar with. Let us take a drug X, which is being imported for \$10. We start out by increasing that because of the foreign currency charge. We increase that product to \$10.20, we then bring it in and apply the Social Responsibility Levy at ten per cent which takes it to \$11.02. If it is duty-able, as some medicines are, you add on 15 per cent to that which is \$12.67, and then if it is VAT-able at 17.5 per cent, it then takes it to \$14.89. That is a drug which would have cost \$10 coming into the pharmacies at \$14.89. They then have their markup, which, to be conservative, we say is 40 per cent, and so we now have a drug which has in fact doubled in cost; from the original \$10 at source to \$20.85 minimum over the counter.

Aside.

Senator Dr. C. LADY HAYNES: I am not hearing asides, Madam President. I am moving right along. I also heard Senator Boyce refer to the exclusions and to ironing out the kinks, and therefore I think a lot of what is in this is going to be, “What are we going to exclude?” I think that it is going to be incumbent on Government to iron out these kinks early. I think I would really wish that the Government would spend a lot more time reflecting on this tax and what the exemptions are going to be. I just am

really, really concerned about the implications of that increase in this Social Responsibility Levy.

Madam President, Government needs to find the money. There is a fiscal deficit, but I think there are alternatives, and one of the things that concerned me was the Report of the Auditor General for 2016. Madam President, as I went through that, looking at the audits and what came out of the audits, first of all on Page 92 I started there:

“The Barbados Boxing Board of Control has not submitted any accounts to be audited for the past 20 years.”

That is the most outstanding one, but that is pretty frightening, Madam President. Moving onto the National Insurance Fund:

“The accounts for the Financial Years 2006-2009 are currently being audited by a private sector firm, which has indicated that it was having challenges in obtaining the relevant schedules so as to complete the audits. The audit for the Financial Year 2006 is near completion.”

Madam President, I do not need to tell you that we are in the year 2017.

The Financial Statements of the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic have not been audited for over ten years, since no accounts have been submitted. The Transport Authority, set up in August 2008 to regulate, monitor and plan for public transportation in Barbados, has indicated that audits of the accounts for the Financial Years commencing March 2011 are outstanding. The Unemployment Fund’s audit of the accounts for the Financial Years 2010-2012 was partially completed. As a reminder, Madam President, the Rural Development Commission was incorporated in August 1995 under the Rural Development Commission Act, and its principal activity is to improve the quality of life for persons living in rural communities in Barbados. The audit for that Commission ended March 31, 2009; so from 2009 to 2016 the audit is outstanding. Madam President, the audit of the accounts of the Transport Board for the Financial Years 2012-2016 remain outstanding. For the Urban Development Commission, which is to undertake slum clearance and improve social amenities in urban areas, provide loans to individuals with small enterprises and for assistance in house acquisition, repairs and improvements, it was previously reported that the audits of the accounts for the Financial Years 2008-2014 were outstanding.

6.02 p.m.

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SENATOR DR. C. JACOBS: (Sequence 31) (Read)

.... It was previously reported that audited accounts for the financial year 2008 to 2014 were outstanding.

Madam President, if those examples have been outstanding for so many years I would think it is of the utmost urgency that audits within these statutory corporations be completed and attention be paid to the findings. Let me say in fairness, that there are many statutory corporations, I have not made mention of the ones who are just outstanding over the past years because that would keep me long after the half hour but I do want in fairness to say that there are several of these corporations whose audits are all up to date, to include Barbados Conference Services, the Barbados Investment Development Corporation Limited, the Barbados National Oil Corporation, the Barbados Port Inc., the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation, the Child Care Board, the Fair Trading Commission, the Financial Services Commission, the Grantley Adams International Airport and the National Productivity Council, all of those are up to date. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital is outstanding from 2012 to 2016 and as a general observation at the end of that report, and I really would just like to read that on page 120, the general observations made by the Auditor-General reads: (1:51)

“The audits of a number of Government agencies are in arrears and this must be a concern for the Barbados. these agencies should have had their accounts audited annually as required by law. Agencies whose audits are in arrears need to reexamine their accounting systems, processes and staffing to see how they can be approve.”

Senator A.R. WORRELL: Madam President, on a point of order.

MADAM PRESIDENT: What is your point of order.

Senator A.R. WORRELL: Madam, not that Senator Haynes is misleading but just to get a little elucidation on what she is saying. The Auditor-General’s Report... On a point of order then since I am being told that I cannot elucidate at this stage. So, I will have to unfortunately say that Senator Haynes may be inadvertently misleading the Chamber. What the Auditor-General’ Report is actually pointing out is that the Government is now trying to bring all of these audits for these agencies up to date. Madam, in terms of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital the report is saying that from 2012 to 2016 is not available because you had to reports from report to bring those up to date and then you would do the other reports because a lot of the agencies had not filed report, so that is what is being said in the Auditor-General’s Report.

SENATOR DR. C. JACOBS: Thank you, Senator Worrell but that is not my understanding of what I am reading in this Report, so as far as I understand it, I am not misleading the House. The concluding paragraph is that the

submission of accounts long after the due period actually leads to problems in finalizing the audits and is of little to decision makers. The late submissions are also to contrary to statutory requirement and can create an environment where fraud can thrive and remain undetected.

Madam President, I think this is a very serious commentary and I personally am very concerned about it. I do see that, in my view, this is an area where with significant attention a lot could be picked up and a lot of money could be saved for the Government, better practices and better processes could be in place.

Madam President, finally, I want to close and quote from an interview with Marla Dukharan. I am sure most people in here are familiar with her. She is quoted as being one of the top thought leader in the Caribbean on key economic issues and policies and she is the group economist for RBC Caribbean. She says:

“I am referring the Laffer curve for Barbados. The Laffer curve shows the relationship between the average tax rate and the level of fiscal revenue. The relationship is non-linear and beyond a certain tipping point, higher taxes actually do not lead to higher revenues and the relationship becomes negative.”

Madam President, my plea this evening to all that might hear is that we can review this national social responsibility levy and try to move it to an area where it does not seem punitive but where rather we can allow people to have some more money in their pockets and therefore, stimulate growth in the economy reduce our fiscal deficit.

Madam President, I thank you.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Ince, you have the Floor.

SENATOR INCE: Madam President, I rise to support the National Social Responsibility Levy 2017 that is before this Honourable Chamber. Madam President, when we examine the words “national social responsibility levy” and we should ask ourselves what is social responsibility, what is the social obligation of the Government, where does the duty of Government lies to the Barbados.

Madam President, when I examine the initiative of Government to reduce the deficit to close the gap my mind reflects on, and those in the legal fraternity would have heard about the 1932 case of *Donoghue v Stevenson* in my readings. Madam, I stand to be corrected by the legal luminaries, the ones who are grounded in law but, Madam, I do my readings. I have in my presence persons who can also guide me. I have in my presence the Senator Dr. Sir

Trevor Carmichael. I also have in my presence Senator Abrahams and Senator Depeiza. Madam President, in looking at this national social responsibility levy, and in my readings, and those of us who read the writings of Aristotle and Plato, the great philosophers, they wrote about social responsibility and they wrote about a duty of care. Madam, in that case of 1932, *Donoghue v Stevenson* that established what is a duty of care and negligence, the question was asked in that case: to whom do you owe a duty of care. It was established that you owe to all those persons who are my neighbours that you owe a duty, those persons who you are in contact with are the persons to who you owe a duty of care.

Madam President, this national social responsibility levy established they duty of care to persons and to the society of Barbados. If we are not going to implement a national social responsibility levy and the objective is to reduce a fiscal deficit and Barbadians are saying we must reduce the deficit then tell this Senate and the people of Barbados what is the alternative. Madam, that is what I want to hear.

Sequence 31

Insert s32 juliette

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Senator J. INCE: The majority of medical practitioners ran around here telling me that you are going to have people collapsing at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and you are going to have all of this fall out and that you cannot have this and you cannot have that, but Madam President, we made the adjustment to the Barbados Drug Service. Adjustments are necessary if an economy is supposed to grow and to function. I normally hear, as I said, opposition politics saying that this is wrong.

In the Budgetary Proposals, Madam President, we indicated that the possibility based on projections is that we would have a surplus in the current account. Madam President, the Opposition is saying no, it should not be any zero balance that at least the deficit should be 1 per cent. As you know the good Book says that a doubleminded man is unstable in all of his ways. All of the time we were hearing from the Opposition that it is important to get this deficit down to manageable levels otherwise we would not have investors' confidence, that it is going to have a ripple effect through the country, and what about direct foreign investment. I heard all of that. Take action now.

Madam President, we reviewed the situation in the country and we looked at what is best for the country at this time. Any individual who says it is a badge of honour to increase taxes or any individual who says they enjoy increasing taxes... Nobody likes taxation, but taxation goes

back from biblical times. At the same time the country has to function so when we say National Social Responsibility Levy we are saying that all Barbadians must play their part in supporting the initiative. That is why you call it a National Social Responsibility Levy. You play your part in supporting the initiative, which is critical and important. Then you hear oh what is going to happen, hardship on the poor, businesses are going to close down, businesses are going to leave Barbados, mortgages are going to go under and we are going to see more layoffs. We hear all of these theories and negative comments without saying what is the solution. Bring an alternative. What is the alternative to the National Social Responsibility Levy? If you want to increase road taxes, you are going to hear no. If you want to increase the cost of school meals, you are going to hear yes because it suits the agenda. The same people that are saying to protect the vulnerable would say to you increase school meals because it suits their agenda. Nobody likes to take what you call bold initiatives, and I am saying to the people of Barbados that decisions taken by this Administration are decisions taken for the interest of the country.

We have experienced economic growth and we are projected to experience more economic growth. Madam President, when you look at the historical economic growth of Barbados over the years it averaged around 3.5 per cent. We have projected 2 per cent economic growth for 2017/2018 and we have already experienced a 1.6 per cent economic growth. We gradually brought the deficit down from 11.2 per cent without major disruptions. We restructured the tourism sector. We examined alternative tourism destinations. We have outlined a policy for the sugar industry. We said we were going to restructure, diversify and develop a cane industry. We carried out a water augmentation programme, the relaying of water mains, a problem that plagued Barbados for years, Madam President.

Look at what is happening in education. The whole idea in education is to look at the agricultural sector as a professional sector. This is the initiative of the current Minister and the Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation changing the image of the agricultural industry in Barbados. These are the things we are doing, important and critical, and we want to hear solutions. Let us discuss it. If you have alternative solutions that can produce the same results and, as the Opposition would put it, favour the people of Barbados then let us hear it, but do not cry about all of the falling apart and the disruption and what is going to happen in the country and how we are categorised as not understanding the strategies of economics and finance.

Madam President, I say to this Chamber and to the people of Barbados, I have said it before and I repeat it again, this Administration in all of the financial, economic

and social decisions said that we were going to restructure and diversify this economy, and you cannot restructure and diversify an economy without little disruption. It is like repairing your own home. If you decide to repair your own after many years you are going to have dusk, sometimes you have to deal with termite problems, you may even have to change the roofs or remove some windows and a neighbour that you loves dearly for years may start to quarrel because the workmen a Sunday evening at four o'clock are hampering and your neighbour wants to have some sleep but at the end of the day when the house is repaired you invite the neighbour over for a nice dinner, have a nice bottle of wine and everything is fine.

