
THE SENATE DEBATES

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2013 – 2018

THE SENATE

Monday, March 20, 2017

The Senate met in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings on Monday, March 21, 2017 at 11.00 o'clock 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 Dr. J. X. Walcott, M.B., B.S., F.R.C.S. (Edin.), J.P.

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

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 now in Session.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY Her HONOUR THE PRESIDENT

PAPERS

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

1. The Excise Tax (Amendment) Regulations, 2017;
2. Needhams Point Holding Limited Annual Report for March 31, 2014.

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

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. O. P. McCLEAN: I beg to move that Standing Orders 22(1) and 45(2) be suspended for the remainder of this Sitting.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SENATOR the Hon. Miss M. O. P. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I beg to move that the following Bills be read a first time:

1. Appropriation Bill, 2017.
2. Excise Tax (Validation of Tax) Bill, 2017.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

ORDER No. 2

SECOND READING OF THE APPROPRIATION BILL, 2017.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator McClean, you have the Floor.

Senator the Hon. Miss M.P.O. McCLEAN: Madam President, I rise to move the Second Reading of the Appropriation Bill, 2017. Madam President, I rise to make my contribution to what if my mathematics is correct, my 10th debate on the Appropriation Bill or as we often call it the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure. Madam President, as was the case with the first debate in March 2008 and all that followed, I see this as a very serious exercise. It is made even more important, given the challenges that Barbados continues to face both economically and socially.

Madam President, before I begin speaking about them I will simply state that the Appropriation Bill provides for the grant of a sum of money out of the Consolidated Fund and the appropriation of the same for the service of Barbados for the year ending 31 March, 2018. The specific figure is for sums not exceeding \$1 816 827 953. Ma'am, that of course is a significant amount of money in a small economy like this but at the same time when we look at other economies it pales in significance.

Ma'am, it is therefore import to recognise that we as a Small Island Developing State have been able over the period of the last 50 years, if I could use that as a benchmark, that being the post-independence period, that we have been able to achieve substantially. We have talked about Barbados becoming a successful developing country moving from what essentially, as what some people would have described it, as a collection of villages.

Mr. Chairman, I certainly have seen this country evolved. I would have been one of those persons to have benefitted from secondary education immediately after

Independence. In fact, I went to secondary school the year Barbados became Independent and so I come to this debate fully aware of the continuing concerns and ongoing public dialogue about the state of the Barbadian economy. I am not an economist but I have succeeded my brother the late Wendell McClean who sat in this Honourable Chamber and who even though some may question my objectivity, I will very quickly say was one of the best economists this country has produced. I also recall very vividly the day that I sat here for the first time we were dealing with a similar debate, and I was reminded by his widow of his love of country and what he did and what she thought he would want me to conduct myself here.

Madam President, I say that because I have listened very attentively to all that has been said about the economy about Barbados. I sit, listen and read local papers, I am engaged regionally but I am also fortunate and privileged to represent Barbados in the international arena as the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade. Madam President, in that capacity I want to say very quickly that notwithstanding or even in the face of the many challenges, particularly economic challenges that we are dealing with, and these will be explained full over the duration of this debate, I can say categorically that this country continues to have an excellent reputation in the region and internationally.

D6(A) (1)11.42 a.m.

Madam President, as recently as Friday I had the opportunity to meet with persons who operate within the international business sector, and who wanted to share with me some proposals that they were looking at in terms of demonstrating their love of this country and in terms of their identification of Barbados as a place to invest. That is not a 'one-off' situation. I know that we are challenged and, as I said, I am not the economist, but I think I have been able to interpret in my layperson's language a lot of what is happening. Madam President, the reality is that as we dialogue about the Barbadian economy, I would go back to the beginning because, in speaking to these Estimates, I am going to contextualise them. I often do this because it is important that people understand where I am coming from when I make my contribution, and understand what is the context and the parameters within which I engage and share my thoughts.

In 2008, because I go back then to come forward, we assumed office confronted by what was to become the worst global economic and financial crisis since the Great Depression, and we know that over the ensuing years this Administration took on the task of managing the domestic manifestations of that crisis. That was best exemplified, of course, by the several programmes and legislative arrangements which we had to put in place, along with concessions and increases in taxation. We cannot run from

taxation because we have to pay for what we receive; but we saw in this country the manifestations, as I said, of the international crisis as exemplified by declines in a number of key economic indicators. Unemployment went up and our revenues from key sectors went down. The kinds of concessions we had to make, including those in the international business sector, and the incentives we had to put in place would have been all indicators of efforts to ensure that we maintained a viable private sector and that Government was able to realise significant revenues.

Madam President, we also saw in that period a number of initiatives to further efforts at reform of the public sector, for example. We were able to count on the Social Partnership, which is the workers' representatives and the private sector, to maintain what I would describe as level heads in all of this and to play their part. Madam President, it has not been easy, and I would certainly want to say that it has been a task, as I said before, which we all took very seriously on this side. Government recognised the responsibility. I also would want to say that as we explored the options, we bore in mind at all times that this Administration, as would have been the case of previous Administrations of the DLP in Government, put the people of Barbados at the centre of all this. At the end of the day, we have to make sure that there is a delicate balance between those initiatives which seek to ensure economic and commercial and financial viability, but we also have to ensure that we maintain social stability. Madam President, what this therefore translated into is a process by which a number of decisions taken would have pretty much caused pain, but those things were minimised by an effort to balance that with ensuring that we made the necessary provisions. Madam President, all in all this Administration undertook between 2008 and today a number of measures which, taken in balance, have ensured that Barbadians continue to be employed, that Barbados continues to have a good reputation generally across the world; and that is exemplified, as I said, in my goings-about representing this country.

Madam President, I would say that over the period to which I refer, however, this Administration has sought to address challenges head-on, and that is contrary to what some political detractors may want to suggest; but I always tell people that opinions are like eyes and ears: we all have them. Madam President, we focused on supporting the private sector, especially the tourism sector, and I would hasten to say that I anticipate that in true style my colleague who speaks on these matters will demonstrate that. I therefore do not propose to spend a lot of time examining the figures but to tell you that when you look at the numbers captured in the Estimates -- the allocations to tourism -- what we will see is an effort to maximise the returns on reduced funds. The reality is that we do not have all the money that we want to expend on any sector, but I can also tell you that if we trace from 2008 until now, what

we will see would be a package of initiatives, including rebates, adjustments in VAT, et cetera, which have served to encourage and support the tourism sector. I recall several debates in which my colleague, Senator Sandiford-Garner, would have shared with us the impact of those things, and I can tell you that I know clearly and I have seen firsthand some of the efforts. I will give you an example which relates to how we have been able to work across Ministries.

Madam President, today -- I will just use this illustration from tourism and then we will proceed to capture the total picture that I want to paint -- Barbados receives flights by Avianca out of Colombia, and that came about out of negotiations on behalf of this country with my colleague foreign minister. The person with whom I negotiate is still foreign minister. María Angela Holguín is the name of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Colombia, and she was the person who made the introduction to one of the two key owners and investors in Avianca. We were able to discuss and very quickly have the Ministry of Tourism and International Transport do the necessary negotiations. Madam President, I can say that as recently as two Fridays ago I would have met in Havana at a meeting of the Association of Caribbean States, CARICOM Foreign Ministers and the Foreign Minister of Cuba, and had the opportunity to speak to my colleague minister to ask her to explore some opportunities for a private sector initiative, and that has to do with the import of flowers for an event. I will explain the genesis of that because I think it is important to look at how some things unfold.

About a year and a half or two years ago, it was drawn to my attention that there would be a conference of flower arrangers in Barbados, bringing people from 30-something countries. One of the organisers said to me that they were trying desperately to encourage flower producers in Barbados to ramp up their production, and they did not get the kind of enthusiastic response they expected. It was ironic because somebody said, "We are satisfied with our business," and that, to my mind, was kind of strange. Somebody else asked, "If we increase production, what we will do after the event?" I thought that we imported a lot of flowers, so they could have been substituted for imports. The long and short of it, Madam President, is that now the organisers are faced with the reality that they are being told by local producers, "Sorry, we cannot supply you. We have to focus on our traditional customers." This was not Government. This had nothing at all to do with Government; this had to do with opportunities for business, but what it said was that there was some shortsightedness. I use that to illustrate how we have been able within the parameters of Government-to-Government opportunities to generate business for Barbados, but also show how Government often has to step in to find solutions where you would believe the private sector can sort those things out.

Madam President, we have been supporting the private sector, as I said, especially tourism which is our main foreign exchange earner and, as we know, an employer of a significant percentage of the country's population. Madam President, we also took tough decisions to protect the international business and financial services sector in terms of looking at the tax concessions and the tax rates charged in those sectors. We all know that over the last five years cumulatively, Barbados would have foregone about BDS\$1 billion in taxes because of changes in the international business arena globally, and specifically because of some of the actions taken by the Canadian legislators.

11.36 a.m.

That, of course, was done as a trade-off between ensuring that companies sought to remain here rather than relocate given those decisions but it has been a cost. I think we can put that \$1 billion into context when we look at the figure that I quoted earlier in relation to this year's Estimates. A big sacrifice was made in the short term to ensure the long term survival and viability and growth of the sector. It has worked in maintaining business, as I said in my opening comments, I know for a fact that there are companies still coming, the statistics are there and anybody who has read the reports of the Ministry of International Business would see that. We have those kinds of things but I also want to emphasise that while we were doing those things to protect the private sector, the examples I gave would have been tourism and international business and the financial services sector. We were maintaining the social safety net which has characterised this country. Barbados is considered to be a leader in many respects. If we look across the Caribbean before we even go outside of the Caribbean, I do not know that any single member of CARICOM provides an identical package or an equivalent package of benefits to their citizens. Look at health, for example, Madam President. Barbadians are able to access free healthcare, free to themselves directly at all stages. We know of our medical benefits provided in terms of medication on the drug formulary, et cetera, any Barbadian who wants to can access the services of the polyclinics or the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) and that is for treatment of major or otherwise. We have a lot of structures in place to protect them. We, in fact, if we look at these Estimates, have continued and this has continued across Governments since the post-independence period. If we look at the Estimates and you calculate a percentage of the total allocations, the health budget is one of the two highest. Education as well.

Barbados now is able to provide education from nursery to tertiary with some small modifications and I want to emphasise, Madam President, with some small modifications at the tertiary level, most specifically the University of the West Indies (UWI). I spent about 18

years of my life and I am sure that what I have said I might have said here before, teaching at the University of the West Indies (UWI) and after leaving there fulltime, being a consultant on a project for about two and a half years before I took up this assignment as Minister and in those 20 plus years I would have seen the attitude of Barbadians change towards university education. People were beginning to take for granted something that is extremely costly to taxpayers. I also saw the almost exponential growth in numbers therefore when we look at the allocations to the university we see that growth.

I want, Madam President, to quickly debunk the notion that Members on This Side, having benefitted from that kind of education would sit today and approve Estimates which do not allow, as some people may want us to believe, Barbadians to access university education. The reality is we have seen numbers fall off but that has happened elsewhere.

I was a young woman at the University of the West Indies (UWI) probably half my age when you look at it, when the university campuses of Mona, in the first instance, and later St. Augustine, introduced fees of about the approximate percentage that Barbadians are being asked to pay now. The truth is that is to ensure that in an effort to spread the resources that we have we make sure that all persons pay part of it. What is important to know, and some people need to remember this, is that as we look to introduce a fee paying structure, a percentage I think it is a maximum of about 20 per cent of the total fee is paid by the student, provisions have been put in place by the Ministry of Education to support students who have not been able to do so therefore I would want to say that Barbadians continue to have access to university education. I say that within the context of what obtains in the Eastern Caribbean. Up to now I do not think that any country in the OECS is able to offer their citizens as much as we offer. Students, therefore, have been made to assume responsibility and in terms of managing their financial decisions and managing their decisions about the timing of their access of tertiary education they have been changes. I know recently, I believe, the Minister of Education in trying to ensure that as this process has rolled out, we are able to address persons who continue to be challenged, my recollection is that the Minister of Education has asked the university to provide the Ministry with information on students who might have withdrawn because they simply found it difficult.

I, Madam President, would have paid my way through Cave Hill. When I say paid my way, my parents could not give me money. I worked for two years so I understand what it is. I have other siblings who went to the university as mature students for the same reason so it is not a phenomenon that is new but I think it is one that we have been forced to address as we engage as a country. I

would suggest, Madam President, that we have come as a Government to this year's debate of the Estimates or the Appropriation Bill having to balance very carefully the resources that we had, the needs and interests to be met on the part of our citizens and we have done so in a way in which we have not forgotten that at the heart of what we do is in the interests of Barbados and Barbadians.

Madam President, we have come to this Senate to debate and pass new legislation and amend existing legislation and existing laws to ensure that we have in place the necessary legislative or legal frameworks thus ensuring that we maintain an important pillar of what has made this country the globally respected nation that it has been and continues to be. That is the whole business of the rule of law and the adherence to good principles and good governance.

I want to further frame my contribution to the Estimates against the background of something on which I touched but I think it is fitting that I establish a clear background or context against, what I would call, the celebration last year of the 50th anniversary of independence and that was not simply the marking of the anniversary. Persons and certain my distinguished Senate colleagues would recall that in the lead up to the celebrations and in the launch of the celebrations the Prime Minister of Barbados issued a charge to this country and it was about reflecting and looking back to go forward the next 50 years because anniversaries, as we hear and we know, whether it is personal, business or family, those are times in which we do some introspection, Madam President, so we can recall that the Prime Minister's charge to the nation was that we engage in serious introspection as a means of going forward to the next 50 years. I want to highlight one initiative which I know should inform some of how we plan in the future and even some of the activities financed by the various estimates that we have.

Among the initiatives, Madam President, of the celebrations was the commissioning of the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies at the Cave Hill Campus, we call it SALISES, to conduct a study entitled "Barbados at Fifty: The Barbados National Values Assessment 2016".

Senate D 6A Seq 3 11.45 p.m.

As we go forward as a Government we need to be clear, to use a kind of colloquial expression, of where people's heads are at. We need to understand whether the things, the values and the behaviours, et cetera, which allowed us to take this country and bring it to where we are now still prevail or whether people have a very different world view or even a different view of themselves. It is important that policymakers, whether they are in the public sector, the private sector or in the non-governmental

organisations sector and individuals themselves, understand what are the values and the behaviours, et cetera that influence their thinking and their actions.

Madam President, I therefore anticipate that on completion of this it would give us a chance in this country to think about whether or not as we expend taxpayer's money we continue to do so in a way that matters, not only appreciated but is expected in terms of what the country's priorities and realities are. Madam President, I therefore believe that this should contribute to the stocktaking that was started, as I said, with the celebrations and which should inform Barbadians about the positives and negatives which must now be examined and addressed.

Madam President, this country has witnessed several changes of Government since 1966 and this has taken place in a very orderly and peaceful manner. I would suggest Madam President, that as we observe changes in Government and the development of this country that there has been significant change but there has always been continuity. If we look at the management of the economy, it can be argued that there has always been a high level of consensus on how we manage the economy, and contrary to what some individuals might suggest there has been no fundamental differences in economic policy.

Madam President, in looking at it more specifically as it relates to the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, the Appropriation Bill, I want to highlight a couple of those things. Madam President, deficit financing has been an essential element of Government's economic policy since we became independent. One caveat, however, is that we have to ensure that we can manage those. I do not like using words you hear all of the time, but I will use it, that they are sustainable, that we can afford to do that, that as we have and engage in what might be short to medium term strategies we also focus on what are the critical long-term strategies that are important to ensure that we are able to continue to be a viable society and a viable economy.

The reality, Madam President, is that as we have engaged in deficit financing we have done so to ensure that the Government played and continues to play its part in supporting private sector activity and also make proper provision for that social safety net that I have spoken about. This happens against the background of what I would describe as an emphasis on limited economic sectors. Tourism continues to be the primary economic sector. We have heard about the resilience of tourism and its ability to bounce back. We have seen it during this period of global challenge as I would describe the economic and financial crisis. We have also seen that in the face of the crisis Barbados was still able to dedicate significant time, energy and financial resources to better target key sectors of the market with good effect, and with the support that we offer

to the various players in the industry we have been able to do that.

Tourism, as I said, has been our primary sector in terms of foreign exchange earnings. We know that with the elimination of the protection of sugar we have seen some decline in agriculture's contribution as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product. What I would hasten to say, however, is that if you review, for example, the Barbados Economic and Social Reports for the last four to five years and you look at the performance of the subsectors within the broad agricultural sector, you would see that we have seen significant improvements in several areas even though we have had a heavy reliance on tourism.

In several years, certainly as was the case immediately prior to the assumption of office in 2008, there was a notion that services was the way to go but of course we recognise that while services are and will continue to be important, a country has to address the issue of food security and of course the whole question of nutrition which is becoming a critical issue as we address a number of health problems in this country and indeed in the region where we see the increasing incidences of Chronic Non-communicable Diseases.