We say to the people of Barbados we are holding your hands, you hold the hands of this party and we are going to make decisions despite a little discomfort. At the end of the day you may get weary. In the short term you may be disgruntled and in the short term you may want to say that this Government does not understand but we do understand because we said that we are restructuring and diversifying. In the medium term we are going to see the fruits of our labour. We are beginning to see the growth in the economy and the turnaround in this country. In the long term Barbadians and everybody else are going to benefit, so I say to Barbados and to this Senate keep confidence in the Democratic Labour Party, let us continue to work together for the benefit of Barbados because what we are seeing now are efforts made on the behalf of the every citizen of this country.

Madam President, with those words, I am obliged.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Worrell, you have the Floor.

Senator A. R. WORRELL: Thank you, Madam President. I rise to support this Bill for the National Social Responsibility Levy. This Levy was introduced in the Budgetary Proposals of 2016 and what we are doing today is actually putting in place the framework...

Senate D10 Sequence 33

6.32 p.m.

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Senator A. R. WORRELL: Madam President, this National Social Responsibility Levy was introduced in the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, 2016. What we are doing today is actually putting in place the framework and legislation to govern this levy and also to validate the sums which were collected from September 1, 2016, until when the legislation is passed.

Madam President, I want to say that I do support the introduction of the National Social Responsibility Levy. When the levy was introduced in the budget, it was identified that the proceeds from that levy would go towards critical elements within our society, in terms of the payment of healthcare services, sanitation and the environment as well. We did mention that funds from the levy could be used for things such as cleaning the environment, which would fall under the Ministry of the Environment and Drainage.

Madam President, this levy was introduced because we recognised that as a Government we had to bridge the gap in terms of financing the cost to operate these services which were a cost to Government and the amount of revenue that we were collecting. Ma'am, you do recall that we would have tried a number of different measures to provide revenue to some of these agencies, we would have tried the Solid Waste Tax and that did not work, persons complained about it because we recognised that the cost of operation of the Sanitation Service Authority had increased tremendously since 2007-2008 and that it was being deprived of the necessary revenue, so that you had to find some way of providing the finances to that agency. Ma'am, we had looked initially in a previous budget at the Solid Waste Tax, that was not favourably accepted and we moved away from that, but we still have the issue. Madam President, I am certain that many of you would remember, especially in the earlier parts of last year, 2016, there was this constant complaint about garbage not being collected because simply the Sanitation Service Authority did not have the resources in order to collect the garbage because the trucks were breaking down, we needed to find some money to invest in the Sanitation Service Authority so that they could upgrade their fleet and also properly collect that garbage.

Madam President, I am certain that since we have had the introduction of this levy that we have begun to hear less of those complaints, so we can see that what the levy was intended for is working because from then the Sanitation Service Authority was able to enter into a programme where they made arrangements for the collection of garbage until they were in a position where they could have outfitted their fleet with new garbage collection trucks. Obviously this would be paid for by funds collected from the National Social Responsibility Levy.

Madam President, another area which we need to focus on is that of healthcare, particularly at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. It was said that funds from this levy will go towards meeting the cost and the expense of operating the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Madam President, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital probably operates on a budget of over \$186 million a year, we as a Government recognised that we cannot continue to afford that out of the

regular tax take that we had been getting, especially from VAT, income tax and the other tax takes, especially in light of the fact which we discussed in here today, that we were receiving reduced tax revenues because of the changes in the International Business Sector and having to give up some of that revenue because of changes in our larger source markets, so that we had to look for alternative and creative ways of finding that revenue. Ma'am, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital again is another key critical area which will benefit from the funds of the National Social Responsibility Levy. Madam President, I am certain that that would help us in terms of a Government to ensure that the hospital is able to provide the services to the people so that when persons go there for any operations or medical treatments that the hospital would be able to adequately provide that service to them.

Madam President, it would not happen overnight because we must admit that for years the hospital has been operating with possibly less money than they need to operate, so that those doctors here and those persons who are familiar with the operation of the hospital will recognise that it will take some time for you to clear up that backlog of debt that has developed over the years and for you to take some time in terms of allowing the funds from the levy to build up so that you can get a hospital that is operating efficiently, having the adequate amount of funds at its disposal on an annual basis to buy the supplies that are needed, to pay the salaries and wages, to maintain the equipment and the facilities as well. Madam President, all of these things which are areas that are very critical to us here in Barbados are coming out of this National Social Responsibility Levy.

Madam President, the cleaning up of the environment, we had countless complains about that, especially in the latter part of last year or throughout last year. We all want to drive around Barbados and see clean roads, areas properly debushed so that we do not have to worry about the rodents and mosquitoes. We want to see a tidy environment. Ma'am, we are not the type of people that we were before whereas as persons in our communities we would gang together and see that there is a spot of land that is overgrown and not being taken care of where we would gang together and come out a Saturday and take care of this piece of land and clean it up. Ma'am, instead, the first thing that we do is to call a Government agency such as the Ministry of Health, you complain and you ask them to clean up the facility. Ma'am, if you are going to be doing that, the Government needs to find some way to pay for those services as well.

Ma'am, I not saying that the Government at this time should really be paying for those things but the reality is that you have a bigger concern in terms of the health of the nation so that if it is that no one else is taking up that responsibility to do it and Government has to slip in there

to do that cleanup job, well, therefore, the resources must be provided so that persons can go out and can do the cleaning.

Ma'am, you have the debushing programme and the drainage unit as well because especially today we are having heavy rains and I am hoping that the drains have been thoroughly cleaned and that we would have had fewer incidents of floodings on the roads because the drains were properly cleaned and the water was able to flow nicely off the roads, into the rains and then down into the gullies and canal streams as it ought to do and that we do not have a situation where there is unnecessary bush and the piling up of garbage that needs to be taken care of. Ma'am, if that is the case, again Government has the Drainage Unit and persons would have to be paid, Government would have to find the resources in order to do those things.

Madam President, these are some of the critical areas that this National Social Responsibility Levy is taking care of. Ma'am, I would have to say that any right-thinking Barbadian needs to recognise that it is high time that we accept and pull our weight. If you are not going to go out there and do the work, if when you go to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital you pull out your health insurance card and tell them that you have health insurance coverage and you may have to be a patient there for a couple of months, that the hospital can bill your health insurance company, if you not willing to do that then we must be willing to find some way to allow the Government to gather the necessary resources in order to make that payment on our behalf. Madam President, that is how the National Social Responsibility Levy comes in.

Now, in the legislation it makes clear how the levy is supposed to be collected, it is imposed on all imports. Ma'am, I must say that this levy is possibly quite similar to the Environmental Levy which we had previously.

No.D10 (34)6.46 p.m.

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Seq. 35

Senator A.R. WORRELL: ... I must say that this levy is possibly quite similar to the Environmental Levy which we had previously. We would have abolished the Environmental Levy here in Barbados, possibly around 2010, but I would want persons to remember that this whole idea of a levy is nothing foreign to Barbados and it has been something that was in place for a while. We had an Environmental Levy which was abolished in 2010, so it was in place way before that. On top of that, when this country faced challenges after the 9/11 attacks and we needed to enhance our revenue, the then Administration imposed a Cess on all imports. I think the Cess at that time

was in the region of five to six per cent on top of the Environmental Levy, the VAT and all the other things which were in place. The notion, therefore, that this is some sort of new taxation which this Government just pulled out of the sky and introduced, I think we need to move away from. These things have been there before, they have been done before and there is nothing new to them. Before you had an Environmental Levy and you also had a Cess, which was on all imported items, and no-one complained about it; you just simply paid for it. These things were in place.

Now, we have decided that we want to take it a little bit further; a National Social Responsibility Levy, where we have identified the key areas which we want the funds from this levy to go towards. It is not to say that we are wasting funds, because we made it clear that these funds would be identified in terms of what was collected on an annual basis, and provisions would be made to ensure that these funds go towards the agencies or the items for which they were identified; so in terms of the National Social Responsibility Levy, health care is big on the agenda, as well as the environment and sanitation. I would want to say, though, that in this legislation I think that we do limit it to those three but I would prefer if it had been a little bit tidier and not just limited to such a narrow section of services. There may be a need for these funds to go towards other critical areas as well, which may pop up from time to time and for which the Government might need revenue in order to finance them. There are critical areas with regards to our social development, in terms of even the care of the elderly or other areas that may need some assistance, towards which these funds can go.

What we have done is that we have said, "We need to raise funds to bridge the gap for these payments which we have to make on an annual basis, so we have come up with a mechanism in the form of the National Social Responsibility Levy in order to do that." I think the Government should be commended for taking such a responsible step in recognising that you do have a problem in terms of your revenue, you want to find ways of reducing your deficit, and find enhanced ways of funding these critical sectors in our society in terms of health care, in terms of sanitation and in terms of making sure that we have a healthy environment. Through the National Social Responsibility Levy, that will be taken care of.

We often complain that in terms of the Income Tax the burden goes towards the middle class, and that we are taxing everything out of the middle class. Some persons complain that there are many persons within the society who do not contribute towards these taxes, and they should be made to pay more. Everyone who is a consumer in Barbados will at some point in time make some contribution towards this levy, but I would want to say that I believe we need to give it some time to work to see what

the true impact of the levy is and the amount of funds it can raise. I believe this is the way how you deal normally with tax administration. You let it go through a period and see how it works, how the revenue is collected, and then, based on the revenue that is collected, you can carve out areas in which you can offer directed assistance to the persons who would be most vulnerable or who would have been affected more by this levy or any tax imposition. We need to give the system a bit of time to work.

Yes, we recognise that there will be some hardship, and that persons will find a little bit of increase in some of the items which they normally buy, but what are we going to do about it? Do we just throw up our hands in frustration and just say the cost of living in Barbados has gone up, or are there things which we can do to help to reduce the impact of that increase in costs? When we talk about the cost of food items going up, I am certain that there are a couple items that I can possibly point out now which may not feel the impact of the Social Responsibility Levy, and these are things which we probably need to eat more of. I find it very hard to see how you would impose the National Social Responsibility Levy on a rod of potatoes, and I think we need to eat a little bit more of those. I find it very hard to see how you would impose the National Social Responsibility Levy on a rod of yams, so we need to plant a lot more of those things. These are healthy foods; foods which we should be eating more of.

The point that I am making is that there are ways and means that we can try to work the system so that we can reduce the impact of the levy on our monthly household expenses. That is the reality which we have to face in Barbados; that we have to find a way of making sure that we can adequately maintain or finance the standard of living which we want to have. Sometimes, it is probably better for you to go back to basics, because we seem to think that the only food we can eat is processed food; when the reality is that the world and those persons who have money are going to something called "slow food" and no longer processed food. This means that a lot of the food which they eat is grown in their backyards or within the village. I think there may also be a term called "homegrown salads" or something like that, which is something that I have nearly every day. A homegrown salad is simply a lettuce which you get from your garden, some tomatoes and carrots, you dice them up as you would normally do, and you have your homegrown salad. We need to do more of these things.

I guess by now what everyone has caught onto is the free-range chickens. I do not eat chicken, but I would still eat the free-range eggs, but I do not eat chicken. The point is that for years we had free-range chickens walking around in Barbados and because we got rich, higher-up and better-off, we scorned the free-range chicken. Then someone in Los Angeles marketed it as free-range chicken and as

healthier and the best thing for you. Now we want to get some of that as well. We want to get the free-range chicken, when your grandmother or great-grandmother has a yard fowl walking around. That is free-range chicken too, so we can make use of those things.

Asides.

Senator A.R. WORRELL: There is nobody who can criticise me and tell me that I am sending people to eat free-range chicken, because I am sending you to do what the rest of the world is saying is healthy and the best choice; to eat free-range chicken, so no-one can criticise me on that. Use some free-range chickens. If you do not want the authentic free-range chickens, I am certain that if you have a connection with someone in the country, there are people out there who raise chickens in their backyards. They may not be totally free-range chickens because they may be fed with the processed foods, but you can buy a \$15 chicken from those persons. It would probably be much cheaper than what you would get in other places. There are ways in which we can try to reduce the impact of this levy on our pockets.

6.51 p.m.

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Senator A.R. WORRELL: (d10: Sequence 36)(Read)

There are ways in which we can try to reduce the impact of this levy on our pockets but also recognising that even when we have to contribute and pay the national social responsibility levy that it is going towards a good cause. Madam, if you want to make sure that any time your children, yourself or your parents get ill and the hospital is adequately supplied that they can take care of your medical needs. I am certain that all of you want to make sure that when you put your garbage out next to the side of the road that the Sanitation Service Authority is able to come and collect it, that your children in an appropriate school setting that the teachers are there to take care of them, and those in school settings where you have the school meals that all those things are provided, that your parents who may need from my good colleague here Senator Durant in terms of the National Assistance Board that has those helpers that go around on a daily basis and do tremendous work for a number of elderly persons in Barbados who live on their own, who may not have family members to come around to give them certain assistance to make sure that the house is tidy and to make sure that they have a well cooked meal, if you want to make sure that those services are provided for, many of those persons who help to build this country, we have to start contributing in a meaningful way because in the regular taxation system we people may say: "Oh you tax me this and you tax me that", but the reality is that the cost of maintaining these services have increased over the

years, so the State would then have to find alternative ways in terms of finding revenue to bridge the gap. You do not want us to be borrowing and using the funds from the National Insurance Fund all the time, so we need to find ways to get us off the National Insurance Fund so we need to have the national social responsibility levy so that You claim that you do not want the Central Bank of Barbados to be printing money all the time, so we need to raise the revenue so that we would not have to depend on the Central Bank of Barbados printing money all the time, printing the money that goes towards the payment of wages, towards supplying the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, the Sanitation Service Authority, the schools and all resources that in Barbados have accustomed to and utilise on a daily basis. Madam, of the institutions which have helped us to achieve the level of development we have over the last few years that have caused us to rise high in terms of the Human Development Index in that region, so these things have to be paid for.

Madam President, the Government does not have a money tree and any money that the Government raises must either come from revenue raised through taxes or from investment and the only way that could happen is that it has to be felt by people at some point in time. I am certain that once the situation becomes better that you will find a way in which to reduce this. Madam, we also have to realise that we have responsibility as well to help the Government in terms of improving the revenue collection wherever possible by improving our productivity because we need to have more companies developing in terms of meeting this gap. Madam, as I have said, the national social responsibility levy will not be on a rod of potatoes or a rod of yams, so I am hoping that I would see some fields cultivated so that in the next three months, I can go to Malvern or wherever and get a rod of potatoes, or a rod of yams that would help to subsidise my food. I love the days when I can get a rod of potatoes for \$25, that is like heaven to me. I love that and it means that I can have souse on weekends.

Madam President, we need to do those things. We need to start producing and using more of the things that we produce here in Barbados. If we do that, things such as the commission on foreign exchange sales we would not have to worry about. If we use more things that we produce here in Barbados, we will be importing less and we may put ourselves in a position where we can export more and earn more foreign exchange.

Madam President, I would also want to say to clarify a point that I too accept fully what Senator Lady Haynes said in terms that there needs to be better management of the public service. This is something we do need to pay some keen attention to but it did not just start yesterday, this is a process that started long ago. Madam, to clarify the point I was making that in the Auditor-General's Report

where it says the Auditor-General has reports up to a certain period of time, like say 2012, it means he only got those reports recently and the evidence is here. I believe that you mentioned CBC as one of the agencies which had up to date reports but I would have you know that the CBC reports for 2008 to 2012 were only filed in July 2015 and the Rural Development Commission's reports for 2005 to 2007 were only files in 2015. The Cave of Barbados reports from 2004 to 2005 were filed in 2016. Madam, the auditor cannot come and do a report for 2016 unless he has the report for the previous year. Madam, when we came to office in 2008, we found that a number of Government agencies had not filed reports for years, even same National Insurance Scheme which speaks so highly of and is being thought as the savior to all of has not filed reports for years, so one of things that we as an administration mandated from 2008 is that all of those outstanding reports be done, so we could not just rely on the auditors from the Government, we had to call one external accounting firms to provide audit services to a number of Government agencies and statutory corporations so that they could bring their financial reports up to date. These are reports that go back prior to 2008 so we would love to deal the reports in our period of time but in order for us to get to those reports from 2008 onwards, we have to clear up the backlog and that has been 'licking' a number of boards and statutory corporations under this Democratic Labour Party administration, that we had to deal with the poor management of the previous administration which did not seek to have these reports filed.

SENATOR DR. C. JACOBS: Madam, a point of elucidation. I just want to make the point that my reference to the audit is not a political point. It purely relates to outstanding audit. I was not attempting in any way to tie it to one political regime or political time period purely the inefficiency of what exists.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Worrell. The Honourable Member has two more minutes.

Senator A.R. WORRELL: Thank you, Madam President. I accept as I have said, Senator Lady Haynes is one of the persons in this Chamber that I respect highly and I understand that she was looking at the wider picture in terms of administration of the public services, that we really do need to improve on these things and I totally agree with and we all on this side agree with you and that is why we have been pushing as an administration to make sure that these reports are done. We totally agree with you because that is the only way we can get a true picture of how State agencies are performing, the level of debt they may have and the debt that is outstanding. The only way we can get that is if we have proper audited financial statement. Madam, I totally and wholeheartedly agree with Senator Lady Haynes but I am need to make sure that

record is clear because the message may out that under the Democratic Labour Party administration

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Senator Dr. Sir TREVOR CARMICHAEL: Let me say something, and I will come back to those words, this is the defining moment to do it, but let me take attack as they say, and I am not a sailing man even though I like to sail, the international business sector has been the showcase of Barbados' national legislation. It is linked to our treaties and to our status as a low-tax jurisdiction, and we have marketed it in Canada, the United States of America, Hong Kong, China and in many other places. This Act is troublesome as far as the sector is concerned. The International Business Companies Act specifically exempt licensed international business companies from import levies, and if you look at Section 6 (1) of this Act, nowhere is there any mention of international business companies.

Asides.

Senator Dr. Sir TREVOR CARMICHAEL: I understand that. I did not want to go this far but I know that Barbados International Business Association through its Tax Committee was surely of the view that there would be an exemption, but I understand that a policy note has been issued which does not specifically exclude international entities. I should possibly have this note and produce it here, but I do not have it so all I can say is that I understand that it has been issued. Goods imported by the manufacturing and agricultural sectors, I understand, who benefit from the Fiscal Incentives Act, fisheries et cetera, to be used as part of the production process are exempt, however, goods imported for resale will be subject to the levy, and that is how I understand the practice. Direction, if you will, has been stated.

I think we are playing in a dangerous ground. If indeed international business companies are specifically exempted it needs to be stated. It cannot be murky waters. Madam President, because we have marketed it in that way persons have come here on that condition. We could change the rules but we change the rules at our peril because then it shows that we are less than transparent. I come back to it. We have a legacy of doing the right thing so this is very important. It has to be looked at.

We also give Government guarantees to insurance companies. How will insurance companies look at guarantees when they see that international business companies are being treated by a policy note from revenue which specifically states they are not excluded? We have to

be transparent. We have a legacy to protect, we have a business legacy to protect, we have a historical legacy to protect and we have a cultural legacy to protect. They are all interrelated so I am suggesting, Madam President - I am going to be short this evening - let us use this opportunity to cure these legal conundrums, if you will, in the Bill by putting it on hold when we can also review some foreign direct investment options which are ready and willing and which will plough that \$400 million deficit, I suggest, Madam President, within six months, and I will stand by that, but you have to engage with us. As I say, we know who everyone is, let us sit down together and let us find a way of doing this because there are ways that have been put, there are suggestions that have been made, there have been more than suggestions that have been made, there have been offers that have been made, so let us do it.

Madam President, there are very bright things happening in Barbados at the moment. When I saw the rigour with which young people took that 11 Plus Exam once again... The 11 Plus Exam, whether you criticise it or not, is an example of discipline, fortitude, preparation and all of the things that make for ensuring that not only the promise of our children become fulfilled but the promises also become fulfilled. I am suggesting, Madam President, that we have to however hand them processes which work so we have to show them that yes there is transparency but we can show you that we can have our foreign investor make a proposal and get it through to fruition where the money comes in within six to eight months. We have to do that. We have done it before and it is a long time that we have not done it. This is not partisan. This is not one party or the other. This is a long time that we have not done it. I agree times have changed but there are jurisdictions now, sadly I have to say, that are doing this pretty quickly and they are very close to us, but I come back, we are still doing some things.

The 11 Plus Examination continues to be the model, young people excelling. Three things have happened recently that continue to make me even more confident in this respect, and one of them came to my mind, and it was actually our colleague in here Senator Harcourt Husbands. He does not know I know about this and he was the person behind it, I am talking about a little thing called the Khan Academy. He is looking at me because he is surprised how he knows about this. The Khan Academy is a model educational instrument which only took place because the foreign component met with Senator Husbands and he ran with the ball as they say. That Khan Academy is linking with people like Google and all kinds of international elements. We all know about the work which is being done by Lady Prue Sobers and her husbands and the work at Bay Primary which they have done, the model work which is now truly model work so much so that jurisdictions outside of Barbados are copying that and they are moving on to bigger and better things, but I will talk about that another

time, this is not the time for that, but then I am sitting at my desk and I get another letter from my friend Renee Quintyne who is not even an educator, she is just a web designer who has come to Barbados and loved it so much that she has worked hard with students in her crystal clear workbooks a goal-setting three-year programme and the latest results that when the survey started in the J4 Class at St. Ambrose Primary at the beginning of the term only 10 per cent of the student had ever written a goal before and after they used crystal clear in the classroom at the end 85 per cent of that same class are keen on keeping goals.

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7.21 p.m.

Wednesday, June 14, 2017 Continuation of Senator Dr. Sir Trevor CARMICHAEL:

Madam President, I am sitting at my desk and I get another letter from my friend, Renee Quintyne who is not even an educator, she is just a web designer who has come to Barbados and loved it so much that she has worked hard with students in her "Crystal Clear Workbooks," a goal-setting three-year programme. Ma'am, the latest results are that when the survey started in the J4 classes at St. Ambrose at the beginning of the terms only 10 per cent of the students had ever written a goal before and that after they used "Crystal Clear Workbook" at the end 85 per cent of that same class, the children are keen on keeping goals.