Madam President, the international business and financial services sector has increased in its relative contribution to economic activity over the last two to three decades and continues to be so and in essence we have found ourselves relying very heavily on those two sectors with lesser reliance on agriculture and a growing movement away from sugar until we have started to look at restructuring that industry. Madam President, I used the word restructuring and perhaps I should say something about that. I would posit, Madam President, that the issue of restructuring has been on the cards for a long time with much discussion and until now with not much action to effect the requisite change, so we have not seen a lot of action previously to effect serious change. The fact, as I said, that we talk about restructuring, and we have heard it for many years, much has not been done up until today.

In 2008, I would say that this Government was handed an economy which was essentially the same structure that existed since the early years of independence. I also would want to suggest, as we would hear later in my presentation and over the debate, that there is ample evidence to agree that this Administration has embarked on a programme of restructuring the economy. For the first time we have seen significant movement in what I would describe as two new sectors: the area of renewable energy because we can consider that as a sector in itself as well as the creative sector or the cultural industries as we refer to it.

Madam President, there is no denying that the role of the private sector is one that perhaps reflects an element or an example of continuity. I have spent many years associated with a cross section of businesses in terms of size, scope and so on, whether it is a large conglomerate on whose Board I sat for probably almost 15 years or in the credit union sector on which I served as a volunteer for a quarter century, in other words, I have given almost all my life to the credit union movement, more specifically to the City of Bridgetown Credit Union and so I would say that with a few exceptions the indigenous private sector in Barbados has not been as assertive and indeed as innovative as it could be. Several segments of the private sector have benefitted and continue to benefit from significant Government support and have not contributed to the kind of restructuring that I would want to see happening. When you look at these Estimates and you analyse the incentives given to a number of sectors, when we look back to what has helped shape these Estimates - the opportunity to have interest for example at the waivers and amnesties -- I am suffering from a little amnesia, that is why I could not remember the word, amnesty.

Senate D6A Sequence 4

Madam President, I jetted from the university area to here this morning in my car, so I guess that is a little bit of a jet lag for me, according to the not so sotto voce comments which I am not supposed to hear, but when there are said loud enough, you obviously cannot close your ears.

Madam President, I am very serious when I suggest that in looking at our private sector, we have not seen the kind of innovation in the traditional sector as we would want to see. Therefore, when I sat on more than one occasion, at meetings of the Social Partnership anticipating the suggestions from the private sector, for example, as to how they were going to contribute to the restructuring of this economy, I came away not hearing what I expected to hear or what I needed to hear. Therefore, I believe that while the notion of continuity applies to what I would call traditional private sector behaviour in some corners of that broader sector, I am also happy to say one of the changes taking place -- I heard somebody corrected a journalist this morning and if we do not listen to ourselves sometimes we probably do not realise we make some bad grammatical errors.

In terms of changes, Madam, I am happy to report that across this country we are seeing a lot of young people with innovative ideas, truly entrepreneurial. I draw a distinction between a small business owner or a business and an entrepreneur. An entrepreneur is a business person but a business person is not necessarily an entrepreneur, because business does not necessarily mean that you are being innovative and so on. That is a word we use very loosely. I want to say that I am seeing a lot of young people

using technology to solve a number of problems to create opportunities for themselves.

One area I would want to highlight is in the area of renewable energy. I want to highlight the area of renewable energy, not simply the generation of electricity for electricity sake, but the application of renewable energy techniques in agriculture for example. I would say more about that at another point in time.

Madam President, when we look at what has characterized the environment in which we have operated until now, and in which we have had to craft these Estimates, there is no denying that the events between 2008 and 2017 have made restructuring difficult. I started out by saying when I began on the issue of restructuring that this Government has committed itself to restructuring. I will give you an example of what I mean. If we are talking about restructuring we have to have restructuring of not only the private sector, but also restructuring of the public sector. There is evidence to suggest that we probably have a larger public service in terms of staff complement than we need given the current output. I emphasise that because I believe also that if people are able -- this is in both the public and private sectors -- to enhance productivity, that allows for a certain expansion of economic activity overall.

I am suggesting we have been challenged to do the full level of restructuring that is necessary partly because of the financial conditions, but partly because of the share magnitude of what is required. We are talking about restructuring existing operations. We are talking of restructuring the planks or the pillars of the economy, thereby ensuring that new areas are supported. The critical point we need to recognise is, Government cannot do this by itself.

Madam President, the reality is, there has really been little or no easing of the external pressure, but another fact of life, this administration has however not shied away from the task. We have however recognized that we cannot disrupt the social fabric of this society. Therefore calls to cut expenditure, calls to cut transfers, have had to be done in a manner that is judicious and I am sure that given his profession, my colleague on the other side can appreciate the difference between a scalpel and a cutlass. Therefore...

Asides.

SENATOR Hon. M.O.P. McClean: As he wants me to say his preference is a machete rather than a cutlass, but I am a good old Bajan, so I know a cutlass or a cane bill, as we can talk about it.

Madam, the point I am making in all seriousness, one of the challenges we have had to face in this country and as we decide what has to be done by Government, we

have to balance the needs of the most vulnerable in this country. We have to balance the reality. If for example, I use the situation of the size of the public sector, if we were to cut numbers suggested by previous studies and recommendations to previous administrations, we would in fact be substituting salaried persons for welfare recipients in the short-term. In essence what we would be doing is failing to get any level of productivity from persons who find themselves unemployed because of a part of what I said about the private sector. Not only is it perhaps not as assertive -- to use the word I used- or innovative, but the size of the private sector, the areas of activity would not necessarily lend themselves to the easy absorption of workers.

So it is important to recognise that as we try -- I am doing a lot of recognising, Madam President -- to understand that as we try to address the question of restructuring in all its facets, we have to do so bearing in mind that constraints of a small society with a narrow economic base which is highly susceptible to what goes on because it is an open economy and the realities of our social economic structures. As I said we cannot disrupt the social fabric of the society.

I have heard our detractors accuse the Government of inaction. Madam President, it is not inaction nor inertia, it is the reality of being able to do things in a way and in time and adapt to a pace that allows the society to absorb the shocks that come from those changes. Clearly, as we have done in the past debates of the Appropriation Bill and other debates, and we will do over during of this 2017 debate, we will demonstrate the accomplishments of this Democratic Labour Party Government.

The pace at which we have proceeded, if I could sum up the point I was making, reflects the complexity of the task of restructuring, and the need to balance social and economic realities. There is clear evidence, Madam President, that where difficult decisions have had to be taken, we have always ensured that citizens have been able to access a comprehensive portfolio of services, education, health, welfare services, citizen protection services, and I recognise the hard work of the Royal Barbados Police Force and the Barbados Defence Force, as they continue, as two important institutions in this society to provide quality service.

Madam, the question is, where are we now? If we begin with the economy, the reality is, our economic base remains narrow and this is an issue as I said before, which this Government has sought to address. For the first time we have seen significant progress about building two economic sectors. I referred to them before. There are the renewable energy sector and the cultural services industry sector. The expectation, is that we will see the full benefit of investments in these sectors across time, with short-term

benefits giving way to what I would describe to much longer term benefits. There is much that will be said about these.

Sequence 5

I however want to touch on the cultural services sector, because if you analyse the financial information provided for the Ministry of Culture we would find that we must laud the efforts of the Minister of Culture to formalize the Government's policy framework for the sector. We now have in place the Cultural Industry Act. Among other things it offers prospective and actual cultural entrepreneurs and business persons a comprehensive mix of incentives. The Cultural Industries Development Authority has been set up and I can say from experience and association that a number of strategic partnerships with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, the Barbados Investment and Development Corporation, the Caribbean Export and the Caribbean Development Bank, the Authority, that is the Cultural Industries Development Authority, has been able to provide support to individual artistes and groups, who have participated in a series of promotional and commercial activities. These are, of course, included in the kinds of things that authority will undertake as it goes forward.

I would say quickly that the Ministry has taken advantage of a number of bilateral agreements to share our cultural offerings either as part of a people to people exchange which is a very critical part of building our relationships with our foreign bilateral partners, or as a means of creating commercial opportunities. I will give you a couple examples. One that comes readily to mind was the arrangement for artistes to visit China. We also would have seen in the case of National Cultural Foundation and a number of artistes coordinating whether they were persons who were in the Fine Arts, painting, musicians and so on would have gone to a number of places including Brazil.

I recall being part of what we called political and commercial mission to Brazil, where in fact a number of artistes introduced in one case a steel pan and their vocal and artistic talents to a cross section of cities. I can tell you that coming out of those missions people are now actually being engaged in gainful performances earning themselves a living, and, of course, contributing to the earning of foreign exchange in this country.

In previous year, Madam President, we have included officials and artistes in political and commercial missions. Brazil as I would have stated. As recently as last year, we had one of our key diaspora events. This was an event called Barbados Comes Too, and in that case we had Barbados come to Atlanta. Previously we had Barbados comes to Charleston. We had Barbados -- the person was

Amelia Island. This way we will have Barbados comes to Tampa.

In Atlanta for example, Barbadian artistes, twenty some persons were sponsored and they were able to showcase their work. I am sure again, not only make themselves known to that city and persons in that city, but also to negotiate opportunities to earn some money.

Having spoken about culture, and I can go on and on, I want to say a little bit, Madam President, about Barbados' status. As I said, I am sharing my thoughts on where we are now. Barbados has been classified as a middle income highly indebted country. We are very well aware of that information. I would want to say on the positive side, as a highly indebted middle income country it is almost like a two-edged sword. On the positive side the middle income element of it, of course, reflects the great achievements that we have realized in the past 50 years. We have seen it come to fruition because of our heavy investment in education, health and social services. That again is reflected in the numbers in our Estimates this year.

It has found itself financing -- I mentioned deficit financing earlier. At the same time Government has played a major role in stimulating private sector development. I have touched on that both in relation to domestic or indigenous to the business community, as well as the international business sector.

Tourism, international business, manufacturing are all areas in which Government would have provided incentives, provided support whether it is marketing in tourism, provided facilities, putting in place the necessary legislative infrastructure. Therefore, it has helped us to develop, but it has come at a cost. We have engaged heavily in deficit financing, as I pointed out, and we have also engaged heavily as a country in what I would call consumption of imported goods and services, which require the utilization of foreign exchange. Therefore, as we have sought to bear the country, we have come to a point where, as I said, we certainly have started to address that issue and it is one in which people need to recognise that the situation which obtained before the debt, for some of the transfers and expenditure and support on Government, that now has to be revisited because (1) if we look at the individual citizen, a significant larger number of Barbadians are or should be in a position to do a lot more for themselves. In terms of the private sector, similarly the reliance on Government has to be revisited and the whole question of how we tap into the innovation, how do we address issues of productivity, et cetera, to ensure that we either are able to do one of a couple things, (1) that we are able to earn greater amounts of foreign exchange, or (2) we are able to save greater amounts of foreign exchange. Those are some of the tasks we have before us.

Madam, looking at all of those things I would say we have maintained our reputation as a society that places great store on law and order. That is something that is very important. I would argue that, yes, we have been subject to now and before the downgrade, as we like to speak about them, and they have implications for a number of things for Barbados. Those are clear.

However, I would want to emphasise that downgrades have happened before. The causes of the downgrades, one of them being the whole question of our physical deficit, our foreign exchange situation. Those things -- I have been around substantially longer than you have been and I have seen the impact of those, but I want to emphasise I believe we would have heard the Prime Minister, who heads this Government say, we are not going to find ourselves reacting to some of these initiatives and taking decisions in what is considered to be a panic manner, and that is important.

On that score I want to say something about how Barbados is seen beyond those immediate ratings. I want to start by how Barbados is seen by Barbadians away from home. As recently as this morning I had a conversation with our new Ambassador to Washington to the United States and to the OAS and those multilateral organization in Washington, Ambassador Selwyn Hart, a very bright young man whom I am a very proud to say I saw mature before my eyes. My first encounter with him would have been when he was a Foreign Service Officer at the Permanent Mission to the United Nations. Very quickly within a matter of about four years he was borrowed from us, and first came home to the Caribbean Development Bank to be one of their specialist looking at funding and climate change.

Sequence 6

Before he could complete that assignment, he was borrowed by the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, to be the leader of his advisory team on climate change and I can tell you that that was not by accident.

Madam President, since taking up his position I can tell you that Ambassador Harte has very quickly engaged his colleagues within the CARICOM Grouping, he has very quickly engaged persons at the State's Department and that is important because at the moment the United States of America is going through a transition in terms of its administration. I recall that on the day after the inauguration of the new President on 21st January I happened to have been in Washington for the premiering of a docudrama on the late Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow. The narrator in that docudrama was former Attorney-General, Eric Holder, whose father as we know was a Barbadian and whose mother was the child of

Barbadian parents. He happened to share the same birthday January 21 as the late Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow. He was very happy to have undertaken that and certainly to have been a narrator and as I later learned, he was the executive producer of that as well.

Madam President, the point I am making in relation to the image and work of Barbados was that on that Sunday morning after Ambassador Harte was able to arrange meetings with officials of the State Department and that was important because at the end of the day those are the persons with whom he has to engage. The fact that people on Sunday morning will make time to meet and to have serious discussions about how we will continue to build on what has been a longstanding relationship with one of our major neighbours was important.

Madam President, he has gone beyond that to engage on Barbados' behalf with the Organisation of American States, the Inter-American Development Bank, et cetera, and is now being invited to do a number of things. Madam President, what I want to report on in relation to how Barbados is seen is that in the conversation I have to make mention of a report that he has to send to me which has to deal with a town hall meeting that he had with Barbadians in Washington D.C. and the surrounding areas where people tend to be serviced from D.C. Ma'am, his point was that Barbadians were overwhelmingly strong in their support of this country and have indicated that they will do what they must.

Madam President, I say that against the background of what is an ongoing exercise by this Administration and that is to involve the Diaspora of Barbados. Madam President, I recall, if I could illustrate its importance and its commitment, that some people were trying to minimise these significance of the occasion of our 50th Independence Celebrations, but I can tell you that if you look at the numbers between the last two weeks or so of the celebrations, the number of Barbadians who came home were significant.

Mr. Chairman, I participated in a family dinner where they actually bought out about three-quarters of a popular restaurant in Barbados where there were over 50 people having dinner. For the most part, most of them were here for at least two weeks and because almost the entire family is resident outside of Barbados they were staying in hotels, going on tours, taking their children and grandchildren to see parts of Barbados that some of them did not know or where their relatives did not go.

Madam President, the point I am making is that when we talk about Barbados is seen outside of Barbados, we do not only focus on how Barbados is seen by other countries or by multilateral agencies, i.e. the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, United Nations Agencies,

World Trade Organisation and others, we also want and can share... I certainly can share from the perspectives of Barbadians abroad and so that kind of exercise that he would have reported on is something that has been replicated in London, the United States of America and Canada, among other cities.

Madam President, unlike some of the concerns that are expressed here by some vocal Barbadians - I do not know if we can say the majority of Barbadians - that they have concerns and we certainly as a Government continue to work against the background of those concerns, but there are Barbadians who are fully committed to this country. Madam President, I would want to say that I would also use the example of the descendants of Barbadians. I will share, for example, how Barbadians in Panama and in looking to see how the Government of Panama sees this country and what are the financial and economic implications for Barbados. Ma'am, first of all, if I use the example of the Independence Celebrations again, we had a contingent of over 40 Panamanians coming home for the Independence Celebrations. They were here for about two weeks. The beautiful thing about was that there were about maybe two to three generations of persons, so it was not just older Panamanians who still reminisced about what their grandparents or their parents might have told them, but these are the children and children's children of surviving descendants of Barbados.

Madam President, in respect of the Government of Panama -- and I look at this on how we build on our bilateral relations - the Right Honourable Prime Minister of Barbados would have had the opportunity to facilitate a formal visit of the President of Panama to Barbados. Before that the Honourable Member would have visited Panama and would have been invited back when they were opening the new extension of the canal. Ma'am, in that first visit to Panama the President pointed out that there is an initiative in Panama to ensure that the average Panamanian can do what many of the descendants of Barbadians could do, that is, they are bilingual. He indicated to the Right Honourable Prime Minister that for many years they have been following a programme where some people went to the United Kingdom, the United States of America, et cetera, to learn English. Ma'am, within months of negotiating an arrangement with the University of the West Indies we had a cohort of Panamanian teachers of English coming to Barbados.

Madam President, I say that to emphasise that that is part of an ongoing programme. Prior to coming into office the University of the West Indies, I understand, would have been delivering training in English as a second language to executives, many of those executives of Petrobras in Venezuela. We have been negotiating this but we were able to use the opportunity also to bring to Barbados and to agree to assist two other CARICOM countries who were

participating in a programme with Ecuador. Madam President, to use a Bajan expression, the long and short of it is that the Government, more specifically the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, through its bilateral discussions and engagements, have been able to create what I believe should be, and certainly we will do all that we can to ensure that it continues to be, to develop a profit centre for the Cave Hill Campus of the University of the West Indies where they can do like what has happened at the Barbados Community College, that is to deliver English as a second language to various kinds of people.

Madam President, how we are seen will also be important in terms of our ability to speak other languages as English-speaking people. I can report that in our negotiations we have been discussing with countries like Columbia, Mexico, Panama, et cetera, opportunities for them to assist us in training our young people in a second language. I know that for many years the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and Innovation has been running programmes in our primary schools but we have seen that it needs to be institutionalised and supported.

No.D6(A) (7)12.28 p.m.

In a sense, part of what we are doing is obtaining opportunities of bilateral cooperation where in fact the cost to Barbados would not be the same because of the technical cooperation agreements which we have with our neighbours. Madam President, those are some examples. I want to cite two other examples about how we are seen, and then I will go on to talk a bit more about the Government's agenda, given its vision and so on in terms of why we have the composition and the focus of the numbers, because I do not plan to be saying we have allocated X million and so on to those. We all have the information and we need to understand why and to what effect, and how we go forward.

Madam President, I want to give a short quotation from ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), which is one of the UN agencies in the region which focuses a lot on the economic analysis of the region and its performance. I would also want to acknowledge the executive secretary of the agency, Alicia Barcena, who has been a champion of the cause of the CARICOM countries and other countries in Latin America when we speak about the issue of middle-income, high-indebted status and the lobbying to address that issue in a way that understands as well that we are not only successful in what we have done so far, but that we are also highly vulnerable. This is what ECLAC had to say in terms of how Barbados and indeed some of our Caribbean neighbours are seen. I quote:

“Given the recent negative growth, the Government adopted a new growth and development strategy in order to stimulate a sustained economic recovery. Short-to-medium-term challenges will continue to be the high fiscal deficit and a large public debt. The country, however, showed maturity as it begins the economic adjustment with all social partners fully committing to the process.” It goes on to make projections about growth in the years to come, and this would have been cited in 2014.

In essence, Madam President, multilateral institutions with which Barbados has to interface recognise the challenges that we face. In addition to that, if we look at the Human Development Report, it would also demonstrate the outcomes. I am not going to cite a long statement from that Report because I believe we receive the Reports and anyone who looks at it will see that we in fact have been doing very well, according to those Reports. One of the things I would want to say quickly, though, is that the efforts of agencies like ECLAC and its head of agency, Ms. Barcena, are seen playing out in this Report, where finally those international agencies are recognising that when they seek to classify Barbados and graduate it away from any concessionary support, almost in effect penalising us for our successes to date, they are now saying that in looking at how we classify countries as middle-income or otherwise, they have to bear in mind the need to look at multiple indicators or indices rather than simply looking at GDP per capita, for example.

Madam President, if I could move on to say a little bit about the Government’s agenda without going into any significant detail in areas that I anticipate will be covered by my colleagues and therefore not wanting to be repetitious, I would want to very quickly say that this Government, as it pursues its day-to-day operations and as the Ministries under the several Ministers and Cabinet colleagues of mine engage, we are doing so against the background of a vision of Barbados that is in pursuit of Green Economy status. At the end of the day, it is important to recognise that if we are to sustain our growth and protect our environment which is very critical to us as part of not only a national agenda but a global agenda, we have to do so using a certain kind of approach. With a Green Economy, of course, we are looking at the whole question of sustainable production, sustainable consumption, the utilisation and reliance on renewable energy, et cetera. With that vision of the pursuit of a Green Economy, it is felt that we need therefore to revisit. A clear example would be the whole question of dependence on fossil fuels. Not only does it have an impact on the society, but it demands foreign exchange. I also want to emphasise as part of that vision that we have a vision of a Barbados that is built on a number of fundamental pillars, and one of those deals with the whole question of being socially balanced. At the end of the day, if we focus on things economic only and we fail to appreciate the importance of

social balance, as I mentioned before, we can do significant damage to the social fabric of this country.

We also talk about being economically viable, and if it is to be economically viable, it requires much more than Government’s efforts, Madam President. It requires the inputs. Of course, Government will act to facilitate, but I will in a little while speak about some recommendations that I have in terms of moving beyond what Government does to ensure that when we talk about economic viability, we do so in a manner that is inclusive of the wider population. We talk about being environmentally sound, and that is where the notion of a Green Economy comes in. That is critical.

Of course, Madam President, at the end of the day I mentioned earlier that we in Barbados are operating in a situation where we have abided for many years -- this is something that characterises this country and I trust it will continue to do so -- as people who believe in the rule of law and subscribe to good governance, and therefore that is another fundamental pillar which holds up that vision of which we speak. As such, Madam President, that will identify for us the kinds of priorities that we have to look at. I have said before, and you can see, that by our areas of focus and our priorities in terms of expenditure and within any particular Ministry or Head, we can also see how resources are allocated that people must be at the centre of these things. Madam President, being at the centre now does not state that we can continue to offer everything to everybody at no direct cost to themselves. Therefore, for example, it is clear that while the health of our nation continues to be absolutely critical, the Ministry of Health and its allocations across the hospital and polyclinics and so on will reflect the need to rethink what will be the financing of healthcare going forward, Madam President. That is something I am sure many people have heard being touched on by the Minister of Health on multiple occasions. We will have to revisit the kinds of expenditures that we are predicting in order to ensure that at the end of the day we can offer across all sectors the kinds of benefits that are required.

Madam President, in addition to that I would want to suggest that I think that as we look at commerce -- I have looked at health and education -- beyond the business of protecting and facilitating the existing business sectors, I want, before I spend a little time to talk about my Ministry, to put some suggestions on the table. Madam President, I mentioned that I spent many years in the credit union movement, and it amazes me sometimes the kinds of things that people want us to do with the limited resources in the credit union movement. It therefore sent me to read a document which I recommend for reading by all, Madam President. It is the very recent Report from the Central Bank of Barbados; the Financial Stability Report 2016. One of the things which we will have to look at as we talk

about growing this country and earning our way out of the high level of indebtedness, is the structure of the financial system, the composition of that and the use of the resources in the financial system.

12.34 p.m.

I have heard some ludicrous ideas, in fact, a friend of mine when I mentioned it said, you know you should not even give credence to that by mentioning it but I will mention it for the sheer ridiculousness of it. I heard a certain former politician suggest that the Credit Union should buy Kensington Oval. That is the biggest piece of nonsense that I have heard in a long time and if that were the case I would go to the City of Bridgetown Credit Union(COBCU) and tell them give me all of my money because that would be madness.

Madam President, I would just quote from this report before I make my suggestions about how the credit union movement can help us to address these issues. At page 2 of the Financial Stability Report 2016 of the Central Bank of Barbados and as you would recall, Madam President, this report is one which is produced by and the Preface of it says, it is the oversight of the financial system shared between the Central Bank of Barbados and the Financial Services Commission and the Barbados Deposit Insurance Corporation and they have a financial oversight management committee which produces this excellent report. I site it because I want people to understand where the money is and where we have to get it if we are to help Government roll out and improve on some of the initiatives.

At Table 1 of this, Madam President, the Table is entitled "Structure of Financial Service Sector to GDP" and it gives you assets as at September, this would have been last year. Commercial banks, well they are two and I will give you both and then I can probably express it as a percentage of GDP in each year. In 2015, commercial banks held \$12 733 million or what was equivalent to 145 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product of Barbados. In 2016, commercial banks held \$13 220 million or 146 per cent of the GDP. Credit unions, Madam President, in 2015 in total and if my memory serves me correct there are about 30 something credit unions affiliated to the Barbados Cooperative Credit Union League, about 35 or so, but the movement holds - and there are a couple that are not, so we probably have at most about 40 credit unions -- accounted for \$1 850 million in 2015 or 21 per cent of GDP and in 2016 \$1 999 million or 22 per cent so it stayed roughly the same thing. I am making that point that while that is the case, credit unions also represent about a number larger than the workforce. I think the workforce is just about 145 000 to 150 000 people and credit unions represent probably about 160 000 members and that probably includes the young people who are not employed and so on, however, I

want to say very quickly that unlike the commercial banking sector where there is high liquidity in the banking sector a high percentage of the funds deposited in the credit unions are un-lent so the credit unions are financing the borrowing needs of their members so you save and you borrow. I also want to say that because of the structure of the system, credit unions cannot now issue credit cards or checking accounts therefore members are forced to put their moneys in greater percentages in commercial banks than they probably want to and I speak for myself, but the reduction in interest rates, et cetera, I think a lot of people have seen that they can gain more on their savings. The point I am making, Madam President, is that I want to link what is happening at the level of the Ministry of Commerce and international business, small business development and so on with what I see to be opportunities for that Ministry to partner with the credit union movement in trying to find ways to encourage the credit union members - and I draw a distinction between the institution and the members -- to facilitate some means of investing. I can either be the identifying of special areas in which attention can be paid for business start-ups and so on. I also see an opportunity, Madam President, in the area of housing because if we have a membership base and we can look at the situation of the National Housing Corporation, for example, recently the Minister of Housing has been indicating that they have been able to meet some of their expenses based on some of their policies but I would want to suggest that a policy that we should explore is the making available of land for sale to the members of the credit union where they can get their mortgages finances by the very credit unions of which they are members and that they can then work with small contractors, obviously reputable ones, but that is between the person and the contractors but look at ways in which they can facilitate the construction of homes for members of the credit union using the resources of the credit union because at the end of the day if that happens you may very well find that the small contractors are members of the credit unions, the members themselves are borrowing their savings and they are the ones who would earn dividends on their savings and who, if we follow the principles of the cooperative movement, will be able to get attractive rates of interest on their loans. In essence, what I am saying without having to go, I do not have the time to go into the kinds of details, there are two things 1) those who eye the resources of the credit union and do not understand anything about it in terms of its loans portfolio, loans for savings or do not understand the true size of the credit union and what the membership profiles are, my recommendation is that any consideration should be engagement in activities to support the needs of the movement and to do so in a way which does not necessarily call on the institutions themselves to take up the money to invest in anything that is risky or totally outlandish or ridiculous but to use their size and their membership base and their needs to meet the, in fact, as I am speaking, I know that the Barbados Workers' Union,

and I hope Senator Trotman does not, Madam President, chide me for involving the union but I believe that the union, which has property, can actually work with its credit union and some others in a way to do that because we are talking about the same workers who are the members of the credit union. I believe that, as I always said when I was a volunteer active in the movement, we have done very well at what I describe as stage 1, we need to move to stages 2 and 3 which allow us to empower ourselves because we have the wherewithal and I anticipate that Government through its division of cooperatives can find some space to engage. They call me the lobbyist of credit unions, if they want to engage me as an intermediary I am willing to sit down and talk about these things because it is something for which, I think, there is potential. I can apply in housing, it can apply in agriculture and I think that is important.

Madam President, I believe that based on what you said I may have about 20 minutes so I am duty bound if I want to go back to my office ...

Asides.

Senator M. P. O. MCCLEAN: Okay. Madam President, has suggested but if ... Am I hearing half an hour, Madam President?

MADAM PRESIDENT: That is what I said.

Senator M. P. O. MCCLEAN: Okay, so time has not stopped.

MADAM PRESIDENT: No.

Senator M. P. O. MCCLEAN: I want quickly, Madam President, to speak to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade because I believe that at the end of the day there are ...

Asides.

Senator M. P. O. MCCLEAN: Yes, I should really ignore.

I want to reiterate and first of all, to express a sincere thanks to the staff and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade.

Senate D 6A Seq 9 11.44 p.m.

Within the scheme of things we are a small ministry when we look at the budget but we have significant reach and we have had over the last several years since I have been at the Ministry to operate with leaner and leaner budgets. We also are a small staff. We have 13 missions around the world but I believe that we have been able to do significant things in those. Our Mission in China, for

example, has been able to work very closely with the Chinese Government to facilitate educators, our private sector to grow...

Thank you very, much Madam President, I am happy to see that it not 13 minutes but more like 30-plus minutes so I accept that.

In terms of the Ministry, as I said, we operate with a small staff. We have been working very closely to support the work of our ministries.

Madam President, I want to take a moment to explain what is the purpose of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade because I listen to the radio a lot. I work with a radio on and I drive with a radio on accept now I tend to listen because the one thing I have given up for Lent is what the Bajans would call Banjo in the old days. I listen to the kind of music I used to hear as a child for 40 days. You probably may not remember that, Madam President, because you may be too young. Madam President, I listen to the radio and I often hear people suggest, that is persons from a certain group of media persons, that they do not hear anything from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, but I would want to say that the work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade is carried out on behalf of and with our functional ministries, therefore for example, when we heard of a \$10 million donation of equipment to the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation by the Government of the People's Republic of China that came through negotiations on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation and the children of Barbados. Madam President, four trips to China might have been made by personnel from the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade.

Asides.

Senator the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN: That is right but sometimes I cannot help but then again it does not do me any good, it is Lent. They say in Lent that the devil is out.

Madam President, the key point I am making is that at the end of the day our role is to facilitate and therefore that is what we have been able to do and continue to do.

Madam President, I want also to recognise the very small staff we have in Geneva. The Minister of Health has often asked me to convey his thanks and I believe my distinguished colleague to my right also experiences the support when the meetings of the International Labour Organisation takes place, the kind of coverage that we have to engage in. Madam President, if I could identify the broad

categories of involvement or the broad goals which inform what we do at the Ministry, there is what I would describe as our over-arching strategic motivation for our foreign policy which is to protect and promote the national interest of Barbados. How do we do that? We protect, of course, the security of Barbados and its people. Madam President, I spoke of the contribution of the People's Republic of China to the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation but they have similarly made a contribution to the Barbados Defence Force worth millions of dollars in terms of equipment and so on, and that of course goes towards the protection of Barbadians.

Madam President, if we look at the Estimates we would see some allocations to the Regional Security System but many Barbadians do not know that Barbados has in fact been propping up the Regional Security System in terms of financing. We talk about transfers and so on, and I am happy to say that notwithstanding our challenges Barbados has been doing what it is supposed to do in relation to the region. I recently had reason to look at some of the arrears owed to the CARICOM Secretariat and I can tell you that Barbados, notwithstanding any challenges it had, has been paying its dues. There are some member states of CARICOM, and I would not call any names, that have probably not paid anything close to the full amount for several years, and they may in fact in absolute numbers be a couple years behind. Barbados does not operate like that and therefore we are out there representing Barbados and Barbados' interest, but as I said while we meet our financial obligations we have also taken advantage of our bilateral and multilateral arrangements. I speak of the Regional Security System because at this point in time with all that we see happening around us globally we in the region and Barbados in particular are able to say that we still are part of a zone of peace in this hemisphere, we cannot say that for some other parts of the world, and that is made possible because we are able to afford, as I said, all that it takes to protect our borders. We have been able to work very closely with the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada and France in terms of securing resources, technical support, training, et cetera. Beyond protecting the security of Barbados, that is part of what we do to advance the economic well-being of Barbados and its people because if we become an area that is plagued by violence... I know that many of us continue to be concerned about the frequency which we hear of persons losing their lives with the use of small arms and light weapons and so on and people shooting and killing numbers of persons. As far as the average Barbadian and all of us are concerned too much of that is taking place, but imagine what would happen if we were not involved in the collaborative arrangements with those countries I mentioned working specifically with the Royal Barbados Police Force, the Barbados Defence Force, the Regional Security System and other impacts and other agencies intending on securing our borders because if our tourists feel insecure we know what

would happen and so that is very important, and so in doing so we are also protecting the economic well-being of Barbadians.

Madam President, one of the areas that is critical to the international business and financial services sector is the whole question of our tax treaty arrangements where we negotiate what we call Double Taxation Agreements and Information Exchange Arrangements with a number of countries. It is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade personnel who do what I would call the initial negotiating and sensitisation when we meet with delegations, whether in the corridors or as we would say in the margins, to use the diplomatic jargon, in the World Trade Organisation or in the UN General Assembly or in the Organisation of American States or the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) meetings as we would have done in Cuba a week ago in which we constantly engage countries in terms of negotiating them and so on.

I recently would have met with the German Ambassador to Barbados who was here as part of their celebrations this month of 50 years of diplomatic relations with Barbados, and we again were looking at those issues. We asked them in many cases where we do not sit, for example, in the G20... That group of developed nations would have met very recently and it is through our relations with countries that are members of those bodies, G7, G20 or whatever, that we have asked and do receive support on issues of a blacklisting, for example, the issue of de-risking where our correspondent banks are saying that our transactions are probably too small given the rules that they have to abide by and to which they have to apply and so some people are saying they are not sure they want to do business with us.

Senate D6A Sequence 10

Madam President, again the message that we constantly send to every country with whom we meet is that if that is allowed to carry, the kinds of things that they want to protect, that is to protect themselves for illegal activities, is opening up countries like Barbados to that. Madam President, let me explain, the issue of correspondent banking, if we cannot get those services it will mean that when a businessman from Barbados wants to pay a supplier or want to receive payment for goods exported and cannot get that transaction facilitated by a bank in another jurisdiction, then we would have a problem, in essence, business would come to a halt, or we would see what is happening in some other area of the region where people move money from one jurisdiction to another. Ma'am, that is fraught with danger because if we are talking about money laundering the fastest way to do that is to use cash and so when cash starts to move you do not know if it clean cash, if it has been laundered, if it is still dirty and whatever the case may be.