Madam President, I look at those three things happening in our educational system for young people and I look at the favour of the 11-plus examinations and I look at the sincerity, and I enjoy the sincerity of the debate where everyone is really seeking a solution to a problem because we have a problem at the moment, let us not fool ourselves and irrespective of how people have addressed it, the one thing that they have all recognised in common is that there is a problem. Madam President, I am suggesting that with all of this sincerity and our individual views, to use that old expression of an American President and it had biblical roots as well, let us sit and reason together. Let us use this Bill, even if it is passed, give us a promise with the same sincerity that we have spoken today with in this debate and hold on its implementation until we have sat and reasoned together, first, to clarify the issue in respect where basically even if it is suggested that international companies are not excluded, of a perception that they are excluded and in my view if I had to give a legal opinion I would say that they are excluded, let us use this as an opportunity to tidy that up and let us use it as an opportunity to bring some of those persons who have been asked. Madam President, people are coming and saying that they wish to help Barbados, they wish to invest in Barbados at this time, they wish to invest in Barbados not just for a profit but because they believe in Barbados and

they have not even heard of the three elements of the children about whom I have talked this evening, they want to do that because of a historical nexus with Barbados.

Madam President, I am suggesting let us use this opportunity to pause, because sometimes when we pause and reflect we can come up with better solutions. Ma'am, I have rambled a bit this evening but I would like to think that I have rambled with a purpose and sometimes rambling with a purpose will lead to results so I hope, Madam President, that I am able to do so. Madam President, I thank you for indulging me.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Abrahams, you have the Floor.

Senator W. A. ABRAHAMS: Madam President, I rise to lend my voice to the debate and to give my perspective on the matter which before us, the National Social Responsibility Levy. Ma'am, I just want to start by saying that I do agree almost entirely with what was said by Senator Sir Trevor Carmichael, that we should use this opportunity to pause and come up with a better solution. Ma'am, those were his last words.

Madam President, I am pleased to note that the Leader of Government Business was furiously scribbling while Sir Trevor was speaking because it is not often that Independent Senators are so clear and vocal in their opposition, for want of a better word, to a Bill proposed by the Government. Ma'am, Independent Senators do what they are supposed to do, they present an Independent perspective. Some may say I oppose because I am an Opposition Senator and that is my job, but I would like to think that when I speak firmly in opposition to something it is because I truly believe that it is not the right course of action, in the same way that when I speak firmly in support is because I believe that whether it is the Barbados Labour Party or the Democratic Labour Party Government that it is the best course of action to be taken.

Madam President, Senator Carmichael's words were measured, well-spoken, clear, honest and sincere and his esteemed position... Ma'am, I was glad to see that today when Senator Ince listed the legal luminaries, for the first time ever in my fifth year in this Senate I was finally included. I do not know whether Senator Ince has gotten fond of me after so long, in the same way that you get accustomed to a wart, but I take it. Ma'am, Senator Carmichael is well-respected, he is one of the most respected lawyers in Barbados and when Senator Carmichaels says, "dial it back and pause", then I believe you can get no more impartial and sincere advice than that, "dial it back and pause."

Ma'am, we have heard about how it affects the poor people, the middleclass but this is now from a business

perspective, this is now with respect to the International Business Sector, this is now with respect to Barbados' reputation and the transparency of business in Barbados. I am not going to go over what Senator Carmichael said because Senator Carmichael touched those who are not among the most vulnerable, he touched those who are not the struggling middleclass in Barbados and properly presented their perspective and so I wish to wholeheartedly adopt everything Senator Carmichael said, with one exception as I said. Ma'am, somewhere in there Senator Carmichael said: "Even if this were to pass, I suggest that we use the opportunity..." Well, no, I am not with him there, I am actually saying that this one should not pass and that it should not pass for the reasons that I am about to go into.

Madam President, Senator Ince spoke well and was clear as to what he expected. When this was proposed by Senator Boyce, Senator Boyce was also clear, the Government finds itself, however it got there, in a bind. There is the acknowledgement that our finances are in trouble, that the economy is in difficulty, and that something needs to be done. Senator Boyce asked what is the alternative. Senator Ince also asked what is the alternative. The private sector to my understanding was consulted by the Government of Barbados and a number of eminent persons were consulted and asked for their suggestions, while some suggestions were tendered, but from what I understand, not many of them were heeded and this Government did what it always does.

No.D10 (39)7.43 p.m.

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Senator W.A. ABRAHAMS: ... From what I understand, not many of them were heeded. This Government did what it always does. It advised itself. The need was there to raise money, and we looked at the easiest way to do it. We slapped an increase of eight per cent on the Social Responsibility Levy. It is not as simple as it sounds. An increase of eight per cent on the Social Responsibility Levy does not mean an increase of eight per cent across the board. The consumer who is affected by that levy bears the brunt of that levy. I am not an economist but I understand the impact might be more around 15 to 20 per cent, and in some cases up to 30 per cent depending on what it is. While the argument is there that the tourism sector is exempted and certain arms of manufacturing are exempted and some other people might be exempted, the fact is that the poor man on the street is not exempted. The people in Barbados who are struggling to make ends meet, who are not even making ends meet at this point in time, are looking straightaway on July 1 at a possible increase of between 20 and 30 per cent in their cost of living. That is

not a small amount. Some hard choices have to be made. If you already skimp and cannot feed your family, and cannot afford medication, then what else must you let go?

Senator Ince asked a number of times what the alternatives are, and what do you do when you have to raise a certain amount in a year. Maybe that was Senator Boyce, but somebody said it. My question is why do we have to raise \$500 million in a year? This is \$500 million in new taxes, where Barbados is acknowledged as one of the most heavily taxed countries in the world. If people were suffering under the burden of the taxation that existed, imagine what is going to happen on July 1. I am not preaching doom and gloom. I am being realistic, because I am afraid. I have had a relatively good life. I make a pretty decent living. I pay my taxes and every business I am in pays its taxes. My wife and I budget carefully and we get by. I am now wondering what is going to happen on July 1. Let us talk again. In the previous debate when I was cut short, I wanted to talk about when I was pre-empting a debate that was to come.

Aside.

Senator W.A. ABRAHAMS: I was guided on the right path. I am glad for the guidance. However, now is the right time for me to say what I was going to say.

Asides.

Senator W.A. ABRAHAMS: Let us talk in real terms now about how this was not thought through. It is not simply an increase in taxation that is discretionary for some people, or so that people can now control their spending. Senator Lady Haynes now has to pay more money when she goes to the supermarket or she is looking at more in her bills, and she can stagger and she can pick and choose and prioritise and adjust her household budget accordingly. Let us talk about the fact that the highest season for earning, outside of the tourist season, is coming up. It is Crop Over. In the six weeks which incorporate the Crop Over activities, Barbados gets record amounts of visitors and we make a lot of money from people coming in. This is where a lot of our local entrepreneurs make a dollar. The bandleaders who put on the fantastic spectacle that is Crop Over; this is where they make a dollar. All of the fantastic fetes and parties that are on; this is where those promoters make a dollar. For the first time, Barbados came out of the gate very early. We started to copy Trinidad, because Trinidad starts to market their Carnival immediately after the current one is finished. Carnival has ended and we start marketing for next year. Barbadians came out of the gates early this year. The bands were showing their costumes from, I think, January this year. Promoters for activities were advertising their fetes from February and March this year; and not just advertising. We often in the Senate say, "Barbadians need to be more responsible. Barbadians needs

to be proactive. We need to plan better.” We have said that in here a number of times. For once, Bajans were planning well; planning well for Crop Over. Most of the big parties that happen for Crop Over have been sold out already. They advertised, they quoted their prices, they would have budgeted based on what the state of play was. You do not want to over-price your tickets. You put in just enough markup that it makes it worth your while, and you put those tickets out. Now comes this levy.

Madam President, everyone who has sold a ticket or sold a costume or sold a package is going to lose horrendously when this levy comes into force. This will cripple promoters for Crop Over. This will cripple the Kadooment bands for Crop Over. When you have sold your costume to people, you have sold the picture of the costume, not the physical costume. Those costumes are going to land in Barbados in July. They are going to come in July. Most of them come in within nine days before Crop Over.

Aside.

Senator W.A. ABRAHAM: Even if they are made here, the inputs have to be imported and they are going to come in around that time. Senator Carmichael talked about having to give consideration to the international business sector and you have to factor in the various players and stakeholders. We know who they are. He said that it is a small community; we know who they are. How could we not consider the impact of this on Crop Over?

Madam President, why up to ten per cent? Why do we have to rake in the record amount of taxes levied in Barbados in a year; this year on the backs of people who are struggling? I accept the Government has to raise some revenue. The timing is bad. Did it have to be raised by that much? I do not think for most Barbadians it is the fact that a levy is there, because Barbadians understand. It is the amount of it. To go from two per cent to ten per cent, you have raised that levy by 500 per cent. That is a massive jump; two per cent to ten per cent of anything is a massive jump. I am not going to go into addressing everything that was touched. I am going to make it as simple as possible. Even if I am balancing my budget -- and I am one of those lucky ones who manage to balance my budget -- that increase of eight per cent to take it to ten per cent is going to have a resulting increase of 15 to 20 per cent; in some instances more than that. The cost of living in Barbados is going to go up by about 20 per cent. That is from one stroke of a pen.

7.40 p.m.

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Senator W.A. ABRAHAM: (d10: Sequence 41) (Read)

.... That levy is laid at the point of entry and VAT is charged on top of that. If it is with imports with foreign exchange, you are going to have the two per cent because I do not agree with Senator Boyce. I do not want to misquote him so I am going to quote him very carefully. Madam, I cannot find my note where he is but effectively, he says it is going to apply to foreign currency transactions over the counter, or foreign currency transactions by licence persons, i.e. the banks. Madam, his simplified version is not borne out by page 45 of the Budget. Madam, I am reading from page 45 and it is talking about commission of foreign exchange transactions: (1:38)

“In an effort to signal the need to reduce demand for consumption goods I propose that effect July 1, a broad based foreign exchange Commission be charged on all sales of foreign exchange at a rate of 2%. This would extend to inter alia...”

Madam President, that is the legalese or Latin for among other things so it is not limited to these but include these.

“... all wire transfers, credit card transactions and over the counter sales of foreign currencies”. Madam, you are talking not just about purchasing U.S. money but you are talking about even when you use your credit. Asides.

Senator W.A. ABRAHAM: Well, fine. I do not have an issue with that. If that is the sale of foreign exchange let us not over simplify it. All foreign exchange transaction originating in Barbados are going to attract that commission so point is this, you are dropping that 2 per cent commission on top of the national social responsibility levy on which you then will apply VAT. It is a snowballing effect, so you cannot look 2 per cent and file that away, you cannot look at 8 per cent and file that away, you have to look at the cumulative effect on the pockets of people. It is too much pain at this stage. I would never presume to suggest to Senator Ince or anybody else what percentage I would charge because that would then make me an accomplice, because this is a crime. Senator Ince spoke about *Donoghue v. Stevenson*, and I smiled. He used to challenge me on the bible but he has stopped with that now but now he is going on law. Madam, *Donoghue v. Stevenson* dealt with tortious negligence and a duty of care but this is fiscal imprudence, so let us not like the too. Let us not talk about the duty of care and the duty of care to your neighbour, someone within reasonable contemplation because I will tell you that the poor people of Barbados should have been within the reasonable contemplation of the Government of Barbados when they decide to drop that 10 per cent tax on people. We want to use flowery language and we want to say that it was necessary and we

want to simply it and the easiest way to simply it is to say that it was either this or the job, Senator Boyce said that. Senator Ince then repeated it. if it came down to a 10 per cent national social responsibility levy or jobs in the public sector, you have failed as a Government because it should not now come down to an extreme tax or jobs. What was the Government doing for the last nine years? Stop scaring the people of Barbados, it is not as simple as that, there were other options and there are always other options. Senator Haynes put forward one. It is not five hundred million in taxes or laying off people, it is not as simple as that. Do not scare people into accepting a tax that is put there because of the malfeasance of the Government, the casual disdain of this Government, the ignoring of the pain of the people of Barbados. I wonder if the legislators from the Government's side, who walk about in the street, if they have not heard the response of this levy, outside of the 16 people in the Other Place and those on this, you have heard not one human being supporting this levy, nobody. The business community has been up in arms, the man on the street has been up in arms, the bankers have been up in arm about the foreign exchange commission. The shopkeepers have been up in arms. Madam, everybody has been up in arm because before this Budget the one thing the people of Barbados begged, no more taxes. Madam, every economist who weighed in said it would not make sense to have any more taxes. Madam, it was not just the economists from our side, they were impartial people, people associated with the banks, CDB, outside economists. If we keep living and reliving history, we are never going to progress as a people. Madam, at some point in time the Government must say what is the proper way forward of the least pain because we are suffering it right now. The worse thing is if you talk about timing. Madam, maybe a levy was necessary but it did not have to be that much and it was poorly timed. The poor timing of this came on the heels of the Government reinstituting the 10 per cent it decided to sacrifice with the people of Barbados. Madam, it looks bad, it was bad timing, and it shows a lack of sensitivity for the plight of the people we are supposed to be representing. I do not care how you put it, people are hurting and you reinstituted 10 per cent that you voluntarily given. Nobody called for the politicians' salaries to get reduced, nobody call for that show. This Government picked itself up and decided it wanted to do it as a show of solidarity and support and when it became a little bit too painful to bear, they reinstituted the 10 per cent but unfortunately the people of Barbados do not have that luxury. It is too painful to bear, so they have to suck salt and keep to their salaries...

Senator the Hon. Ms. MAXINE P. O. McCLEAN: Madam President, I reluctantly rise on a point of order. I believe the Honourable Senator is misleading this Chamber. I do not feel that I have to stand up and defend a decision where, as he said, nobody asked us to take a salary cut, which we did for a specified period of time and we extended it and it continued beyond that time and it was

reinstated. Madam, any discussion of a tax like this would apply to all of us and so that notion of us having some advantage over other is wrong. Nobody else gave up their salary at this point in time in the public sector or the private sector, so I do not think we should try to mislead the public by trying to suggest that...

Sequence 41

Insert s42 Juliette

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Senator W. A. ABRAHAMS: We all know what is being said on the street, let us not ignore the cries of Barbadians. If the time was ever right to do so something proper with this National Social Responsibility Levy and to pull it back and come better, the time is now. For all those reasons, Madam President, I cannot support this levy. Thank you.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Todd, you have the Floor.

Senator the Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Thank you very much, Madam President. I rise to support the passage of this National Social Responsibility Levy Bill, 2017. I must confess at the onset that I found it very difficult to follow the logic of the late speaker Senator Abrahams because earlier in the day we heard Senator Abrahams said that he is sucking salt and then more recently we heard the same Senator Abrahams admit that he and his family are living a pretty decent lifestyle and then after that we heard the same Senator Abrahams saying that he is struggling.

Senator W. A. ABRAHAMS: On a point of order. Senator Todd is misleading the Honourable Chamber. Madam President, I said I had become accustomed to a certain lifestyle which lifestyle has now changed. I am not saying I am living a decent lifestyle or a great lifestyle because truthfully, I was ten years ago but I am not now.

Senator the Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Madam President, I have been taking copious notes, so this is another iteration of the goodly Senator's perspective, so I am saying that there is a lot of confusion there, Madam President, and Hansard can be produced and we would see the inconsistencies there.

I am just saying that the Barbados Labour Party has to get serious and really have a clear idea of what is the way forward because it is easy for an Opposition to criticise the Government but in my view it is immoral and unacceptable for the Opposition to hide in a corner as it were and not present alternatives to the country if they are going to be taken seriously as a Government in waiting. The first chapter in the book by Dale Carnegie "How to

Win Friends and Influence People” talks about the three Cs, do not criticise, complain or condemn, so I am saying that if you criticise you owe it to the public, if you are going to be taken seriously, to present alternatives.

Madam President, I remember I was in my teens at the time in the lead up to the 1986 General Election when in the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals of the then Barbados Labour Party Administration led by the then Prime Minister the late Sir Harold Bernard St. John had in the \$13 000 threshold where the first \$13 000 of incomes from wages and salaries were exempt from taxes and the late Dr. Sir Richard Christopher Haynes as the Democratic Labour Party spokesman on finance would have led an alternative where we went into the 1986 General Election promising to increase that threshold to \$15 000 and that gave rise to the popular calypso “Dem People Back Raise Me” and we won the 1986 General Election by a 24 to 3 landslide, so I am saying, Madam President, at least the Democratic Labour Party back then as Opposition presented plausible alternatives so I would wish to urge the Barbados Labour Party to wheel and come again as it were and not criticise for criticising sake without presenting viable alternatives to the public.

Madam President, I would also wish to focus on what Senator Lady Carol Haynes had mentioned in terms of her presentation because as other Honourable Senators on this side would have mentioned, Senator Worrell in particular, the proceeds from the imposition of this National Social Responsibility Levy would have among other things resulted in the reintroduction of the national seasonal de-bushing programme which is implemented and managed by the Ministry of Health because yes as part of the austerity measures that we had to introduce involving the layoffs of several persons in the public sector this de-bushing programme was a casualty. I remember as Minister of State in the Prime Minister’s office being asked to look at this matter on route to the Minister of the Public Service, the Honourable Prime Minister, and we looked at all alternatives and we could not save that programme, so there was a hiatus but as a result of the imposition of this National Social Responsibility Levy this Democratic Labour Party Administration within this calendar year was able to reintroduce this so that as early as January this year we were able to employ over 100 persons from throughout Barbados in this de-bushing programme. I remember one young lady from the City with several CXC’s and with a young two-year-old child being able to get work in this programme so that she could put food on her table. Several other persons in The City and other parts of Barbados were also able to get jobs in this programme, so yes I can say without fear of contradiction to Senator Abrahams that we have tangible evidence that the proceeds from this National Social Responsibility Levy were utilised for the purposes that this Administration had outlined when it was imposed. Madam President, those hundreds of Barbadians who were

employed in this de-bushing programme thanked this Democratic Labour Party Administration and the taxpayers of Barbados for having faith in them, for thinking about them, for bringing them out of an unemployment situation to where they could feed themselves and their families by way of this legitimate income stream. In fact, as I understand it, we will be looking to ensure that persons can be employed in an even more continuous form in this de-bushing programme. This de-bushing programme is very important because these personnel are actually deployed throughout Barbados to clean in terms of de-bushing private lots that have been overgrown with bush that then give rise to the harbouring of disease-bearing vectors such as mosquitoes and rodents that can spread diseases such as Zika, Dengue Fever, Leptospirosis, Jaundice and so on, so this de-bushing programme is very, very important in terms of ensuring that the health of Barbadians and visitors alike is not compromised especially in the rainy season. We have to be frank, Madam President. If we did not implement this National Social Responsibility Levy these persons would be unemployed today, this is what I am saying, they would not be able to get that employment from as early as January and have the prospect of getting continuous employment going forward.

Moreover, Madam President, there is a spinoff effect because these persons take their income and they then are in a position to support small businesses that Senator Watson reminds us so often about be they the minimart in Nelson Street or Gwen Workman Shop in Beckwith Street or in the New Orleans or Young Supermarket in Baxters Road and so on or the restaurant bus you see at Bay Street operated by a resident of London Bourne Towers.

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SENATOR the Hon. P.M.T. TODD: Madam President, there is this spinoff effect, keeping those small businesses opened so that staff can be employed, so that there is this spinoff or rippled effect throughout the economy, so that this is responsible Government.

Madam President, I heard Senator Abrahams mentioned that the money spent to engage in the private waste haulers assistance in collecting garbage could have been better spend in buying trucks but Ma’am it takes a few months before the trucks can be delivered, they are not made in Barbados, they have to come from as far as Europe or Asia as the case may be. Madam President, in the interim what was the Democratic Labour Party Government supposed to do? Were we to leave it as it was with residents not having their garbage collected for days? Ma’am, no, we partnered with the Private Waste Haulers

Association and the public of Barbados, thanks to this Democratic Labour Party for acting quickly to ensure that in that relationship that garbage would be collected quickly while we await the arrival of these trucks which I understand have been ordered, so that that criticism again is not in my view acceptable.

Madam President, the night is late so that I do not wish to go on ad infinitum but I must also mention that this Administration is very serious about environmental cleanliness because it is this Administration that introduced the National Environment Enhancement Programme (NEEP) where we were able to employ over 100 persons who were clearing the drains to which Senator Worrell mentioned throughout Barbados. Within the Drainage Division of the Ministry of the Environment and Drainage we were able to launch over successive years since assuming office in 2008 "Operation: Clean City" where we cleared a lot of drains be they in Tudor Street, Baxters Road, along Fairchild Street, all around the city, many of which had been left uncleared by the Barbados Labour Party when they were in office for 14 long years. These drains were filled with filth and debris that gave rise to serious flooding during heavy downpours of showers, so that these personnel were deployed by the Democratic Labour Party, some of whom were previously on welfare where we were able to take them off that welfare system and lift them up by the proverbial bootstraps where they were able to be gainfully employed and building their self-esteem and they thank the Democratic Labour Party for that. Ma'am, so that the proceeds from this National Social Responsibility Levy will therefore provide the necessary funding that then can be utilised to keep persons in these areas employed, Madam President.

Madam President, as an Opposition Member when the Barbados Labour Party was in office prior to 2008 General Elections, I remember visiting the Queen Elizabeth Hospital as part of an official tour by the Opposition and we saw, as the public would have seen under the Barbados Labour Party, the hospital was so mismanaged that you had electrical challenges to the extent that the various medical equipment were left lying around on the corridors and not being able to be installed because of the electrical challenges there. Ma'am, this Democratic Labour Party Administration, with limited resources, was able to have serious electrical upgrades so that when you now pass those corridors at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital you do not see boxes of electrical equipment not being utilised. Madam President, under the Barbados Labour Party a lot of these medical tests had to be outsourced to the private sector because of the challenges at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Madam President, this is now a thing of the past for the most part today. Madam President, reagents that were necessary for the provision of necessary blood tests in the medical laboratories were also in short supply.

Madam President, proceeds from the National Social Responsibility Levy will help to ensure that the suppliers of medicine and other medical supplies, be they bandages, needles and other medical supplies are properly paid so that they do not stop delivery of new supplies to the hospital thus giving rise to shortages. Madam President, these are serious issues that could be a matter of life and death, so that this National Social Responsibility Levy is no luxury, Madam President, and we have to be frank with the people of Barbados if we are a responsible Government and a responsible Parliament because the money has to come from somewhere, so that if you say that you do not want the dollar devalued or that you do not want to increase the debt, that you want to reduce the fiscal deficit, then the money has to come from somewhere.