Ma'am, the point I am making is that the rules makes sense in the absence of an appreciation of the impact that it might have on small jurisdictions like us and the impact it will have on people who want to engage in illegal activities. Madam President, those are the kinds of things if we are talking about advancing the wellbeing of Barbados and its people. Madam President, we are also charged with maintaining and elevating the image of Barbados in the international arena and we do so by the positions we hold on issues.

Madam President, if I can take us back to the Inaugural Speech of our first Prime Minister, many of us are able to cite some words from that speech when he talked about being friends of all but satellites of none. He also in that speech spoke to the relationship between our domestic policy and our foreign policies and for those who never had a chance to read it, I will suggest it is a good speech to read and appreciate. It speaks to the enduring nature of our foreign policy and is part of the continuity of which I spoke earlier and so we are able to operate in various arenas. Ma'am, for example, at the United Nations I made reference to the contribution of one of our staff members but if you go around the world you will find the same thing. In many instances our officers are taken up or are offered positions...

Madam President, I tell persons who are offered positions that I have no difficulty with that, except that it is hard to replace some people, given their contributions or that it takes time to replace those persons. It also puts for us friends in high places and I will give an example, the positive and negative aspects of it, with the negative relating to what I call the double standard. Madam President, one of our officers a couple of years ago who was posted in Geneva was invited to join the International Trade Center in Geneva. In undertaking the work we would have had the Executive Director coming to Barbados and sharing her thoughts on the success of Barbados, et cetera and opted to write an article setting out the positives from the perspective of Barbados. Ma'am, low and behold, I got an email from the former Foreign Service Officer who is now the Executive Assistant or Personal Advisor to the Head of the agency, to say that he had been writing one of the newspapers because he felt that it had the biggest circulation but that he was having major difficulty in getting them to carry the article. Ma'am, I will be very frank with you in terms of my response. I wrote him back and gave him the telephone number of the other newspaper but said that I doubted very much that the other newspaper would carry it because it was a positive story. Madam President, so said so done, it was not carried by that newspaper but of course they are some of the same people who would say that they do not hear from us.

Madam President, I would have thought that an international agency, one of our multilateral partners

writing a very positive story about Barbados from the perspective of trade, development and business would have made for good reading and certainly positive reinforcement for those persons across both the public and private sector who would have contributed to the shaping of that image, but it was not the kind of story. I supposed were it a story suggesting something negative that it might have gone but luckily the other newspaper had the commonsense to carry the story. Ma'am, the young man had complained that that story was a bit too far inside the newspaper rather than being in a more visible place but as I said to him, if one reads the paper one would find the story but in the other newspaper you would not have found it because it was not there.

Madam President, the key point I am making is that Barbadians in their capacities as officials posted overseas but also very importantly Barbadians sent to represent Barbados and negotiate on Barbados' behalf have been identified, since I have been in this position, as being extremely successful at representing this country, particularly when sometimes you note that we may have a delegation of two or three people negotiating with a team of 20 or so persons on behalf of another large country. This I have seen at the World Trade Organisation and they will try to wear you down because as you know, they can change their personnel and so on but that you alone may be sitting in a meeting from 9.00 a.m., as has happened on more than one occasion, for example, negotiations regarding climate change. In fact, I am now in the process of discussing what is expected to be some major negotiations in the making around the issue of oceans.

Madam President, I will say that in the same way that climate change was a major issue, that one aspect of that environmental concern is the question of oceans and Barbados, for example... Ma'am, some of my friends on the other side might suggest that somebody went on a trip and yes, you can become jet-lagged on return because having sat in a meeting from 9.00 a.m. to 1.00 a.m. in some instances, then to catch a plane to return home, especially where there is a significant time difference, you do find yourself jet-lagged, but that does not stop you, you have to get to work as soon as you return home.

Madam President, I believe that at least one member on the other side should have had a bit of that, if the Honourable Member used to go to meetings and stayed there, rather than leaving his officials to take care of those meetings, but I do not expect that that would be answered to me, but that can be answered at an appropriate time but I know the answer. Madam President, the point I am making is that our image abroad is shaped by our representatives usually where the Ministry is required to head or to facilitate delegations to prepare briefs, to advise on how best to represent Barbados, so I think that at the end of the day what we are required to do is to contribute in a

significant way to the national development agenda and I would want to say that as we pursue that national development agenda, summarised as the making of a green economy which allows us to build an economy which has a sustainable economic base and a sustainable set of social pillars and values, et cetera. Ma'am, we are doing that against the background of our participation as a member of the family of nations.

Madam President, I would also want to stress that we have talked about that whole question of a green economy and all of these things even before the world agreed on what they now call the 2030 agenda, that is, that there are 17 sustainable goals that the world is seeking to accomplish in order to ensure that citizens around the world are able to attain a certain level of living. Therefore I would want to suggest that if we either visit or revisit with an objective eye the document which captures the elements of our vision, the document that captures the several strategies that we are going to pursue, we will see that Barbados has been ahead of some of these objectives.

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Madam President, I will also say, because you have to give credit where it is due, that this is something which has been longstanding when you speak about the reputation and so on that Barbados has; the notion of continuity to which I spoke before. Madam President, I believe that if we revisit the Throne Speech, if we look at the two Manifestos of this Administration, 2008 and 2013, and if we look at the growth and development strategy document, we will see that at the end of the day it explains why in the face of limited resources and challenges we are able to still focus on providing resources for tourism, education and health in a way that constitutes the continued emphasis or priority being placed on those sectors. It also shows that we are seeking, within the parameters that we have, to transform the economy, extend or diversify that economy, and ensure that we take advantage of something that does not go away; that is the sun as well as other forms of renewable energy which we are capitalising on. In order to make that work, we have engaged in a programme of legislation, technical support, financial incentives, et cetera, much of which we will hear from those on whose shoulders that responsibility falls. We have done so recognising that as the world has evolved, we have to pay attention to human resource development.

My colleague, Senator Byer Suckoo, has been very much involved in working to help transform the skillsets of Barbadians in a way that would ensure that, with the new technologies unfolding and the new areas of opportunity, Barbadians are retooling and reskilling. We have ensured that not only do we provide support, social services and welfare grants, et cetera, but we know that the Ministry of Social Care has used a model developed and used in Chile

to address the whole question of inter-generational poverty, where we do not only provide individual support but we also provide support to the families to ensure that they are in a position to find jobs and create opportunities to be better educated, thus taking themselves out of poverty. Madam President, I believe that what I have attempted to do in this is not to sit and pull numbers out.

MADAM PRESIDENT: The Honourable Member has 15 minutes.

Senator Hon. Ms. M.P.O. McCLEAN: If people want me to do that, I can certainly do that but what I have attempted to do, Madam President, is to explain that as we go from year to year and as we face the challenge of high levels of indebtedness, we have to recognise that there is a reason why we are where we are at this point in time. It is not a simple reason of not wanting to pursue certain courses of action; it is about a balancing of contending challenges, issues and needs which have to be accommodated. It is about understanding that if we are to move without appreciating the need to maintain the social safety net of the country, we will find ourselves wanting. As such, we have been able to ride out the storm of the early crisis starting in 2008, and we have brought some stability. It has come at a cost. If Government were not to engage in transfers, if Government were to cut salaries and wages by cutting numbers of staff at a level that was beyond our capacity to absorb with minimal disruption, we would have in fact been creating another problem. Madam President, I think that we will hear more.

I know that a number of persons have expressed concern about the need to address the levels of foreign reserves, but I want to say that in the process of doing that, if we do not address the fundamental problems that give rise to what I call the symptom -- the foreign reserves level being the symptom -- then we have difficulties. Madam President, in addressing it, however, what we need to recognise is that there has to be that judicious balance of factors that I mentioned, and it is those things that we seek to address.

Madam President, the other issue that I would want very much to touch on is the need for the citizens of Barbados to look at themselves. How do I individually contribute to some of the solutions, whether it is about the question of productivity or the question of consumption and so on in terms of the lifestyles that we want to have? I want perhaps to move away from the citizen now to touch a group of businesses that typically use foreign exchange, and my question to those business owners is: Have you in the process of business over the years, where you have earned profit, ever thought that perhaps you need -- I do not know because I have not done the study but I think it is a question -- to either invest in new, innovative sectors, either directly or as angel investors? Have you seriously

thought about how in the course of your business you can reduce your demand for foreign exchange in a way that allows us to basically ensure that we all make our contributions to protecting the situation facing this country; whether it is about employment and therefore investing in opportunities for young people? I know some people will say, "I have made my money and I am not risking any of it." Nobody is asking that you put your businesses at peril, but at the end of the day if I am able to invest in a young entrepreneur -- I have done this on multiple occasions so I am not speaking from a theoretical perspective, I have done it for a long time and those people for whom I would have done it would know that -- you are in effect creating the opportunity for greater business for yourself. The persons who start up the business and who, in turn, will employ persons, then create a greater consumer base for you.

Madam President, I have attempted to assess what it is that allows us to be where we are in terms of these Estimates. I have done so against the backdrop of the national situation where we in Barbados are at a juncture where we have to build on what has made us strong, but we now are at a point where a lot of the fundamentals must shift to a serious restructuring of our economy. While solutions such as the sale of assets are possible, I believe we will have to have a very serious analysis. I feel very strongly that there are some things which constitute public goods. I also consider that some things which are profit-making but are seriously critical to the economy should stay that way. Therefore, we need to look at that. I also believe that there are some public goods that will be subsidised, and I use the example of public transportation. If Government were to charge what I would call market rates, the first thing that any worker would have to do is ask for a salary increase across-the-board, private and public sector, or if they are working for a non-governmental organisation. In essence, when the Government subsidises transport, it is in effect making a contribution not only to the consumer and the travelling public, but it is making a contribution to the employer who otherwise would be faced with a demand for higher salaries. Those are the kinds of things we need to look at, so when you look at the Estimates and you ask yourself, "Why so much?" it is because certain transfers are important and necessary. "Why so little?" Because we have to make the necessary shifts.

1.13 p.m.

What I would also say is the process of rationalising and restructuring of the statutory corporations is one that is ongoing and is essential because at the end of the day, as the old people would say, "Too far East is West". They might have been created with certain ideas in mind but some of them are like runaway trains and as has been pointed out, I am sure on multiple occasions by the Minister of Finance those things are being examined and

changes made and ultimately that is what it is about but I will end by saying, Madam President, that when we analyse the numbers, it is about a judicious mix of policies and programmes and a philosophy that is people driven but at the same time an appreciation that hard decisions have to be taken but those harsh decisions have to be tempered by the reality of the needs of the people of this country, especially our most vulnerable.

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

SUSPENSION

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

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

Senate D 6A Seq 13 1.16 p.m.

RESUMPTION

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

ORDER No. 2 (RESUMED)

Senator Dr. J. X. WALCOTT: Thank you, Madam President. As I rise to speak this evening in this important debate on the Appropriation Bill, 2017, it is with a sense of trepidation as I reflect on my country and the present state of affairs after nine years of Democratic Labour Party management or mismanagement, some would say, which has brought us seemingly to the edge of the precipice of economic collapse. I say quo vadis Barbados.

Throughout this country, Madam President, there is a feeling of despair and despondency that transcends the entire country among Barbadians. Barbadians from all walks of life, the rich, the not so rich, the poor, the young and the old of all ethnic groups, are very concerned as to what is happening in this country at this point in time. Daily in my office and in the supermarket, I believe other Honourable Senators would attest to this, persons approach you asking will I lose my job; will there be more taxes you believe; do you believe that we would have to pay for healthcare at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in the future; how will I look after my family; some of them ask how would they pay their bank loans; how would they pay for the loans for their vehicles; will they lose their houses if they are unable to pay mortgages; will our dollar be devalued; will this Government go to the International

Monetary Fund; what will I do if that happens and how will I manage; and I wonder again to myself and I say quo vadis Barbados.

Madam President, what makes it more difficult to bear as I look at these Estimates is that it comes from a Government that promised that they would not lie, cheat or steal and that promised good governance and transparency, yet integrity legislation which was passed in 2012 has not yet been gazetted and is yet to see the light of day. This is a Government that said that the economy was stable and ready to take off in January 2013, really, and we are in this position now. We were told back in January 2013 that the dollar was safe, that our foreign reserves were adequate and had been secured, that the economy had turned the corner and that we were stable and ready to take off, so what are we hearing now.

This is also a Government that promised that jobs would be secure but sent home thousands of Barbadians some of whom are yet to get the severance payments and entitlements that are due to them. This is a Government that promised that University of the West Indies students would not have to pay fees. The Prime Minister said at the Barbados Community College not in his time. This is a Government that ensured that University of the West Indies had to pay fees and as a result thousands could no longer attend the University of the West Indies.

Indeed, Madam President, this is a Government that promised pathways to progress and in 2013 continuing on the pathways to progress and ironically in that Manifesto spoke about the Democratic Labour Party will create an economically viable Barbados. Really?

Today, this same Government promises Barbadians that the dollar will not be devalued and that we would not go to the International Monetary Fund but Barbadians are nervous because they do not trust the Prime Minister or the Government. Can a Government that has broken all of these promises be trusted or indeed believed in any of these matters, I think the answer is clear.

This is the problem. There is a lack of trust in the Prime Minister of Barbados and indeed the Government. Our people feel betrayed, deceived and disillusioned in the 50th year of independence. I remember that because I see Senator Hunte wearing his 50 years emblem.

Madam President, what do we get today? People are concerned about conditions in Barbados, but what do we get from the Leader of Government Business in this Honourable Chamber, that this is her 10th Estimates, we got a definition of the Estimates, we got a history of 2008 when she became Minister, we heard about shortages of flowers for a flower show, we heard about the Boards that the Honourable Member had the pleasure to sit on, we

heard that she was with the credit union for 25 years and it was voluntary yet we have all of these issues going on in Barbados and concerns about the economy about to collapse.

The Honourable Senator also told us about persons on the radio using bad grammar. She told us what is the difference between an entrepreneur and a small businessman. She fleetingly mentioned the need for restructuring of the public service and then she treated us to the delights of a steel pan exchange with Atlanta, and we are concerned, Madam President, about serious issues in terms of the Appropriation Bill.

Madam President, then we heard about Government would not taking decisions in panic. We heard about the wonderful young man, Ambassador Harte and his career and how well he has done. Then we were told that she actually went to the showing in Washington of a docudrama about Errol Barrow which was narrated by one Eric Holder whose birthday was the same date as the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow. Persons are concerned about feeding their families and she went on to tell us that she had the honour and the pleasure of dining with a family of 56 in November at a very popular restaurant, and we are speaking about the Appropriation Bill, the most significant matter that is dealt with in this Honourable Chamber in any year.

If you thought that was enough, Madam President, she told us that 40 Panamanians came for independence and that Ms. Bárcena from ECLAC, the Economic Commission of Latin America and the Caribbean, was told by her about the graduation of Barbados to middle income level status. We had an overview of the credit union movement in this country, its history, the role that the Honourable Senator played in its development and that she is called a lobbyist for the credit union. Can you imagine that, Madam President, and we are concerned about an economy about to collapse. Then she told us that she likes to listen to Banjo music and that the younger Honourable Senators would not know about that and that climate change negotiations can go on until 1 o'clock in the morning and about how many times she has travelled to China.

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Madam President, it was rambling, it was monotonous, it was repetitive, it was boring, it was useless and it never collided with the matter that is being discussed in this Honourable Chamber today. Madam President, after two hours we heard the same old story line: what happened in 2008, Government doing well, they have stimulated the private sector and that they have given tourism incentives. Ma'am, there was nothing specifically to effectively deal with the critical issues facing this country and the people of

Barbados. Madam President, after two hours the stark reality is that nothing has really changed for the people of Barbados after 42 months of austerity.

Madam President, I am tired speaking in this Honourable Chamber about this trilogy of failures. Madam President, first it was the Medium-Term Fiscal Strategy which was not working. There was then the Revised Medium-Term Fiscal Strategy and now the Medium-Term Growth and Development Strategy, in all of these targets were set and were missed continually or consecutively. They were spoken of in glowing terms by Honourable Members in this Honourable Senate and indeed in the Manifestos of the Democratic Labour Party. It was said that these were to do so much, that it was a homegrown plan to transform the economy and to bring stability to our economic chaos. Ma'am, they were just hogwash. Has anything changed for the thousands of Barbadians who are struggling daily to meet their basic needs? Has anything changed for the thousands of public servants who have in effect seen their take-home pay effectively decreased by 11 per cent of over the past eight years? Has anything really changed for the thousands who are struggling to pay their mortgages monthly? Has anything changed for the thousands who are struggling to pay rent? Has anything really changed for the thousands who are struggling to feed their families daily and indeed for the thousands who have to struggle to pay their tuition fees which were inflicted on them by this caring and compassionate Government? Madam President, in the middle class areas in Barbados there are persons struggling, they cannot pay their water bills and electricity in their homes are being disconnected. This is the story of Barbados in 2017, yet the Honourable Leader sits down and gloats as though the Honourable Member has just achieved some important millennium goal.

Madam President, let us get to the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure and an overview of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure as this is what this process is all about. Madam President, when we look at Table 2 of the Revised Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure we note that the Government had said that the Actual Current Revenue, April 2016 to January 2017 is \$2 087 005 million. The Projected Current Revenue for February is \$284 million and for March 2017 it is anticipated that it will be \$435.4 million. In other words, in 10 months

\$2 087 005 million were collected on average of \$200 million per month but 25 per cent of the total

\$2 806 009 million is expected to be collected in two months. I do not know how it will occur but I am just noting it.

Mr. Chairman, in terms of Projected Total Current and Capital Expenditure for April 2016 to January 2017 is

\$4 240 072 million. We have no issues with that. We are told that the overall fiscal balance as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product will be -5.1 per cent.

Madam President, in Table 4 I believe there is a typographical error in terms of the total current revenue under Revised Estimates for the year 2016-2017 where it says \$2 866 890 205 billion. I believe it should be

\$2 806 890 205 billion. We see at Table 5 in terms of the functional classifications the variation in terms of funds allocated to various departments.

We come to Table 6 of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure and the first thing that strikes me was under Operating Expenses "Other Retiring Benefits". I noticed that for the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, 2017-2018, this has gone up to

\$107 729 702 million from \$73 231 378, an increase of

\$34 498 324 million. When I look at "Retiring Benefits" I see that there has been an increase of \$54 659 716 million in terms of what was allocated in 2016-2017 and what is being projected that would be used in 2017-2018. Madam President, I am not sure what this means and so I will ask the question. Does this mean that more persons are opting to retire or if indeed the Government has plans to retire people?

Madam President, another interesting feature on this Table was the apparent decrease in interest expenses. This would be good for the Government. I believe Senator Ince speaks about this because this is exactly what they speak about in terms of refinancing. I do not know if that is an indication that that is happening.

Madam President, when we look at Table 8 in terms of the tax revenue, we see that the Revised Estimates for 2016-2017 is \$2.6 million and the Estimates going forward are projecting \$2.7 million. Ma'am, what is important to note here however, is that when we look at VAT, and I know that the Honourable Member likes to speak about the amount of VAT that was collected, I am pleased to see over the last few years in terms of the amount of VAT that was being collected, the Revised Estimates for 2016-2017 shows that some \$948.2 million were collected. If I could go back as far as 1996-1997 when VAT was first introduced this would be indeed the best year in terms of VAT. Madam President, the Government should be proud because in 2007-2008 VAT collected was approximately \$789.6 million. In 2011-2012 it had gone up to \$939.9 million. In 2013-2014 it was \$905.6 million. In 2015-2016 it was \$924.7 million and indeed \$948 million.

Madam President, the Honourable Member is always speaking about VAT, about how much VAT has been collected and indeed in terms of the expenditure and projections we are all ad idem on this, the Estimates are an estimate, you anticipated that you were going to collect \$959 million in VAT in 2016-2017, you did very well and collected \$948.2 million, but repeatedly in this Honourable Chamber we hear about the years of floating in VAT receipts, especially from one particular Senator who always pulls out these figures, one never knows where they are coming from.

Madam President, what I would like to tell this Honourable Chamber, however, is that in terms of VAT revenues collected in Barbados, which started in 1996, that between 1886 and 2007-2008 that \$6.6 billion were collected in VAT over a period of 12 years.

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What I also must tell the Chamber is that between 2008 and 2009 and 2015-2016 some \$6.7 billion were collected in eight years in VAT, and the figures are there. We can all check them. In 12 years, \$6.6 billion collected under the Barbados Labour Party, and in eight years \$6.7 billion by the Democratic Labour Party. I am not going to say that they licked it out, as the Honourable Member used to say about the Barbados Labour Party in terms of VAT collected. I also want to add to that \$6.7 billion the fact that in this 2016-2017 almost an additional \$1 billion was collected. In nine years, you would have collected \$7.8 billion in VAT receipts, but you keep speaking about the Barbados Labour Party rolling in money. I am reminded: What is there to show for it? Nine years and \$7 billion in VAT; what do we have to show for it?

Again, I am pleased in terms of the Personal Income Taxes. We see that 2015-2016 some \$396.9 million was collected. In 2016-2017 revised, there was \$492.9 million; an increase of \$96 million. We were told that with the removal of the allowances in the 2015 Budgetary Statement, there would have resulted probably an additional \$9 million in taxes. In fact, it is \$96 million in taxes, so I wonder. Clearly, this is substantially more than anticipated. I can only say that pounding the middle classes and sending home the working classes is the policy of this Government. I am also pleased to see that in terms of indirect taxes they have also reached the highest ever: \$1 billion 584.4 million collected similarly for VAT, as I said earlier, the highest ever revenue taken in; Excise Taxes highest ever at \$233.6 million; and import duties \$242.9 million, the highest ever collected. If there was ever a Government that was doing well in terms of taxation and revenue, the present Democratic Labour Party would have to take first prize, Madam President.

All I would say in these matters is that the Government obviously has the knowledgeable persons. We are well aware of the margin of the utility of taxation, and that initially you get increases, you get a large face and then you have reached a saturation point in terms of the taxation that can be inflicted on your country, and then you get diminishing returns. A word to the wise in terms of this. Madam President, in spite of this we still have the situation where thousands of persons still cannot get their Income Tax returns; some from as far back as 2014. Indeed, while I am on that, what about VAT refunds? It is estimated that Government is withholding over \$350 million in VAT refunds for persons in this country. Of course, that is not seen and reflected in the Estimates.

Madam President, it is still worrying that in terms of the Estimates false impressions are continually given to make the balance of payment situation look better, and we understand this; I think we all understand this. It is felt that you would transfer a certain amount to a State corporation, for example the QEH, and it is expected that you would come later in the Financial Year and ask for a Supplementary to make up the additional funds that you need. At this level, it certainly is false accounting because it gives the impression that your balance of payments situation is looking better than it really is. You could therefore have, as occurs in this year's Document, ridiculous allocations, such as the Transport Board where you have allocated \$21.8 million. The Minister has admitted about the situation with the shortage of buses. When the Democratic Labour Party took over in 2008, there were over 200 buses on the streets of this country; now we are scrambling to get 100 on the road on a daily basis. There are issues with parts and the UCAL workshop which is owed over \$20 million. I am not speaking here about work going to other workshops. Perhaps that will be spoken of by other persons who are in better positions to speak to that than I am. For example, in terms of the \$21.8 million we know that in 2015-2016 the Transport Board required \$42.7 million. They have no buses, they are short of equipment, they owe UCAL over \$20 million, and you allocate \$21.8 million. Ridiculous.

To the National Housing Corporation you have allocated \$5.3 million when you know that they needed about \$16.2 million, as was actually given last time. You allocate \$10 million this year. The Sanitation Service Authority is a similar situation. The QEH is allocated \$150 million when you know they need about \$35 million to \$40 million more, based on all that the QEH has said.

Madam President, what about the accumulated arrears that are not shown in these Estimates? In other words, in all that is shown here that is owed in terms of debt, there are arrears that Government owes to persons and companies and entities that are not shown in the Estimates, so this even makes the situation worse. We have

UWI being owed over \$200 million, the NIS over \$200 million. I am told Ionics and SBRC (Sustainable Barbados Recycling Centre) are owed about \$50 million, and of course I said UCAL (United Commercial Autoworkers Limited) was owed over \$20 million. There are other arrears obviously in terms of supplies, for example at the QEH where the supplies of pharmaceuticals, et cetera, are millions of dollars in arrears. Madam President, the problem is simple. We have a situation where a Government acted too late, made bad policy decisions, focused on increasing taxation with no real growth strategy, and the whole thing has failed. You had the 18-month plan, the sacrifices were made, the austerity measures have been introduced, and the cash-flow and economic crisis continues. I must say that they have always said so in arguments: when you start with a false premise, you usually end wrong. We were told -- as I alluded earlier -- in 2013 how well this economy was doing, but the Country Strategy Paper of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) on Barbados 2015-2018 had something completely different to say. Hence why I speak about deception of the people of Barbados, because in that Document they speak under paragraph 1.02. In terms of Barbados where everyone in here and outside were told by the Members of this Government that the economy was performing and it was stable, the CDB says, "By the end of 2012, the economy had taken a turn for the worse." At a time when you were telling Barbadians that things were stable and all was well, your economy had taken a turn for the worse, at a time when you were telling Barbadians that things were stable and all was well. Your economy had taken a turn for the worst, not me, the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), growth had stalled, unemployment had leaped further, the fiscal deficit and debt as ratios of GDP rose significantly and the international reserves tumbled.

3.10 p.m.

This is what the CDB had to say about Barbados in December 2012, one month before we were told that everything was stable and that we were doing well and that everything was on target but I am going to come back to that.

There is the matter of the gap and, Madam President, in the Estimates, Table 8, we see a total expenditure and then we see an interesting figure, excess of revenue over expenditure, over deficiency of revenue over expenditure. In 2016/2017, it was anticipated that \$191.3 million of this would come from foreign financing and that domestic financing would make up \$1.[tape inaudible] of this. In actual fact, the Government was only able to obtain \$141.3 million in foreign financing as their projections there in some cases, in terms of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and in terms of the InterAmerican Development Bank fell short and, of course,

it had to be made up from domestic financing and we noticed that Treasury Notes went up to \$150 million.

This brings us to the issue of the printing of money in this country by the Government and all of the issues associated with it. It is a matter that was raised by the IMF repeatedly in the Article IV Consultations in 2015. In 2016, they made the point repeatedly that the Central Bank of Barbados' continued to fund the Government through money creation as well as using the excess of commercial banks. They were advising repeatedly that they should cease this trend. We have heard, in recent days, certainly last week that the Honourable Minister of Finance in the Other Place, admitted that the Government has been doing this and that it has to cease. We are not told when it will cease and what will happen but we were told it would have to cease however, a certain gentleman was recently unceremoniously fired from the Central Bank of Barbados, one that had been advising the Government over the years and had been facilitating this printing of money but these things do happen and indeed he said, as part of his statements, that on the week on which Government workers are paid, we always note an addition to all of the other expenditures we have to find \$50 million approximately to pay Government wages. This is what the then economic advisor had to say, but he had said a bit more in his newsletters that were issued frequently and his papers that were issued while he was presiding over the Central Bank of Barbados. He said: "These measures will eliminate Government's current chronic shortage of cash." Those are measures he spoke about that I have no doubt that the Government is busy trying to put into place. The Central Bank of Barbados will then be no longer be asked to make financing available to Government to meet its day-to-day needs and freeze the bank to use monetary policy through just the level in interest rates which is the orthodox approach used by central banks the world over. This process -- and he was describing what was currently happening -- works as follows. Every other week, Government issues about \$300 million in Treasury Bills, a Government security which is repaid in three months' time for the most part. If the Government is able to pay all its commitments for the ensuing fortnight from the tax receipts and arrears are being paid separately the amount of the new Treasury Bills is issued is just sufficient to repay the holders of Treasury Bills that were issued three months' previously on which are now due for repayment and this is what he described was happening under his tenure and was happening as he spoke. This was in January. He then went on to explain that treasury officials before its issue the Central Bank of Barbados makes a decision on what amount of the issue it would buy and the bank canvasses the holders of maturing Bills about the intentions and encourages them to roll them over. Those were the sort of things that he was speaking about in terms of the printing and the imaginative methodology he was using.

Then we had a Mrs. Dookoran??? who apparently was abused terribly, Amarla Dookaran who was from RBC, a renowned economist and she had the same sort of concerns in terms as the Central Bank of Barbados and the Barbadian Government utilisation of the printing of money. She was making reference to the fact that the Central Bank of Barbados had announced at that time, this was last year, that roughly \$198 million from commercial banks excess reserves deposited with the Central Bank of Barbados were lent to the Government to finance its spending so the Central Bank of Barbados was using liquidity that the commercial banks had placed there which is stipulated and it was extending that liquidity to the Government when the commercial banks themselves had opted not to lend the same liquidity to the Government. She went on to say that beyond this the Central Bank of Barbados lent some of its own liquidity to finance the Government's spending so that the Central Bank of Barbados total claims and Central Government had increased where it was in June 2016 BDS\$1.6 billion over 61 per cent of the total Central Bank assets up from 49 per cent one year later. Indeed a lot of printing was going on. Even from among them we had one Minister Estwick speaking in terms of the futility as the process which the Government had embarked on and in fact he was saying that he had written the Prime Minister and I think we all know. The letter from Minister Estwick was read in this Chamber in 2014 in the Estimates, and to the Cabinet. He has come back and said, Madam President, that the Government has failed, that its economic policy was flawed, that they paid no attention to what they should have been doing and the advice that he had offered, he said that his recommendations still stand and he said that the problem was that it was probably too late now to make those difficult decisions, as he said, that should have been made two years ago. He said that the growth strategy, if there is one, of his Government, he is a Member of Cabinet, is significantly off target. Not that they had missed the target, but that it was significantly off target. Madam President, one of their own has condemned them in terms of their management or indeed the mismanagement of this situation.

Asides.

Senator Dr. J. X. WALCOTT: Madam President, I am speaking about the Estimates unlike other persons who I am not hearing.

Then I come again to the NIS and its roll in terms of assistance in terms of Government securities. This is not an issue that, I think those who know me who I spend a lot of time on in terms of this, I merely repeat the concerns of citizens. I understand in terms of the NIS and its need to make investments. What I can say is that we need to know where are we in terms of the actuarial reviews that is about to be done. I believe that the last one that we know was the

14th actuarial review and this was as of 31st December 2011.

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I believe that every three years there is supposed to be an actuarial review, so I am hoping that we would hear something from the Minister in terms of where we are in terms of the actuarial reviews. Having said that, prudentially, the review speaks to the fact that there should not be more than 59 per cent in terms of Government investment. I believe it is over 74 per cent. I understand all of the arguments in terms of the National Insurance Scheme. I have heard Senator Boyce speak about the importance of investing and the preference for the National Insurance Scheme to invest in Barbados and in Barbadian dollars as opposed to overseas, but I am also mindful about that feeling of concern of Barbadians who are concerned in terms of their secured building fund and about when they come to the age of retirement if their pensions will really be available especially when several of them have had to use their savings on a monthly basis to make ends meet and to pay tuition fees for their sons and daughters at the University of the West Indies, so they really need to be certain in terms of their pensions. I am not criticizing the National Insurance Scheme, I am just raising the concern in terms of the feelings of Barbadians who are very concerned about their pensions when the time comes for them to have access to them and especially at a time when the commercial banks seem not to be interested in Government long-term paper, Debentures, et cetera.

Madam President, I come to the favourite topic of the Honourable Senator Jeptier Ince, the issue of the national debt. We were indeed told before that this is not really a problem, that the country does not have a debt problem. I believe we have heard, and I have indeed heard it from Senator Ince in this very Chamber, about the country not having a debt problem but other people seem to differ. I am no economist, I do not know that the Honourable Senator Ince is one either but suffice it to say that it shows some worrying trends in terms of Government debt. I think if we look at the Central Bank of Barbados Report of December 2016 we can see clearly in the column that the gross Government debt in 2009, not 2008 or 2007, was \$5.8 billion and in 2016 it was \$9.896 billion, that is almost double. Similarly, for the gross public sector debt we see a substantial increase between 2009 and 2016.

I have also heard in this Honourable Chamber about bringing loans to book and that there were things that were not brought to book and had to be brought to book in 2008/2009 and that is why I specifically stated 2009. In 2009, it was \$5.8 billion and in 2016 it is \$9.8 billion. The figures speak for themselves.

Madam President, I might add also that we are carrying still a PPP for the Coast Guard, the ABC Highway, the Justice Improvement Project, the last allocation I see was 2012, I believe it was, for the Hall of Justice, and indeed a PPP for the Prison which was still on the books, so all of these so-called expenses have been brought to book in 2008/2009, and that is why I started drawing reference in terms of the debt, where it was and where it had gone in terms of that year.

Madam President, for the benefit of Honourable Senators, Appendix C in the document outlines in details what goes on in Barbados, contingency liability, sinking fund, and so on and we have the dates, the interest and the amortisation. It is all here clear. In terms of page 6, we would see that up to November 2007 it accounted for approximately \$810 million and when we look at the total amount it was \$6.2 billion, so we can see what is happening there. As you turn the pages there is an Appendix C at page 11 with extensive information as you would see in terms of details of these foreign loans, and I am certain that Honourable Senators can look at the details and can indeed look at the dates of a lot of these loans and see who is really at fault.