Madam President, this reminds me that in the Scandinavian countries as we speak the tax rate is very, very, high, Ma'am, nearly 50 per cent of the income of earners is taxed because they have a high level of what people nowadays call entitlements. Madam President, we have a choice, we could have that approach or we could can have the approach of the United States of America where you have a low tax rate but not these entitlements, you have to have your own health insurance, you have to pay to go to university and not just the few dollars that we ask Barbadians to pay but you have to pay the vast majority of the cost. Madam President, we have to be frank with the public that these taxes ensure that the social services that we provide to the vulnerable groups are not compromised. Madam President, this is a fact of life, we are not being irresponsible but we are biting the bullet to ensure that the economy is properly managed.

Madam President, we have other things to do so that I will conclude here and say that I fully support this measure to ensure that the governance of our country is not compromised in terms of being prudent, in terms of the management of our financial resources so that we are able to provide the necessary assistance to those vulnerable groups. Madam President, I thank you.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator McClean, you have the Floor.

SUSPENSION

Senator the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Madam President, I now beg to move that this Sitting be suspended for dinner, to be resumed 9.00 p.m. this evening.

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

8.26 p.m.

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RESUMPTION

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

Senator the Hon. Ms. M.P.O. McCLEAN: Thank you very much, Madam President. I rise to make my contribution to the National Social Responsibility Levy Bill, 2017, and of course I would want to thank my distinguished colleague, Senator Boyce, for his usual erudite -- yet very straightforward and non-complicated -- way of presenting the issues related to the piece of legislation which we debate today: The validation of collections of this Levy, which would have been imposed in the Budgetary Statement of 2016. I also want to thank all other persons who spoke before me, and you would have heard my distinguished colleague on the other side comment about my habitual note-taking, Madam President. Of course, he was trying to give the impression that somehow tonight as I listened to Senator Carmichael, I was taking notes in a way in which I was unaccustomed. The truth is, as he knows and as everybody knows -- I tell you this, too, Madam President -- when Senator Carmichael speaks, I write because I believe that he always makes very important contributions, and tonight was no exception. Therefore, I will speak to some of the points he made.

Madam President, I took note of his concerns, but I want to start by suggesting that what we are debating, really, is a piece of legislation that, as I said, relates to a decision or an imposition last year. It becomes even more topical and concerning because there was an adjustment in the recently passed 2017 Budget, where there was a significant increase, and I do not propose to go into what was said beyond the point made by the Minister of Finance as he discussed this with Barbadians in several fora. He said it would impact on the cost of living. I do, however, want to remind my distinguished colleagues and those who listen that this issue on this particular piece of legislation speaks to a matter that was considered an important element of our ongoing and continued efforts to ensure that we would have tackled what many described, and what I saw when I went back to reading about it last night, as a ten-year crisis. It is a crisis which was expected to run a period of a decade or so.

Madam President, the notion has been put abroad -- by those who would want to condemn or to criticise because of where they sit in Opposition, for example -- that this is a lazy approach. To use the words of Senator Abrahams that the Government advised itself is very

wrong. Madam President, I believe you would have heard Senator Hunte make the point that he, along with other Members of the Parliamentary Group, would have been invited to have a presentation done on issues relevant to the Budget by our senior officials in the Ministry of Finance. Therefore, as was pointed out on multiple occasions -- and I will point it out again -- we make policy but we also have technical advisors. I am happy to say, and I know this was criticised as well, that in the discussions which have taken place over the years, one of the things that has happened....

I go back to before I even sat here. Madam President, I was fortunate to serve as a director on a cross-section of boards in this country, from one of the two largest conglomerates to a small bookstore, and I would recall sitting around the board tables of some of those entities of which I was a director. After a Budget or an Estimates Debate, for example, but a Budget in particular, members of the directorate of the particular company or companies would start to question issues and the implications and express concern and identify who they would have called in the Cabinet. Certainly, in the last decade of that before I joined, this Administration would not have been in power; so the point I am making is that the issue of implementation and the analysis that is so critical to ensuring that we are able to turn proposals on their heads to make sure that we have as full a grasp of the full implications as possible, has to be an ongoing process. Therefore, when I hear cautions such as that expressed by Sir Trevor, it is taken on board. I know critics have questioned why a measure was put in place and then the period of implementation was deferred for a month. Part of that has to do not with this Administration alone, as I said. I was sitting on boards since the early 1990s and I saw it in several iterations where matters were put, and the officials who advised Government and the Government Members who analysed it did not see every possibility. Due to the notion, therefore, that this is sufficiently complex, all-encompassing and of such magnitude in terms of the coverage of its impact -- which covers all citizens -- it was felt that we needed to ensure we engaged in that kind of dialogue to make sure those things happened.

Madam President, it is not a lazy approach. It is not something that is drawn out of isolation, but it comes against the background where we took Government in 2008 and we had a number of critical decisions to make at a time when we recognised that while the restructuring of this economy was absolutely necessary, we were doing it with certain significant constraints. In terms of this levy, one major decision taken between 2008 and now was that in order to save, maintain and continue to attract the international business sector, this Government had to forego \$200 million in revenue on an annual basis. That was expounded on by Senator Boyce on multiple occasions and certainly here. In looking at a short term approach to part of an ongoing longer term problem, a decision was

taken to put in place a tax measure, the levy, which would impact on all citizens. What we saw happening was that the contribution to the revenue generation and the revenue made available to Government shifted in significant measure when you looked at the dollars and cents. This is not a nickel-and-dime economy or something, as some people would try to suggest. As I said, I always take these things very seriously. That revenue was shifted to the domestic consumer and so on, and that is what we see and that is where the impact would be, but it does not take place and has not taken place in isolation.

Madam President, one of the things which I can say categorically is that this not a last-ditch, desperate move, as some people would want to suggest, but it is one that comes at a time when Government has undertaken a number of initiatives which, between 2008 and last year and certainly now, would have allowed this economy to move from a situation of negative GDP growth in the early years of -4.7 per cent, to growth of about 1.2 per cent over the past two years. We have seen a fiscal deficit drop from 12 per cent of GDP to about seven per cent. I have to repeat these numbers: We have seen unemployment move from a high of 13 per cent to about nine per cent last year. We have looked at strategies and programmes to date to support the tourism sector, whether it is on the demand side in terms of marketing to persons who want to come here, or on the supply side with provision of support to the sector such as the tourism industry relief fund of \$24 million. We have been able to attract new investments, so in terms of the traditional sectors, work has been done to do so. Madam President, we know that Barbados has relied very heavily in the past. I was around when Senator Boyce was sitting at that time as a director with me at Bridgetown Cruise Terminals; we were on the first Board of that company.

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Senator the Hon. Ms. MAXINE P. O. McCLEAN:
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Madam President, we know that Barbados has relied very heavily in the past... -- I was around when Senator Boyce was sitting at that time he would have been a director with me at the Bridgetown Cruise Terminals. We were on the first Board of that company and he would have been one of the parties to the tripartite agreement we have, the Social Partnership and consistent with dialogue and engagement that takes places this Government went to its social partners and said to them that they want them to share with them what they made in terms of recommendations. Madam, I do not want to take up a lot of time but I think it is important, and I repeat it for the 'enth' time that this was not something drawn out of hat or as

somebody suggested as a lazy response but it was one in which Government took on board some recommendations or suggestions and they were captured in the presentation of the Budget by the Minister of Finance where there was suggestion of privatization. Yes, we have identified for sale a major asset but Madam, do you know what were some of the suggestions in terms of privatization, the Sanitation Service Authority, the water supply, the provision of school meals and the postal services. Madam, the truth is when we look at all of these things none of them at this point in time are commercially independent, in other words, they are net revenue generating for Government and therefore, if the Government were to privatised, Madam President, one of two or both things would happen, the Government would be called upon (1) to subsidise the private sector service providers and (2) they would be called upon to agree to commercial rates. For example, right now, bus fares, if we were to look at that would probably approximate five dollars for each trip. For example, a mother or father who is working and has to take two buses to work will pay \$20 a day, that is \$100 a week. Madam President, think of a person who currently working for 300 gross a week and you are asking them out of their gross wage to pay one third in increased transportation cost. What would that translate into, Madam President? Individuals would go to their trade unions saying they have one expense that have gone up to cover a third of their salary. Madam, think about it, if we also went and talk about water. People made a big song and dance when we increased water rates by 60 per cent. Madam, as of this month, my water bill has never gone to \$40 a month and I live in a house where I have regular amenities and, as I have said in here before I have multiple showers a day like everybody else. I do laundry using a washing machine like everybody else and so on. Madam, the point I am making is that even with 60 per cent I do not know how many bottles of water that provides for me, maybe 10 one-litre bottles or whatever. Madam, the point I am making is that if we were to take on board some of those notions of privatisation of what I would call public services those rates would have gone up.

Madam President, some of the other suggestions made our partners was a change in the VAT in the system. There were two suggestions (1) that you reduce VAT back to 15 per cent, that you remove all the zero rated and exemption items. What does that mean? You would have to pay VAT on water and a lot of the things we provide to the elderly and so on, the basket of goods that we say are essential to the poor Barbadian family would now have to pay VAT, so basic items, the rice, the sugar, and those things we do not pay VAT on now, we will have to pay. Madam, the question really and truly is, do we look at something in isolation or do we look at it and compare it with some of the options put on the table. Madam President, I do not have the time to run through the full list but I call tonight on the private sector and the trade union, and I call on my colleagues who sit at meetings of the

social partnership to put out there all of the recommendations and beyond just listing recommendations if the persons who have made the recommendations have not done it yet, to ask them or provide them with assistance to do the necessary analysis to look at the value of those things because at the end of the day, this is a very complicated matter. We have sat down and we have recognised that in the context of an effort to restructure our economy there is pain-free solution.

Madam President, I want to say something. I want to take on board what were the suggestion made by Senator Carmichael because I do believe that in his contributions he of course has the interest of Barbados at heart as he always does but I also recognised and perhaps I am venturing into an area that is not mine, that is, economics. If I could challenge my dead brother, I would be a boss but they do not have many like him anymore I supposed he took it with him although I thought he trained many of his people but some of them did not sit at his feet as Senator Todd like to say as students. It is clear that they did not but perhaps, he will send his knowledge to me somewhere or the other. Madam President, the point I am making is that as we look at this, I heard of the importance of investment waiting to happen and I think it is critical that we are able to do that but we have to work to attract that investment because we need to diversify our economy. I think also the issue of Government's revenue in the short term still has to be addressed but the key point that Senator Carmichael was making is that there cannot be ambiguity as to the implementation of this legislation. I trust Senator Carmichael, and I know you probably must have been corralled into this already but even if not I think that this should sit with you as they discuss this. I am sure the sectors you represent will share that as well but beyond the issue of the taxation I think you make a valuable point which requires not the political directorate, that is, members of Cabinet like myself who held Ministries... Well, to us sometimes as well because if we can light fires under people we need to do that but there needs to be a level of agility, a level of responsiveness that is critical to the attraction of business.