What I can say, however, is that since independence both parties, the Democratic Labour Party and the Barbados Labour Party, have seen it necessary to borrow and it is a trend that continues but it becomes worrying especially in these days when we see these matters going up and we are not seeing how we are benefiting in terms of the apparent increase in debt.

Madam President, debt also relates to what I mentioned earlier in terms of governance when it comes to projects within this Government, and certainly from a Government that promised that we will have transparency and good governance we must also look at some other matters. We have not seen the Auditor General's Report for 2016. Normally, it is available before the Estimates, I believe. The 2015 Report is the most recent one and it speaks about a Barbados Water Authority Headquarters. It makes very interested reading. It says that the Barbados Water Authority had signed an agreement in March 2013 for the design, finance and construction of its headquarters complex and the agreement also included a lease of the premises to the Barbados Water Authority for the period of 13 years. It went on to say that the Barbados Water Authority had signed a Memorandum of Understanding which gave the contractor exclusive rights to the project. This was eight days after it had commenced negotiations on the bid and approximately 15 months before the Agreement was signed. It says that the Memorandum of Understanding also made provision for the contractor to commence certain works as soon as was practically possible after the execution of the Memorandum of Understanding. The Barbados Water Authority was in

essence binding itself to an arrangement with the sole bidder before substantial negotiations were complete. It says it was originally envisaged that the Barbados Water Authority would only commence payments for this project on completion of the building - this is generally what occurs in PPPs - and this was reinforced in a Board Paper seeking the selection of the contractor which stated that the Barbados Water Authority would be making no capital payments during the construction period. However, the Memorandum of Understanding made provision for the payment of an initial mobilisation fee and advanced payments of \$5 million plus VAT to the contractor. The Memorandum of Understanding did not say how the advance was to be repaid and it should be noted that in this type of PPP which involves the construction of a building to be leased to the Government agency, the developer would be responsible for providing financing and lease payments would start at the completion of the facility. The Barbados Water Authority subsequently agreed on a process for the repayment of the advance to the contractor. The process included a repayment deadline which was stated as prior to the expiration or termination of the lease plus agreement. It also included the interest rate to be charged, which was 2.5 per cent, and a provision for the non-repayment of the advance if the Barbados Water Authority was in default of its obligations as a tenant.

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Madam President, the Auditor-General found that the Barbados Water Authority allowed this contractor the option of completing the repayment of BD\$5 million plus VAT in approximately 15 years, while the Barbados Water Authority was scheduled to make lease payments to this same preferred bidder/landlord/individual totaling more than \$65 million in 13 years. This was approximately two years more than the allotted time for the contractor to pay the advanced payments.

Madam President, the other point of interest that the Auditor-General found was that the interest rate of 2.5 per cent was lower, compared to the interest rate which the Barbados Water Authority was being charged, that being 8.25 per cent. In effect, the Barbados Water Authority in its lease payments would be paying an interest rate of at least 8.25 per cent, while providing a loan to the contractor who was building the project at 2.5 per cent. Ma'am, we talked about debt, about transparency, about good governance, fiscal prudence, a' la Democratic Labour Party. Madam President, it is all here. The Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, I believe was \$35 million.

Madam President, we are dealing with debt, we are dealing with transparency and good governance and we speak to the special hot audit of the National Housing Corporation High-rise apartments at the Grotto and at Valery. Madam President, I am sharing it around. I am

speaking about one contract and I am speaking about another and I will come to that later, though. Ma'am, it speaks:

"Documentation reviewed by the office showed that large numbers of persons were applying for housing in terms of Barbadians. It was found that the vast majority of applications were earning less than \$1 500 per month and therefore were disqualified from being eligible to purchase low-income housing from the National Housing Corporation."

Madam President, clearly there was a need for rental units to be constructed. Madam President, it goes on:

"In January, 2011, the Board of the National Housing Corporation and the Cabinet of Barbados approved the construction of high-rise apartment units for rental at several urban sites."

Ma'am, this was a joint-partnership housing programme and under this programme the National Housing Corporation provides the land and engages a private sector partner who provides financing and carries out the work. At the completion of the project the National Housing Corporation is reimbursed to the partner under the terms that they had agreed to. It goes on:

"Among these projects there was a project at Valery, Collymore Rock and the Grotto, Beckles Road, St. Michael, at an estimated cost of \$15.7 million and \$18 million respectively."

Madam President, that is \$15 million for Valery and \$18 million for the Grotto. Madam President, it continues:

"Any project undertaken by the National Housing Corporation should first be approved by the Board before onward submission to the Cabinet for ratification. It was however noted that for these projects they were approved by the Cabinet on January 13, 2011 and thereafter by the Board on a Circular Resolution between January 14 and 20, 2011."

Ma'am, so that they had gone in the other direction. It continues:

"There was no evidence provided to indicate that the management of the National Housing Corporation [had] carried out the necessary financial and technical review on the Grotto and Valery projects before submission to the Board for approval. Such a review [of the Board] would have assisted the Board in determining whether the proposals met the corporation's policy objectives of providing housing for low-income persons in a cost effective manner. The management of the National Housing Corporation did not go to public tender with these

projects, even though the expenditure exceeded the \$100 000 threshold then applicable under the Financial Rule, 1971. The tendering process would have advertised the project to a larger pool of potential developers therefore facilitating greater competition in the selection process. According to the evidence provided by the National Housing Corporation, the Board approved the construction of 76 apartments at the Grotto in three blocks of \$18 million. The Circular Resolution by which this project was approved by the Board contained a proviso that a selected developer be requested to submit a proposal for construction of the apartment units by March, 2011. No proposal was seen from the developer for the construction of the 76 apartment units, instead, a proposal was submitted by the developer one year later on 10th October, 2012, for the construction of 80 units in five blocks and 84 car parking spaces, at a cost of \$27.85 million, which was \$9.85 million more than the \$18 million approved by the Cabinet of Barbados and the Board of the National Housing Corporation. There is no evidence that this request was assessed by the corporation. Evidence seen indicates that a contract had been signed and the project commenced on April 1, 2013 before the Permanent Secretary received the requested information."

Madam President, the Permanent Secretary had asked for information why this change, why the Agreement said 76 apartment but 80 apartments would now be built. Where is the difference? It continues:

"Therefore, the Permanent Secretary's efforts to reconcile the cost increase before seeking Cabinet's approval was frustrated."

Madam President, do you know what? Ma'am, the increase was approved by Cabinet on 30th May, 2013, even though the Permanent Secretary could not get the information as to why the increase, but we are talking about debt and good governance. Ma'am, it continues:

"The contract had stipulated 84 parking spaces should be provided at the Grotto high-rise complex. According to the information supplied by the developer, the cost of these spaces, [84 parking lots] was \$856 919. There was an approved reduction in the car parking spaces for 43, however, no evidence was seen of a related adjustment to the cost of the project."

Madam President, in other words, the developer said that he wanted 84 parking spaces at a cost of \$856 919, but was given 43 spaces at the same cost of \$856 919. Ma'am, this is when I thought about debt, transparency and good governance. Ma'am, that all relates to the Grotto project.

Madam President, the Valery project incurred an increase in cost of \$7.7 million over the \$15.8 million originally proposed by the developer and approved by the

National Housing Corporation Board and the Cabinet of Barbados. Ma'am, it states as follows:

"The increase was due in part to the addition of a number of items in the Revised Proposal which should have been included in the original submissions. These included fees for design consultants, finance and legal fees and a waste-water plant. These omissions highlighted the need for the Proposals to be subjected to a technical analysis to ensure that all relevant information is included by developers."

Ma'am, it was felt that any proposal that does not include all the relevant costs was deficient and will mislead decision-making authorities. Madam President, it continues:

"However, the National Housing Corporation had indicated that the housing units for low-income earners should be provided at a cost of \$125 000 to \$195 000 for rental units. However, the construction cost of these high-rise units ranged between \$300 000 and \$450 000 per unit. All were built within the agreed timeframe, however, the high cost per unit obtained within these projects obviously would have impacted negatively on the National Housing Corporation being able to provide these units to the low income earners who were the ones they were seeking to be beneficiaries."

Ma'am, they were clearly not fulfilling their mandate. Ma'am, they spoke about how the rent was calculated, they said, it should be noted that in the case of Valery high-rise apartment units certain costs were not considered, obviously it would be ill-affordable for persons to rent.

No.D6A (19)3.46 p.m.

These included the cost of the land on which the units were built, which was \$400 000, and the interest of penalty of \$240 000, and at Grotto the cost of the land was \$6.8 million and the interest penalty of \$784 000 was not included. Based on the information, it was agreed that the high-rise apartments at the Valery would be charged at \$700 a month per unit, and I believe they are still deciding how they will dispose of those at Grotto; if they will be rented or if they will be sold. Interestingly, one important factor in the financing arrangements for Valery and the Grotto was the challenging financial status of the National Housing Corporation. The Corporation was unable to pay the developer in full for these projects after the submission of certificates of practical completion, as were required. As a result, the Corporation then incurred interest penalties of \$240 000 and \$784 000 for the Valery and Grotto projects respectively; indeed an additional \$1 million. One project, Grotto, went \$9 million more than was allocated; you spent an additional \$7 million on Valery - \$16 million -- and \$1

million was incurred in interest penalties. Debt, good governance; they all come together. The Corporation then sought funding of \$23.58 million from Government to settle liabilities on the Valery project. In addition, and this is when it gets interesting, the sum of \$27.8 million was utilised from the Housing Credit Fund to pay the contractor for the Grotto project. However, the legal opinion was issued to the effect that such a transfer of funds from this Fund could not be substantiated in law. Those too speak in terms of governance, and obviously, Madam President, they have some relationship to the debt and how they incur and accumulate some of this debt.

The International Monetary Fund, as we all know, has been very interested in how we deal with our debt. They have been concerned in terms of how we are managing debt in this country. They do their consultations, they come, they advise us from time to time, they speak of the issues they are concerned about in terms of the rising debt and the fact that the budget deficit averaged four per cent of GDP and central Government debt grew from 51.4 per cent of GDP at the end of 2007-2008 to 105 per cent at the end of 2015-2016. This excludes the NIS debt. They insist that if they included the National Insurance debt, it would be 146.6 per cent of GDP, which puts us way up there certainly in terms of the Caribbean in terms of debt, and globally in terms of our debt as it relates to GDP. Madam President, this is obviously a very perilous economic situation. Fifty years of Independence, this is the situation with a Government that is seemingly addicted to spending what it does not have.

Then we came to the downgrades and the talk about the downgrades and the 19 consecutive downgrades, and I know that the Honorable Senator on the other side speaks about the three downgrades of the Barbados Labour Party, but I am speaking about the 19 consecutive downgrades that have occurred. Standard & Poor's, the most recent, lowered its long-term foreign and local currency sovereign credit rating of Barbados to Triple C-plus (CCC+) from B-minus (B-), and it also lowered the short-term foreign and local currency rate. In announcing the revision, they said that the Government's increased reliance on Central Bank financing would still hide Government's deficit, and the fall in international reserves reflect heightened challenges for policy implementation and sustainability. They said that the negative outlook reflected the view that the Government's ability or willingness to take timely steps to redress the deficit and financing pressures would likely deteriorate further.

Moody's came just a few days later and did a similar downgrading, dropping us to a CAA3, and there again said that the debt burden had risen in recent years and as far as they could see, would continue to do so. They assessed the likelihood of a credit event in the near term as very high, given the lack of fiscal adjustment and increasingly limited

financing operations. It made reference also to the Central Bank's financing of Government, but more importantly said a number of factors caused the stock of international reserves to drop significantly in the previous year; coming to US\$340.5 million in December from US\$463.5 million a year earlier. Moody's said this was the lowest level of foreign reserves recorded since 2009, and was equivalent to under 11 weeks of imports compared to 13-and-a-half weeks and 14-and-a-half weeks in 2014 and 2015 respectively. They said that this persistent decline in reserves continues to pressure the exchange rate peg of the Barbados dollar.

Madam President, this is scoffed upon; something that is serious in terms of the access to funding, the banking sector and interest rates. This is dismissed by the Prime Minister and others, regrettably, in terms of that not downgrading Barbados. This is about financial matters, and for example, in terms of the Credit Suisse loan of \$450 million, this most recent downgrade increases the interest by 0.5 per cent, so that you will be paying \$2.25 million more in interest; and every time there is a downgrade it is affected in terms of the interest on loans. The Prime Minister's comments are regrettable. Of course, countries can bounce back, but as it stands now, we have had 19 consecutive downgrades. We are seemingly ignoring it and we are going deeper and further into the abyss. Bloomberg had its say on this matter.

Everyone is having their say on Barbados apparently, and Barbados is popular. Bloomberg was saying that it was the worst performance of emerging markets; this is Barbados, of which we heard the Honorable Leader say earlier today that the Government is doing well. It was said that we are on the right track. Is that what the Honorable Leader said? That the Government is doing very well and we are on the right track, that we have been given incentives to tourism and we had turned the corner. I do not know; probably a 360-degree turn. Bloomberg also stated that the tropical island is grappling with weak growth, one of the world's highest debt burdens, and unwelcome currency appreciation caused by its link to the United States dollar. Then the Observer in Jamaica got into it with an article by a Eugene Stanley, and Barbados was described as "a classic case of a fallen angel". It started by giving a definition. A "fallen angel" in finance is a rated entity which once carried a high credit rating and investment grade and displayed exceptional performance, but has since experienced sustained declines and ratings, culminating in the loss of its investment grade status. Barbados' financial woes over recent years have placed its debt in that demeaning category, and future prospects for the debt also appear to be grim. They then went on to parade about Barbados, Madam President, which I am not going to read. It said that in fact among the list of sovereign countries currently rated by Standard & Poor's, only two countries are now rated lower than Barbados; namely

Mozambique and Venezuela. Madam President, this is not something that we should be proud of or that we should be ready to jump onto the rooftop for. This is something that we should be very concerned about. Madam President, what will this Government do?

3.49 p.m.

What really would this Democratic Labour Party (DLP) Government now do in terms of this dire situation in which we now find ourselves? Will the Prime Minister continue to be like Nero, I cannot say play a fiddle, but at least probably read philosophy while the economy collapses? No, I am not getting into anything washing today?

Former Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Owen Arthur has advised, three former Governors of the Central Bank have offered advice and other reputable economists, local and overseas, have offered advice. Are we now to await some sage to emerge from within the bowels of the DLP to advise us and to guide the Democratic Labour Party (DLP)? I do not know if the sage would be Minister Inniss. There is now, we are told, to be a national consultation, when the horse, I am afraid, has already bolted. Suddenly a group that had all the answers and had a home-grown plan apparently now they do not seem to have a clue. I remember in December 2013 the Leader of the Opposition, my leader, suggested that we should put together the best brains in the country eminent persons ??? invited for them to gather Members of the Government, Members of the Opposition and other eminent persons who were knowledgeable unlike some of the Members on the Other Side and it was scoff upon by no one else by the Prime Minister.

Asides.

Senator Dr. J. X. WALCOTT: I do not know what the point is for the laughter but he said that he had all the brains and the intelligence in his Cabinet and we are waiting to see it. That was in December 2013. We want to see the brains and the knowledge in this Cabinet, the one that is being described as the worst Government in this country since 1966 and that does not come from the Barbados Labour Party (BLP). That is being said. The Cabinet with all the brains and the knowledge and now there is to be a national consultation but the important thing is how do we get off this precipice. You are the Government, tell us your plan. That is what I expected to hear this morning, the plan in terms of the Estimates and things that would be done differently and that we would have a discussion. Do not try to abdicate your responsibilities and try to abandon your responsibilities in terms of leading us in this country and taking care of the economic situation. What will a Government that is notably slow on the implementation now do? How will fiscal

stability be now obtained? How will this deficit be further reduced? Tell us we are waiting to hear. We need to hear. How will you go about expenditure reduction so that it is rational, so that it is targeted, so that it is strategic, so that it is economic and certainly that it is now political? When having already divested being apparently being ??? when will you divest more of our statutory corporations? The studies and assessments have already been done. Will you be looking at debt restructuring and refinancing or are you planning to introduce more taxes, for example, the VAT that was put on only last week on over the counter drugs where persons now if they have to buy Panadol, cough medicines or vitamins now have to pay a VAT that was not there then. That was not imposed on them then so that persons now who would normally go without a prescription and buy a bottle of Histal would find that it has gone up by 20 per cent from a caring Government that looks after the social responsibilities of the citizens. A caring one indeed.