Madam President, I will quickly use an example. I have not read the article, I was trying to find it before but I understand there was some criticism of a new area of business that we have been attracting to Barbados and that is international medical schools. The Minister of Education, the Government of Barbados subscribes to the notion of internationalisation of education. Madam, sometimes you have to pat yourself on the back and this is why I will speak of this particular one. On May 31st last year, Madam President, I sat down in Atlanta with the then honor counsel of Barbados and I am going to beg your indulgence and call your name because it is nothing negative. He is somebody I have properly recognised for his twenty something plus years of servicing us as an

honorary counsel, the Dr. Edward Layne, a brilliant Barbadian physician who I would call the tag partner of Professor Cardinal Ward, the two names go together in my mind, who in his youthful time would have part of the setting up of Morehouse Medical School in Atlanta and who for many years would have been approached by all kinds of people to recommend Barbados. We sat with a gentleman, his mother of Grenadian ancestry to negotiate the relocation of a medical school to Barbados and I can tell you that we were able to do that within a year. We did have to the last two weeks or so before its opening some hiccups because everything that was supposed to be done by the persons coming probably was not done to the exact specifications et cetera but the point I am making is that these are recommendations not of some fly-by-night institutions. Those institutions have evolved and I can tell you that in terms of the recommendations of a Barbadian who is "part of the traditional medical training background" because we have onshore and we have these international schools. Madam, he was very selective and these are students when they qualify will return to do their clinicals in some of the best medical schools. They are not competing with our medical school here, they are not competing to internships in our hospital but they are clearly recognizing that...

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Senator the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: Is that a transfer from Government or are you going to legislate certain minimum wages? We put these things out there but at the end of the day my argument is that this Government has bit the bullet of seeking to ensure that we work to restructure this economy. It will not happen by itself.

Madam President, before I wrap up I want to touch on one of the issues that would have been put on the table by Senator Fraser who said that we still have not addressed the issue of productivity. Productivity is a matter to be addressed by each and every one of us. It is critical that the people in management positions seek to do that but if every Barbadian understands that he or she has a role to play when he or she is at work to do their job to the most efficient and effective, then we should be able to see an improvement. For example, we talk about cutting staff but at the end of the day if persons are to deliver... You hear of officers, and I speak to the public sector because the difference between the private sector and the public sector is that if a private sector person refuses to step up to the plate so to speak it is much easier to terminate that person's service but in the public sector the rules are there to protect the employee but they also put a number of constraints on...

If people are to do that we would find ourselves better able to achieve all that we have to achieve.

Madam President, I want to say that as we have put this levy in place last year and as we validate it now and as we are faced with an increased we want to make sure... Let me say that as of today people have about two more weeks to raise some of the concerns we have heard as those raised by Senator Carmichael. We also have an opportunity for people to look and see whether or not at the end of the day while it covers a broad brush if it is more equitable than having a situation where - I think I heard some numbers used - there are maybe 4 000 self-employed persons registered at the National Insurance Scheme when in fact the numbers suggest that there are about 17 000 persons so self-employed.

Madam President, let us forget the taxes for a minute and look at the issue of national insurance and the future provision for our welfare and our wellbeing, that is provision for pension. I happened to have spent almost ten years as a self-employed persons prior to doing what I am doing now and if there was one thing I made sure I did it was to pay my national insurance because I was looking after me. I did not expect and I will not expect that in a situation where this country has had to revisit that whole notion of a non-contributory pension, we do not have the luxury of providing that... We need to help provide for ourselves and so when we look at taxation and so on which provides for a number of benefits, we talk about using this levy to make sure that we provide for our sanitation services, for health services and so on, it is to the advantage of all of those.

Madam President, I do not know that we can give in the short-term a cost of living allowance to public workers as the Leader of the Opposition has spread abroad in the Media, et cetera. I am not sure what is meant by a minimum living income for households, who would provide that or what is the mechanism, and so I think that at the end of the day within the context of a strategy of trying to contain Government expenditure while putting in place the necessary supports to grow the economy that we have put this in place. The Government has suggested to people it will be tough but a number of tough measures had been taken between when we came into office and now. We have also taken a number of measures to support the vulnerable, we have looked at increased unemployment benefits from 26 weeks to 40 weeks and we would have made certain concessions in terms of rebates on taxes or at least the elimination of interest charges on back taxes et cetera, so Madam President, I certainly have no difficulty in providing support for this the National Social Responsibility Levy Bill, 2017.

I am obliged.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Boyce, you have the Floor.

Senator the Hon. D. W. BOYCE: Thank you, Madam President. Let me thank all Senators who have contributed to this debate on this National Social Responsibility Levy Bill.

Madam President, no Administration likes to increase taxes and no one likes to pay taxes because by its very definition a tax causes hurt to somebody somewhere, and when you have a broad-based tax like this it means that everybody has to bear little of the sacrifice. Madam President, I would rather pay a little bit more tax when I purchase something than have another family unemployed and children without food.

Madam President, I am not given to hyperboles like some other persons may be. I do not say things lightly or wantonly for the sake of saying them to make an impression. If people want to see the structure of Government's expenditure, let them go back to Table VI in the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure and let them see what the facts are in terms of the structure of Government expenditure, how much is wages, how much is pensions, how much is hospital, how much is university, how much is the Barbados Community College, how much is the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic and how much is for the Barbados Tourism Management Inc. and the Barbados Tourism Product Authority, it is inside there.

Madam President, you hear a lot of grand talk about cutting transfers. When you take out the essential services that fall under the transfer category, when you take out the old aged pensions, the non-contributory pensions, the pensions of civil servants and their gratuities, you have very little left inside there that you can make any sizeable cut from to deal with the situation.

Madam President, we are not at the level of doing taxation because we have done nothing over the years. Senator McClean talked about the Tourism Industry Relief Fund which kept people there going and we increased the amount of money we gave to the Barbados Tourism Authority so they could do more marketing when the crisis hit us. What we did for the international business sector in terms of reducing the taxes was to encourage that sector to remain there and to grow some more. When we did the concessions for the hotels that was to get the 500 rooms up in Dover going. We have had an economy which was driven by foreign real estate and when the bottom of that market fell out because of the crisis in North America and Europe that foreign direct investment dried up and with it dried up the work in construction, so we have to understand the structure of the economy. I am not interested in making soundbites for anybody. I never was and never will be, only in telling the facts as I can understand them with my

limited ability but equal to anybody else's in this country, not more than anybody else's but equal to anybody else's. That is what they taught us as Senator Sir Trevor would admit and Senator Abrahams would also admit that was what was also drilled into his head and so would Senator De Peiza. Having said that, Madam President, we have to do this thing...

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Senator the Hon. D. W. BOYCE: Madam President, having said that, we have to do this thing, we have to do it so that everybody pays a little something, but because it is such a broad-base, that it affects so many people, yes we will have some issues in its implementation, that is why it is time period. I am reliably informed by the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs that the Honourable Member has already begun consultations with the various sectors on the Draft Bill and that the Honourable Member expects to continue all this week and next week talking with people.

Madam President, I heard the plea of Senator Abrahams coming from a vested interest position about the Cropover. I will convey to the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs his concerns and see whether or not the Honourable Member is minded to give some kind of relief. Ma'am, under the Act the Minister cannot give waivers, the Minister can make regulations in the administration of the Act, so I agree that what we need to do during the course of this couple of weeks is to do that detailed discussion, get some draft guidelines, sit down and discuss them with the people and make such changes as are required with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs. Madam President, before I came here this morning I enquired of him about that, not because I was leading off this debate, because I did not know I was going to be leading off this debate until today, but I thought that I wanted to know from the point of view of rooting with the business people and so on and I think that the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs is going to do that.

Madam President, my own preference for doing budgets and so on is not the preference that we would like to use in Barbados over the last 30 years, the preference of this black box thing with effect from midnight to midnight business. I like to take time and run through these things because taxes are very tricky things to deal with but that is our tradition and we follow it.

Madam President, let me also put another perspective for us to consider. We say that we are a highly taxed community, the percentage of Gross Domestic

Product that goes into Government's revenue tax in 2016-2017 is roughly the same as Government's revenue in 2001-2002 or 2007-2008. Madam President, there is a nice draft there on the website of the Central bank so that people can look at it. Ma'am, the problem has been that in 2007, \$200 million of that tax revenue came out of the foreign people, the International Business Community. When they stopped doing that you then had to try to catch it from the local people and so yes you would feel it a little bit more. Ma'am, that is the experience, nobody is seeking to torture anybody.

Madam President, we have that kind of level of tax which might be a little bit higher than many countries. We are on par, though, with the European countries in terms of the tax take as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product, but our welfare system, our social fabric is much stronger and caters more to the needy and the vulnerable than the welfare structure anywhere else in the Caribbean or North America. Ma'am, it is the same kind of welfare system we have in Europe, so that the schooling, health, medication and all of those things are not wished into being and they stay there, so that if you are going to reduce the level of taxation in the economy you have to accept a reduction in the level and quality of the social services that you have in the community. Do we want to go back there? There may be some of us who were never there and therefore may not understand what it is even to contemplate going back there. There are others of us who came from there and so we know exactly what we would be going back to.

Madam President, that is the context in which these things have to happen. We felt that persons in the formal sector had had enough burden placed on them and that we needed to make this thing a broad-based tax. With that we would have to do what we have to in order to remove any inconsistencies, remove the major hurdles that may damage the economy, but we know that everybody is going to have to bear a little bit of the burden.

Madam President, it is that we bear that burden or the persons particularly those in business who think that we should push more growth are the ones who should come forward and push some more of that growth. When you think of the investments that we have had, there have been projects that I know of, project that I have personally tried to facilitate where we have given them all of the incentives they needed, the incentives that they had asked for; where we have given them all of the planning permissions that they have asked for; and they have changed their minds and came back with a new request for planning permission and we have given that to them too; and then they changed their mind again and we gave that to them too.

Madam President, I can think of two supposedly big project off the top of my head, neither one has yet started but they will then go around to the Government officers,

and I am not saying that Government officers are not to be blamed for some things in terms of the slowness of doing some things, but it is not always the Government officers who are to be blamed. Ma'am, these people are in those positions because they too were affected by the financial crisis of the world, and a lot of developments have been driven by persons borrowing on their overseas assets, then bringing in the money and then buying a property here. Therefore, when they could not borrow over there anymore they could not bring any more money here into Barbados.

Madam President, we have an economic model which was almost geared towards being supported by foreign persons who were doing things not because they were critical to them but that they were nice things to do. We now have to continue the work to restructure the economy to make sure that we do not need as much foreign exchange, that we are not quite dependent upon foreigners to drive this economy forward. Ma'am, the work that is being done in all of the ministries, in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and Innovation, in the Ministry of Health, in the Ministry of Telecommunication and Energy where we have had in the last couple of years a couple of hundred million dollars of investment in the telecommunication industry alone, so that when you make comments that we are not driving growth those comments are totally erroneous but Government is not in a position to go borrow the kind of money that you are talking about to invest in the country without worsening the fiscal position. Madam President, except we can have instantaneous growth you just cannot expect to find the revenue from the growth immediately, it takes time, so that if anybody knows how to get that growth going instantaneously then let them come forward.

Madam President, I want to make a couple of other small comments, for example, the matter of the investments coming from overseas. We obviously need them, we obviously want to encourage them but they deal with a problem that we have, which is to increase our foreign reserves. They do not deal with the other problem that we have, which is to close the fiscal deficit. They will eventually help you to do that in a couple of years' time when they get going and they generate revenue that begins to be taxed or they employ people who earn income, who then would be taxed but it takes a little time for that to happen.

No.D10 (50)10.06 p.m.

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Senator the Hon D.W. BOYCE: ... It takes a little time for that to happen, and I hope that Sir Trevor lets me know what is needed for those people who are ready to

bring in their \$400 million, and let me see if I can persuade some officers to work a little bit faster to get the matter sorted out. That is part of my informal portfolio too, I am told, but so be it.

Madam President, I think I have listened to all the discussion. Much of it has been useful, and I tend not to hear the political parts of it because that does not help me to make the legislation any better. It may get you annoyed, but it does not help you to make the legislation any better, so I tune out from that because I am not a very patient person. I listened for the technical parts, and I will certainly bring to the attention of the Minister of Finance those technical issues that have been raised and encourage him to continue the consultation so that we can put in place a good set of regulations which would help us to encourage the country; and also just to let all the sectors know that everybody has to make a little bit of a contribution. I remind people of what has always been said: In economics, there is no free lunch. With a tax, there is somebody who is not going to like it. Madam President, with those words, may I move that this Bill be read a second time?

On the motion of Senator the Hon. D.W. BOYCE, the question that the Bill be read for the second time was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

On the separate motion of Senator the Hon. Ms. M.P.O. McCLEAN, the Senate resolved itself into Committee for further consideration of the Bill. His Honour the DEPUTY PRESIDENT in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This Senate is now in Committee.

Clauses 1 -- 5, inclusive, were called and passed.

Clauses 6 -- 10, inclusive, were called and passed.

Clauses 11 -- 15, inclusive, were called and passed.

Clauses 16 -- 20, inclusive, were called and passed.

Clauses 21 -- 27, inclusive, were called and passed.

The motion that the Schedule be the Schedule to the Bill was put and resolved without division.

On the motion of Senator the Hon. Ms. M.P.O. McCLEAN, Mr. CHAIRMAN His Honour the DEPUTY PRESIDENT reported to Her Honour the PRESIDENT the passing of one Bill in Committee, and Her Honour the PRESIDENT resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the motion of Senator the Hon. Ms. M.P.O. McCLEAN, the Bill was read for the third time, passed and cited as the National Social Responsibility Levy Act, 2017.

ORDER NO. 3

The Magistrate's Courts (Amendment) Bill, 2017

(Second Reading)

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator McClean, you have the Floor.

Senator the Hon. Ms. M.P.O. McCLEAN: Madam President, this is a small but important Amendment to the Magistrate's Courts (Amendment) Bill, 2017. This legislation would have been earlier amended to address the question of trying to improve and to expedite the process of hearing cases. I will seek to put it in laypersons' terms, and any of the legal luminaries in our midst can seek to correct me if I am incorrect. Previously, my understanding was that there was a method of preliminary inquiries used to determine whether cases should proceed beyond the Magistrate's Court to the High Court, and that process required the interviewing by magistrates of witnesses and the taking of evidence. It was felt that the process could be made faster if evidence, such as written statements taken by officers of the Royal Barbados Police Force (RBPF), could be used and accepted into evidence. In the original Amendment, the legislation provided for a senior member of the RBPF not below the rank of sergeant, and those persons were the ones who were identified to take such evidence. Madam President, unfortunately that does not accord with practice, where much of the evidence would have been taken by junior officers.

Aside.

Senator the Hon. Ms. M.P.O. McCLEAN: I am told that all the evidence would have been taken by junior officers, and therefore that created some significant challenges. If this were to proceed, all of that evidence taken would have to be retaken, in essence, and that certainly would run counter to the very effort that you were trying to make. To address that challenge and to move forward, a simple Amendment is proposed; that we replace the words "a senior member of the Royal Barbados Police Force not below the rank of sergeant" and substitute the words "a member of the Royal Barbados Police Force", which would allow evidence taken in the normal way by constables to be accepted in this process where written statements are entered into evidence as the Magistrate undertakes his or her task of evaluating whether matters should proceed to the High Court.

10.13 p.m.

Insert s52 velda

Insert s53 juliette

Wednesday, June 14, 2017

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Senate is now in Committee.

Clauses 1 to 2, inclusive, were called and passed.

On the separate motions of Senator the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN, His Honour the DEPUTY PRESIDENT reported to Her Honour the PRESIDENT, the passing of one Bill in Committee and Her Honour the PRESIDENT resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Senator the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Magistrate's Courts (Amendment) Act, 2017.

ADJOURNMENT

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

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

No.D10 (54)10.38 p.m.

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2. Senator Walcott, who is out of the country on business.
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2. The Chief Medical Officer's Report 2010 to 2012.
3. The Income Tax Automatic Exchange of Information Regulation 2017.
4. The Loan Agreement No. 35/0R-BARR between Caribbean Development Bank and Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. dated March 27, 2017.
5. The Child Care Board Financial Statement for the year ended March 31, 2016.
6. The Sugar Industry Sugar Workers Providence Fund Order, 2017.
7. The Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemption) St. James Atlantic Incorporated Order 2017.
8. The National Conservation Commission Fees (Amendment) Regulation 2017.
9. The Barbados Economic and Social Report 2016.

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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. Throughout, ‘Insert S 2 Juliette’ to ‘Insert s53 juliette’. Notes reading ‘Insert sN juliette’ (and one ‘Insert s52 velda’) stand in the text at twelve points. At several of them the debate resumes mid-speech with no call from the Chair (for example Senator J. A. Watson after Senator Todd, Senator R. A. Hunte after Senator Boyce moved the second reading, Senator J. Ince at ‘The majority of medical practitioners’, and Senator Dr. Sir Trevor Carmichael after Senator Worrell). The reporters’ takes for those sequences appear not to have been inserted, so passages of debate may be missing. The notes are printed as in the source.

Q3. Order No. 1 and the Treasury Bills Resolution. No Order heading or title precedes the first Resolution: the text begins in the middle of Senator the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McClean’s speech on the vesting of land at Arch Hall, St. Thomas. After her winding-up (at ‘Insert s12 juliette’) the record moves straight to Senator Watson on the second Resolution, on raising the limit for Treasury Bills and other borrowing to \$4.75 billion, whose heading and opening speech are absent. The passing of neither Resolution is recorded. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Order No. 2, Senator Dr. Carol Lady Haynes. Three parts of Senator Lady Haynes’s speech and her later point of elucidation (about 640 words in all) are labelled ‘SENATOR DR. C. JACOBS’, who is not in the PRESENT list; Senator Worrell’s point of order addresses ‘Senator Haynes’. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Order No. 2, Senator W. A. Abrahams. One speech label reads ‘Senator W.A ABRAHAMS (d10’, with the text beginning ‘Sequence 41)(Read)’; similar reporters’ notes such as ‘(Seq 6)(Read)’ and ‘(d10: Sequence 36) (Read)’ begin other speeches. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Treasury Bills Resolution, Senator W. A. Abrahams. Mr. Deputy President calls Senator Abrahams and then vacates the Chair for Madam President, but Senator Abrahams opens ‘Mr. Deputy President’ and addresses both in the course of his speech. Printed as in the source.

Q7. Order No. 3, Magistrate’s Courts (Amendment) Bill, 2017. After Senator McClean’s explanation the record

goes (at ‘Insert s52 velda’, ‘Insert s53 juliette’) directly to the Committee; no question on second reading is recorded. Printed as in the source.

Q8. Take-slips, about 12.13 p.m. and 1.02 p.m.. Two take-slips are dated ‘Wednesday, June 12, 2017’; the others read June 14. Printed as in the source.

Q9. Speech labels, Senator McClean. The Leader of the Senate is labelled ‘Senator M. MCCLEAN’ when laying papers and ‘Senator the Hon. Ms. MAXINE P. O. McLean’ on the motion to suspend Standing Orders. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The Senate met at 11.00 a.m. on Wednesday, 14th June, 2017, with Madam President, Senator Miss Kerryann F. Ifill, in the Chair; prayers were led by Rev. Father Errington Massiah. Madam President announced excuses from Senators Durant, Walcott and Abrahams, and a minute’s silence was observed for those who had suffered tragedies in the United Kingdom. Senator the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McClean laid nine papers, among them the Barbados National Oil Company Limited Annual Report 2014, the Chief Medical Officer’s Report 2010 to 2012, the Income Tax Automatic Exchange of Information Regulation 2017 and the Barbados Economic and Social Report 2016. The Minutes of 17th May were confirmed and Standing Orders 25(1) and 45(2) were suspended.

The first Resolution, as stated by Senator the Hon. P. M. T. Todd, was to vest in the National Housing Corporation Crown land at Arch Hall, St. Thomas for residential purposes, a small section being used for access to the Arch Hall Fire Station. Senator McClean spoke of the enhancement of the Arch Hall Fire Station and new fire tenders. Senator Prof. Emeritus Sir Henry Fraser supported it but asked to see site plans for such resolutions; Senator Todd spoke of faster emergency response; Senator J. A. Watson raised starter houses and the protection of agricultural land; Senator J. Ince spoke of house fires spreading to neighbouring houses; and Senator A. A. Adams said that agricultural land should no longer be used for housing and that there were about 1 500 to 1 800 derelict houses in St. Michael. Senator McClean wound up.

The record then turns to a Resolution to raise the limit for borrowing by Treasury Bills and other instruments to \$4.75 billion. Senator Watson compared the position to a business renegotiating an overdraft and urged support for small businesses that earn foreign exchange. Senator W. A.

Abrahams recalled the earlier increase to \$4 billion and called borrowing to pay debts as they fell due a vicious and unsustainable cycle. Senator Fraser said he could not reconcile the \$750 million increase with the Budget and spoke of the rum industry and planning delays. Senator Ince wound up, recalling taxation in 1995 and \$200 million in debentures and Treasury notes issued by the Barbados Labour Party.

Senator the Hon. D. W. Boyce moved the second reading of the National Social Responsibility Levy Bill, 2017. He said that the levy, introduced in the 2016 Budget at 2 per cent on imports and on goods produced in Barbados not for export, was expected to raise about \$80 million a year, excluded enterprises on fiscal incentives, the tourism sector and exports, and had helped to bring the fiscal deficit down from 6.9 per cent in 2015/2016 to 6.3 per cent in 2016/2017. Senator R. A. Hunte supported the Bill. Senator Dr. Carol Lady Haynes questioned the use of the levy for health care and the environment and quoted the Auditor General's Report on unaudited accounts, Senator A. R. Worrell rising to seek elucidation. Senator Ince and Senator Worrell supported the levy, Senator Worrell likening it to the earlier Environmental Levy.

Senator Dr. Sir Trevor Carmichael warned that if international business companies were to be exempt the Bill must say so, as the Barbados International Business Association had expected. Senator Abrahams argued that the measure had not been thought through and would cripple Crop Over promoters and Kadooment bands; Senator McClean rose on a point of order that he was misleading the Chamber. After a dinner suspension, Senator Todd and Senator McClean spoke in support. Replying, Senator Boyce said that no Administration likes to increase taxes, that the last Treasury Bill auction rate was 3.5 per cent and that growth in 2016 was 1.6 per cent, and undertook to convey Senator Abrahams's concerns on Crop Over to the Minister of Finance. The Bill passed through Committee, His Honour the Deputy President in the Chair, and was cited as the National Social Responsibility Levy Act, 2017.

Senator McClean explained the Magistrate's Courts (Amendment) Bill, 2017, which replaces the words limiting the taking of written statements for preliminary inquiries to a member of the Royal Barbados Police Force not below the rank of sergeant with 'a member of the Royal Barbados Police Force', so that statements taken by constables could be accepted. The Bill passed all its stages and the Senate was adjourned sine die.