How will our credit rating be improved so that we can access funds from the capital markets so that when the Honourable Leader travels to the orient and the mid-east that person, royalty investors in Abu Dhabi and United Emirates would be willing to infuse funds into Barbados? How are you doing to do that? Or will you use the Estwick plan and modify it? How do you plan to access more foreign direct investment? You spoke about the diaspora and the purchase in Atlanta and North Carolina that they are linked to Barbados at the waist and are so supportive? Are you going to bring it in from them to help stem the consecutive decline of our foreign reserves over the last three years even when you insisted that the foreign reserves decline was not a problem? What will happen to our dollar? How will you improve the ease of doing business or will you go to the IMF having already implemented a number of IMF measure. The IMF boasted about it in their report and in their consultation. The IMF speaks about it in their Article IV and they boasted about it. They said the Government undertook further adjustment measures broadly in line with the staff's recommendation in the 2015 report and they then gave information about the areas where there was progress following the IMF recommendations. They were told to contain current spending and they said while the wages and salaries bill fell marginally they were concerned that it increased by 0.7 per cent due to non-budgeted debt amortization. The IMF recommended to accelerate the restructure of the public enterprises and they said that the Barbados Government was making progress in rationalising and reigning in spending in that respect. They said there were areas where there was a limited or no progress. They were satisfied that you had sent home over 3 000 people, that apparently was one of their recommendations and they said that you are supposed to do a review of social spending to better target social problems. They were supposed to improve the quality of the public service and its efficiency. These were some of the things that you were supposed to be doing not

as part of the IMF but following the IMF recommendations, introducing all of the pain. They had as for a freeze on public sector wages since 2010, they said they had been an increase in Value Added Tax (VAT) roughly 3 000 public sector employees were laid off and the spoke about a further 500 were to be downsized by attrition. I am asking in the light of these IMF matters that the Government seems to be implementing, what is the plan? Of course, I am mindful of what Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford said about not doing anything to commit political suicide. Is it that the plan is to muddle through until the next elections? Our policies have failed so let us continue. Is this the method of the Government? Is this the rationale? Our policies have failed so let us continue or will we now join the ranks of the failed States under the guidance of the Honourable DLP Government.

Madam President, when I look through these Estimates, Government obviously knows something that we do not know on This Side or indeed the rest of Barbados does not know. In the face of all that I have said about the economic situation, about the austerity, the downgrades, the foreign reserves depletion, the comments from Prime Minister Arthur, the governance of the Central Bank, what is the Government planning for us next year? I do not know but when I look into the Estimates they call it Forward Estimates and when I see Forward Estimates 2018/2019 and I see that Prime Minister's Office \$169 million 2015/2016, 2017/2018 \$155 million.

Sequence Seq 21

Forward Estimates for 2018-2019 is \$210.6 million and in 2019-2020, \$203 million. What does the Government know that the rest of Barbados does not know? The Urban Development Commission under the Prime Minister's portfolio got \$5.5 million in 2016-2017. In this current financial year 2017-2018 it is allocated \$6 million and in 2018-2019 it is to get \$35.4 million.

Defence and Security: Madam President, I know it was said in the Other Place about mashing skulls and you heard recently about streets of blood. Defence and security has been allocated \$16.2 million for 2017-2018 and in 2018-2019 it is to get \$19.5 million. The Barbados Defence Force for the last couple of years got \$53 million. The plan for 2018-2019, forward Estimates, not me in the document, is for it to get \$59.2 million.

The Rural Development Commission got \$4.9m year before, \$4.5 million last year and \$4.5 million this year and next year, 2018-2019, it is to get \$10 million. The Ministry of Housing, Lands and Rural Development got \$112 million in 2016-2017, it is to get \$111.7 million this coming current financial year, in 2018-2019 it is to get \$138 million and in 2019-2020 it is to get \$128 million.

The Ministry of Transport and Works is to get \$125.3 million in 2017-2018, \$205 million in 2018-2019 and \$149 in 2019-2020. Madam President, I cannot believe what I am seeing.

The leader of this Honourable Chamber has said in here and outside that elections would be next year. We know that the Government could go down to June 2018. Could this be a plan, Madam President, by a very honourable Government to bribe Barbadians with their own money again? With all that I have said about the situation facing us where will these funds come from. Is the Government serious? Is this a Government addicted to spending what it does not have?

Madam President, I move to the sectors and I will start with health. It seems as though, according to the Estimates, that the plans for a new hospital and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital redevelopment have been put to rest or to sleep or whatever, but I recognise that there are some challenges. First of all, I must talk about the Emergency Ambulance Service. In looking at the Budget you would see that the amount allocated has been reduced by \$200 000 and indeed that for the Medical Aids Scheme has been decreased by \$500 000. These are two very important areas. In terms of the Ambulance Service, I am not certain what exactly is happening. We had embarked on a plan to decentralise ambulances in Barbados recognising that the response time is affected in terms of an emergency if you have ambulances leaving wherever it was in St. Michael because it has been relocated again to go, for example, to St. Lucy, St. Peter, St. Andrew and those areas. We have reverted now to bringing all of the ambulances to one location, so in ten years we have come full circle. I see that there is now talk about decentralisation but I see no provision made for it and this is a concern for me.

In terms of the Barbados Drug Service, the scourge of chronic non-communicable diseases continues in Barbados and it is not at all helped by the cost of healthy foods and indeed the food basket, I believe, has diminished and this is a concern. If we want people to live healthy lifestyles we have to look at this.

We notice, and I spoke to it before, the increasing number of strokes after we made changes four of five years ago in terms of the availability of medication under the Formulary where our medication became more expensive where persons were asked to pay a user fee at the private pharmacies and those people who could not afford it were told that they could go to the public pharmacies in the polyclinics which oftentimes were short of drugs and rather than being given a month's supply of drugs they would be given a week or two weeks' supply because they were always out of stock. As a result, you have poor compliance.

I know that there are a number of effects in terms of the strokes that have occurred and there is empirical evidence within the hospital which shows that. I understand the situation. I see that there has been an increase in the allocations to the Barbados Drug Service this year and that is positive.

In relation to the care of the elderly, I know that these are tough times but we need an allocation in terms of looking after those persons who are indeed the builders of Barbados.

In the country, we have had outbreaks of vector-borne illnesses over the last couple of years. We had a drought last year but we are still having rising cases of Leptospirosis and we are still seeing some Dengue Fever and some occasional Zika Virus. Again, this was compounded when hundreds of National Conservation Commission workers were unceremoniously sent home, so I am still concerned in terms of the amount which is allocated under Vector Control in the Ministry of Health.

The Queen Elizabeth Hospital is allocated \$150 million this year. The Hospital has a business plan, April 2017-March 2020. I believe all Honourable Senators on the other side would have seen this document. It would have been made available in terms of their preparation for the Estimates. This document shows that the Queen Elizabeth Hospital has repeatedly, and it goes back to the Barbados Labour Party time, been underfunded. In 2007 in the Estimates the Queen Elizabeth Hospital was awarded \$133.2 million but in effect they needed \$150 million. There was a gap and then a shortfall of \$16.3 million. In 2008, in terms of the amounts allocated, it was \$143.9 million and they needed \$155 million, which is about \$11.5 million short. The year 2009 was a great year, the Hospital was allocated \$166.3 million and they needed just \$174 million and so they were short by \$7.6 million. Since then, 2010, it was short by \$23.6 million; 2011, \$28.4 million; 2012, \$33.8 million; 2014, \$29.2 million and in 2015, \$21.9 million, so we can safely say that the Hospital needs about \$180 to \$190 million per year so clearly \$150 million is going to be woefully inadequate. I guess they would have to depend on a supplementary but waiting on a supplementary has its problems.

The Hospital has outlined in their business plan a number of the challenges they face. This is seen on page 8 of their business plan. They had challenges to sustain current levels of clinical and diagnostic services. They speak of a gross inadequacy of financial resources. They speak about quality care being compromised by the shortage of resources. They speak about inadequate health establishments and that they have a shortage of specialised nurses and clinical specialists, so they are telling you some of their shortages and their problems. There is still the recurrent problem of the shortage of drugs and other

supplies within the Hospital, we hear about it almost daily. There is a situation where we have a Medical Intensive Care Unit which will accommodate 12 bed spaces but it is now working at only half capacity because there is not the nursing staff which is necessary to man a 12-bed intensive care facility, so the private sector has helped you to establish a 12-bed unit but now you can only utilise six of the beds and that is certainly not acceptable.

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Meanwhile we have been hearing about plans and discussions about financing healthcare, which is a very useful discussion, one which is necessary and should have been done a long time ago in terms of 2007. When we started speaking about a national health insurance it was pood-pood at that time, we were told that we wanted to introduce private healthcare and that only those who could have afforded it would benefit. Madam President, I am pleased to see that after 10 years the Government is now coming back full circle to the need to look at the provision of healthcare.

Madam President, we still have issues of overcrowding in the Accident and Emergency Department. I know that we hear from time to time that the waiting time has been reduced substantially and that persons no longer have to wait for long hours in the Accident and Emergency Department but in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Business Plan, page 24, they speak, however, of these delays. They say that these delays have also impacted on the resources of the Emergency Ambulance Service and that it is very common for patients to remain on ambulances' trollies because of the unavailability of beds in the department. Ma'am, therefore, if the ambulances do not have trollies then obviously they cannot go to emergencies. It says that, in some cases the evidence indicated that patients spent three to four days waiting in the Accident and Emergency Department for bed on the wards to become available.

Madam President, I mentioned the situation with the Intensive Care Unit, you have a 12-bedded unit that can only accommodate six persons, sometimes persons who need to have intensive care are now treated in the Emergency Room in the Accident and Emergency Department. In other words, it reduces the capacity of that department to treat persons who are seriously ill. If you have an area that can accommodate four or six beds and you now have three persons who should be upstairs, you have limited and reduced the care that you can offer to those individuals when they need it.

Madam President, I go on to the issue of the Cardiac Unit. I remember in 2014 a new Cardiac Unit was opened. I believe that Senator Carmichael was there, there was much sound and symbolism and the Honourable Ministry of Health spoke about it in glowing terms. I feel

constrained to report that some three years later it is still not in operation, they tell me it was just a mocked opening, it was to let people see it. The people from the European Union were invited, people from the Sandy Lane Trust, among others were all involved and that Cardiac Theatre is not yet being used in that Cardiac Unit. Ma'am, that is shameful, I believe, where you have a new Cardiac Unit but it is not yet operational three years after it has been opened.

Madam President, there is also the Lion's Eye Care Centre. I believe it was Minister Inniss when he was Minister of Health before the 2013 elections who made a grant announcement that the Lion's Eye Care Centre would be opened and available, about how it would welcome patients from the Eastern Caribbean and other places, but that Lion's Eye Care Centre is not in operation. Indeed, the Records Department is now occupying part of the Lion's Eye Care Centre upstairs, not the theatres but indeed the areas where persons would have been recovering, et cetera. Ma'am, that is unsatisfactory.

Madam President, I say so because at the beginning of this year the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Director spoke about a plan for cataract surgery in Barbados. We have heard over the years about the situation of a waiting list for cataract surgeries. Before we demitted office there was a plan with Cuba where Barbadians were going there to have surgeries done but they have decided that they would embark on a project where they would look at the backlog of cases, where there were over 550 persons who were waiting to have cataract surgeries done. At the beginning of this year it was announced that this project would start and would have been completed by March 31. Ma'am, today is March 20th. I do not believe that they have done 50 cases, but I think that it is a very good idea but that in terms of getting it done they obviously have had some problems, they were also using one theatre. I think most persons know that the theatres were down for about two weeks to be refurbished and made splendid at an attempt for Canadian certification which did not occur, that certification was not successful, but that also affected the process in terms of getting cataract surgeries done. Madam President, I think it is a very good project and I think they would have to push on and try to get as close to that number as possible. Certainly it cannot be done in three months, I cannot even see it being done in six months, but it is indeed a very good venture.

Madam President, there was the recent refurbishment of the operating theatres, and I believe that these are matters that can be embarrassing at times but it is all in an effort to progress and move forward. We make mistakes when moving forward, so that you close the operating theatres for two weeks, you refurbish them, put in new lights, then you discover that one of those lights is malfunctioning, then you are down short again, but these

things happen. Ma'am, in this regard I certainly would like to take this opportunity to praise the efforts and support of the various philanthropic groups: the European Union, the Sandy Lane Trust, Clara Lionel Foundation, Maria Holder Trust, and others who play a very useful role in trying to ensure that we can improve our healthcare.

Madam President, meanwhile, klebsiella, an antibiotic resistant is still wreaking havoc on the wards on a number of persons. This needs to be addressed and to be addressed aggressively and because of the myriad of shortages of dressings, gloves, et cetera, that are needed in terms of isolation this is not being attended to as effectively and efficiently as it should perhaps be done. Madam President, the only other matter I would address is that the Chief Executive Officer sometimes acts as though he is a Public Relations Executive instead of trying to be a healthcare provider, but that is my personal opinion.

Madam President, I go to the St. John Polyclinic. I understand it very well, I know the background, I am just concerned about the actual cost. We were told that it would cost about \$13.5 million. Recently I have been hearing its cost is about \$31 million. I do not know if that could be considered to be a cost overrun, moving from \$13.5 million to \$31 million. Ma'am, this sounds a bit more like a cost overrun to me and so I would like to know what is the actual cost. I have gathered that dialysis treatment is being offered at the St. John Polyclinic. Again, I am just asking if this for paying patients only or is there free dialysis available there. Madam President, now that we have spent all of \$31 million outfitting it, I would like to know if Barbadians can have access to free dialysis, if it reduces the load on the Dialysis Unit at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and if in doing so is it offering the services for fee-paying patients only or for all, including those who cannot afford to pay?

Madam President, I move on to the Ministry of Energy and the Environment in terms of the recurring shortage of trucks and the difficulties with garbage collection. Ma'am, I note that in the Estimates there is no real increase in the allocation, there is no provision in the Estimates for trucks. I know that it does not have to be there, that the Government might have plans and might have entered into an agreement with some private provider to provide some sort of purchase/lease arrangement but with these things I am just seeking some clarification. To my mind Government is spending excessive amounts in terms of using private waste haulers and this is something that needs to be looked at carefully. We need to know from Government what is their plan, we need to know if there is a plan to continue a Sanitation Service Authority or if this entire process would be weaned off to the private sector and then Government providing... What is the plan with regards to that?

Madam President, certainly, I would have figured that the provision of garbage trucks and ensuring that garbage was being collected would have been more important than focusing on the construction of a new Headquarters at Vauxcluse. Ma'am, while I am on that, I am concerned that there seems to have been some delay in the completion of that project and therefore I would like to know from the Government what is the problem, when will work recommence, what was the issue in terms of the delays regarding the construction of that new Headquarters? I believe it is one of the public-private-partnerships projects. I do not want to believe that it is like one of which I discussed earlier but certainly we would like to know what is happening.

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I believe it is one of those (PPP) Public Private Partnership projects. I do not want to believe it is one like what I discussed earlier, but certainly I would like to know what is happening. At the state of our cemeteries I think all Members in here would agree that we need to look, and this comes under the Sanitation Service Authority. There needs to be some plan or some project in terms of the upgrade and beautification of our cemeteries. It brings me then to Cahill, which we are not talking about this year because apparently that is a thing of the past; but indeed there is still the process, and the Sustainable Barbados Recycling Company (SBRC) facility at Vauxcluse, and the Auditor General has some interesting comments regarding that entire project. It spoke about how the agreements were signed in 2009. It speaks about the agreement for 20 years in terms of the tonnage of waste that would be disposed of and delivered to the facility. It spoke about the tipping fee. Then there were concerns about the fact that we had entered into an agreement where, if there was a shortfall in terms of garbage that was supposed to be delivered, then the Government -- that is the Sanitation Service Authority -- would have to make up that.

More importantly, the Auditor was concerned that in the contract it spoke about the need for a composting facility, and that this was to have been constructed. They were concerned that this project had started in 2009 and by 2015 it had still not been finished. This is 2017 and it still has not been constructed. Apparently, there is a need now to look at discussing this entire contract again, because Government was at a disadvantage in terms of the investment of this composting facility which had not been constructed, and it was part of the complete agreement in terms of waste management. That is something which I believe we will hear more of in the coming months.

Concerning the Ministry of Agriculture and the Barbados Water Authority (BWA), I spoke at length earlier about the BWA headquarters and the cost projected to be about \$65 million. I am also interested in the contract and

maintenance of the grounds of that facility, and if in fact it is \$250 million and also going to the same person. I need to know if it has been awarded to the same builder. In the matter of the project for the changing of the water meters, I believe the contract was about \$25 million. I am wondering again if this is the same entity involved. I am wondering. The reverse osmosis plant of the Belle which we have been looking at since 2007, we are concerned about the level of the nitrates in the water in the Belle. I know that there was extensive discussion and consultation. We heard last year the comments of some person representing the Canadian Embassy - I believe it was the High Commissioner -- in terms of the Belle project. I am just wondering what the Belle's reverse osmosis project is. The management contract for the West Coast Sewage Treatment project I am also wondering about, and cannot help saying that all of these processes mentioned have gone to one entity. I am just wondering about the water tanks that were distributed throughout Barbados during our terrible time last year when there were water shortages, and now the plan for two desalination plants. I am wondering who are the black businessmen who would be empowered in this country in the 50th year of Independence, who will benefit, and if indeed all of these projects are going to one entity or one individual. I am just wondering; wondering whether after 50 years of Independence we cannot in fact do better than this in terms of the provision of resources and the sharing up of -- I believe it was called -- the fatted calf, Madam President? I am wondering if it would be divided and found possible to find some parts of that calf, be it contracts to the BWA or others, to go to other parties.

We had the issues of the months of a terrible situation where persons would have been without water for months. I certainly hope that this will never recur in Barbados. Where Nature is concerned, we have no control but I am certain that the Government will leave no stone unturned in ensuring that problems of this magnitude will not again occur in Barbados. The sewage treatment plant and the problems we had with that last year showed clearly a lack of maintenance, and this was admitted by the management of the BWA. It hopefully has been dealt with. I know that sometimes it is not very safe to put a plaster over an abscess. Sometimes when the plaster is removed, you see more puss emanating from the abscess and the wound than when it was uncovered; so I certainly hope that in terms of sewage -- and there is no analogy -- that we have that matter well under control.

The \$500 million sugar factory and the project that involves planting River Tamarind across the entire country; I am wondering what has become of this and the AnsaMcAL fund for the \$5 million loan. Where is the rest of the funding going to come from? What is the holdup with this sugar factory that we were told was going to transform the delivery of energy in Barbados? It was going to be something new. There was going to be power in terms

of mega wattage, the likes of which we would never have seen before. The last time I passed, all I saw was decking around the factory. We were told that the \$5 million was supposed to be for the demolishing of the factory, but apparently that has been put on hold.

Of course, there are the deplorable conditions of our markets at Cheapside and Oistins in terms of the facilities and the areas where persons clean and store the fish; these are matters that need to be addressed. Certainly if we are speaking in terms of the European Union and making use of the European Partnership Agreement (EPA), we need to maintain certain phytosanitary conditions as it relates to food, the storage and processing of fish.

Madam President, in terms of tourism -- and I take a sip of water -- there are arrival figures, again, like last year. The arrival figures are very good, and I believe all are happy. The Ministry of Tourism has been working very hard and assiduously in trying to get these numbers up. However, I know that they have concerns in terms of the rising numbers and in terms of the tourist spend. I guess I have no doubt they have the capacity and the tenacity to address these matters and to ensure that this is sorted out. One concern I have, however, is that I have gathered that the arrivals from the United Kingdom (UK) were down by two per cent in December 2016, and that they were down by nine per cent in January 2017. I think this must be something that the Ministry of Tourism will certainly be looking at, the UK being our largest market. We seem to be doing quite well in the arrivals in home-porting, except that the taxi drivers keep complaining that the tourists are coming in and are here for the weekend, but they do not seem to be benefiting. We can never tell.

The Sam Lord's Castle Project, I believe, has had two groundbreaking ceremonies. Three? I am being corrected, Madam President. I thought it was two. It is three. I believe they have constructed the facilities where the Chinese labourers will be housed. Is that the correct word?

Asides.

Senator Dr. J.X. WALCOTT: Apparently, Madam President, it is an extremely big project to have had three groundbreaking ceremonies and still not started, but we are just concerned. I note in passing that a previous talk show hostess had chastised a previous Barbados Labour Party Government almost daily on the radio when there was talk of bringing Chinese labour in terms of the Four Seasons construction. All I would say, Madam President, is that it is pleasing to me that the talk show hostess is no longer on the airwaves so that she cannot oppose the importation of Chinese labour to take part in the construction of a hotel; not Four Seasons, as it was then, but now Sam Lord's. Indeed, I am glad that we are moving on and we are

praising China, and I commend the donation of \$10 million in equipment to the Ministry of Education; even though it has been said that some of the boxes that were delivered on the Thursday left in the backs of cars on the Friday, Madam President.

Senator Hon. Ms. M.P.O. McCLEAN: Madam President, I rise on a Point of Order. I certainly try to avoid doing this. He is misleading the House. To suggest some infelicity of that type is disgusting, Madam President. It has to be on the part of workers. I think this is a serious exercise and we really need to treat it so, Madam President.

4.28 p.m.

Senator Dr. J. X. WALCOTT: Madam President, I said it was said, I never said the words “public worker”. I was about to say who it was alleged. I do not see anyone in here.

Asides.

Senator Dr. J. X. WALCOTT: I am sure that they were delivered to the Ministry and they are still there.

Madam President, there is the issue of the Hyatt Hotel and we have heard a lot about the Hyatt. I believe a number of persons have expressed their opinions about the Hyatt, another hotel should come or should not. As far as I know there has not been clear, perhaps I could be informed in here if there has been a decision in regards to the Hyatt. I know that we heard that the Prime Minister had said that it would start at some time but as I said earlier, there are so many things that he, the Prime Minister, would have said in the past and have not come to fruition so I am just waiting. I know that they are concerns and no doubt we will hear about the concerns as it relates to the Hyatt in the course of this debate. I have no doubt that other Honourable Senators will have their say on the Hyatt.

The Pierhead Project, I wonder what is to become of that. Has that been put to bed? Is it sleeping? Is it expected to come up sometime when we least expect it. We have not heard anything but we know that there are some outstanding legal matters as it relates to that. There is the issue of the status of this famous cruise pier terminal where the Port Authority spent \$12 million in consultant fees, drawings and designs for Sugar Point and I have not heard any mouthings from the Minister of Finance with certainty to indicate that there are plans to proceed with this cruise pier terminal. I have no doubt that the Honourable Senator might be in a position to perhaps enlighten me as to where we are in terms of Sugar Point.

Madam President, I will now move on to education and I think it is clear. All Senators would agree that the role of education and the important role that education has

played in the development of Barbados in post-independence and certainly in terms of Barbadians and in terms of being able to achieve hits in all areas, not only in Barbados. I think it is well recognised that education is vitally important in the development of human capital. There is certainly the leaning now in terms of technology, IT, research and development and Barbadians are playing leading roles all over the world and certainly I commend the Ministry in terms of science and technology and the input and the allocation that has been made in that area as they press on obviously recognising the need to focus in those areas. I am definitely supportive of the support being show from the National Council for Science and Technology. Having said that, however, I must speak of the University of the West Indies (UWI), more importantly the Cave Hill Campus and it is importance to the Barbados economy. I think that most Members might not be aware that facility has economic activity of over \$200 million in terms of the contribution to the GDP of Barbados and certainly brings in its average about \$80 million to \$100 million in foreign exchange per annum. The Government of Barbados owes the University of the West Indies (UWI) over \$200 million and we have heard from the principal, we have heard from the Minister but we seem to be getting no closer in terms of how this could be addressed. It certainly is not in the Estimates, as I said, the arrears are not spoken to in the Estimates. Whether Honourable Senators choice to admit it or not, the enrolment at Cave Hill in the University of the West Indies (UWI) among Barbadians have certainly plummeted since the introduction of these fees. That is clear. There are thousands of persons who still cannot afford it and their parents dreams was for their children to be able to have this opportunity that they did not have and I am certain, and I have said it before, that the Right Excellent Errol Barrow probably turning in a watery grave as he looks at this unpardonable carnage which is being inflicted on tertiary education in Barbados by a party that he was part of its formation, however, in terms of the secondary schools we still have the fact that some schools seem to be repeated plagued with environmental issues and shortage of supplies. In terms of the primary schools where you have a shortage and where teachers report that they have to take almost everything to schools including toilet paper and these are matters that really needs to be addressed. I know that there is EduTech and in terms of refurbishment of the secondary schools, but I think we need to also pay closer attention in terms of the primary schools and the provisions that are made thereto. As I said at the beginning of this part on education, we have no natural resources. What we do have is our people and we should invest in their development.

I move on to the Ministry of Transport and Works and I said earlier that the Barbados Transport Board had been allocated \$21 million and I said clearly this is woefully in adequate. There is a shortage of buses and

meanwhile the Minister is speaking of new routes and all sorts of transformation. The issues of part being unavailable and unaffordable and I need to know, in terms of UCAL, what is the Government's plans for UCAL. There was an example where the workers of the workshop were encouraged to form this company. It was their company and I believe the Honourable Senator would probably speak to this, my colleague, as he was part of this formation, Senator Trotman. I do not even remember my role. He was Chairman and I was Deputy Chairman. We were both shareholders and I believe we are both shareholders in UCAL and if \$20 million is owed, I know in this Estimates I saw earlier that the Government expected to obtain \$10 million in the page 7 the current Estimates of Review, a dividend of income from Barbados National Oil Company (BNOC) and I noticed the note said it was a dividend but I do not know that BNOC has ever issued shares, certainly in terms of UCAL there were shares and over \$20 million is owed. We really want not only the former Chairman and Deputy Chairman, but we would like to know: what is the Government's plan for UCAL? Is it a plan that we will gradually, what is the word that they use in terms of the public servants, by "attrition", that UCAL would be starved of funds and eventually collapsed and then the private sector would have all of the work coming to it. We are not clear in terms of what is happening.

Years ago, I do not know if Senator Trotman remembers, there was a concessionaire committee set up which was looking at the privatisation of the Barbados Transport Board and I believe this was in 2008/2009. I do not know that this has been shelved or what has become of that. There are the recurring issues about conditions at Fairchild Street Bus Terminal and the apparent take over by insects that people keep complaining about and it really needs to be a facelift in improvement in terms of the Fairchild Street Bus Terminal. When it was opened years ago, it was a show piece, now it is a far cry from what it was then.

Madam President, we have come to the state of our roads which have almost reached a crisis situation. Even Minister Inniss, the one who is always commenting about everything, spoke about the conditions on our roads and how they had affected him in terms of his car tires and other people were concerned. The state of our roads is in a really deplorable situation. I was in St. Lucia last year driving around St. Lucia and was shock about the state of the roads. You could go around St. Lucy now but years ago that was impossible then I came back to Barbados and a couple weeks later, I tried to drive around Barbados and was devastated when I go to St. John and St. Joseph and saw the conditions of the roads, Madam President.

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I do not know if there is one road but Barbados is small and therefore we should have one proper road around the island.

Asides.

Senator Dr. J. X. WALCOTT: I think that is the point I am trying to make. It would certainly benefit us in terms of the tourists. I am sure that the Honourable Senator Worrell would agree and attest to the deplorable state of the roads in St. John of all places, the place which produced two Prime Ministers.

Asides.

Senator Dr. J. X. WALCOTT: Madam President, I come now to the National Housing Corporation. I know that the Government has launched the HELP Programme, Housing Every Last Person, and I am wondering how successful that has really become based on the issues in terms of the high-rise blocks and the preoccupation with ensuring that certain contractors seem to benefit not necessarily on housing those who need to be accommodated, be it rental or the purchasing of units.

Madam President, I believe I have said enough. As I close I will simply say that the Barbados economy is now in a most precarious position since we became an independent nation. The foreign reserves are less than half of what they were in 2009. The national debt is almost double what it was then. Our economy is smaller. The printing of money by the Central Bank of Barbados is almost scandalous.

Madam President, it is absolutely clear that poor policy choices and indecisiveness are responsible for where we are as a country. Decisive action is needed now. The Barbados economy is in a situation akin to a patient who needs emergency surgery to save his or her life and rather than taking decisive actions and doing what is necessary we are prescribing bed rest, continuing the status quo.

Madam President, good policies, good governance, good politics. Bad policies, bad governance, bad politics. Distractions: The Democratic Labour Party alternative facts. Denial and deception as it relates to our present economic situation is not the solution. Madam President, we need decisive action.

I am obliged to you, Ma'am.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Trotman, you have the Floor.

Senator Sir Roy TROTMAN: Madam President, I rise to make an input into this debate on the Appropriation

Bill, and it would emerge and I would say towards the bottom end of my comments what my approach has been.

Madam President, I should like to speak from the point of view of the Estimates 2017-2018 as reflected from the working man's working woman's position in the nation on the Estimates. I should wish to do this because I do not think that I can effectively address all of the Heads or the issues which there are and I would not wish to do that anyhow but I would wish to comment on some issues which have been the subject of ongoing debate over the last nine or so months but more so particularly over the period from September until now.

I wish especially to indicate that in my experience this is one of those periods where much more has been discussed by what we sometimes call the average man, the average person, regarding the Estimates than we have been hearing in a long time. We hear it in discussions taking place every day and one gets the impression that there are hardly any persons who have not been encouraged to have some expression on the matter. Indeed, just over a week ago we recognised that even teenagers were involved in the exercise. It is taking place in call-in programmes, and I believe that there are several experts who are speaking on the subject across the airwaves on this matter and in the other social media which they may be and much time is being spent on this matter. We hear it and those who pass near or go into the nooks would find that it is the subject of discussion in the rum shops, but I would not expect, Madam President, that you or the Leader of the Honourable Senate would be too much involved in that but I know the previous speaker and I would have some things to say regarding the fact that it is the subject of discussion there.

Just purely in passing, Madam President, Senator Walcott was the Chairman of the Transport Board and I was the Chairman of UCAL, United Commercial Autoworks Limited, so we must not let Alzheimer now take over especially after that presentation which he made. We worked closely together. There was somebody on the Board ready to work with the unions in those days and I hope for those days to come again. If we go on our beaches particularly those who go early morning to the beaches it is the subject of debate for those who go to the early morning visits to the beach. I do not say to those who go to swim, I leave the swimming part to Senator Fraser. Madam President, we hear it at every workplace. Persons are working. Many of them are supposed to be working but much time is spent even though people are at work discussing the challenges that there are in our economy today, and yes the discussion is 'on the block' as well because even though it would be expected that the persons 'on the block' are not employed generally and would turn off from what is happening in the community in many cases we find that persons are 'on the block' not necessarily by choice and so the subject of the challenges

to our economic circumstances are challenges which everyone is discussing.

With your leave, Madam President, I should like to pay respect to the scores of persons in those various areas who are making contributions and who though they may not have a formal setting in which to do it are sufficiently concerned about this beautiful island of ours and wish to be heard and wish to have their thoughts understood and heard by somebody who cares and have them implemented because we all are very conscious of the fact that the challenges which we face are awesome and that the challenges are imminent but at the same time the challenges are overcome.

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Madam President, I do not think that there is anyone among us who does not have the sense that we may overcome and that we cannot overcome. Of course, there are several issues within those areas where I have made reference that might distort the nature of the discussion. Ma'am, for one thing, several of those discussions in the media and elsewhere are driven by the likes or dislikes of the people who are contributing and sometimes those dislikes are hardline dislikes and do not relate necessarily to the matter that is being discussed but rather than the likes of the individuals or the likes as in Barbados' case for the political parties.

Madam President, sometimes the discussion is driven by frustration because there is either imperfect communication or incomplete information and unfortunately that is so in many of our areas because commentators have to be so very careful when they are likely to cross the line between what is true but libelous and what is untrue and still libelous. We do not have the benefit of the American community where persons have been able to say to the leader, particularly the new one, precisely what they think of what he is doing, and to do that with impunity. Madam President, sometimes the comments spring from a contradiction which is presented because opposing parties are speaking, or persons opposed to leading parties are speaking but unfortunately sometimes the problems we have spring from persons in the same groupings who are opposing other persons from their same groupings and making those disagreements which should remain in-house being made publicly known and therefore serving to confuse the public, the public who wants to believe our leaders but who get confused when the leaders contradict one another.

Madam President, our danger in this country lies in the fact that we are prepared to destroy the message because of the messenger and particularly at a time like this we have to be particularly careful and sometimes we would wish that in all of these areas where comments were made

that there was the world of possibility for the collection and collation of meaningful segments of those offerings that come from the very generous public who have so many ideas. Madam President, it is clear to me that the challenges I have referred to should not be seen in this discussion and should not be seen by us in Barbados as Democratic Labour Party problems or as Barbados Labour Party problems or as problems of the newer political parties that seem to be ready to offer themselves as the season for hopefulness comes. Madam President, both here in Barbados itself and in the Diaspora at large we are hearing, we are seeing and we are experiencing the Barbados spirit to build, and if the expression were now tainted I would say that we are experiencing the spirit to build and to make Barbados great again.

Madam President, I would wish just to take a moment out to say that in all of this we found that just a week ago there was a major march in Barbados, I am told over 10 000 persons. I wish to take time off to commend those persons who engaged in the march. There were not all Barbados Labour Party people, there were some who had no party. Ma'am, I commend them because I recall that in 1991 I led a similar march, we had a few more people, the Press said we had 40 000, but I know that in 1991 that not everybody was a member of the Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados, indeed, there were several employers. Madam President, one of the reasons for disagreement of some of my colleagues was that they did not think that I should have allowed employers to march but I believe, as my mentor used to say, that if the devil brings it that means that the Lord has sent it and that when the employers came along and joined with us in the march I was quite happy because I know that during the march there were persons who had all kinds of reasons, apart from supporting the cause of the Trade Union Movement. Ma'am, Senator Husbands who was a co-leader in that exercise, he was not then a co-leader, he was tending more to have been a rabble-rousing trade unionist as we all were.

Asides.

Senator Sir ROY TROTMAN: Senator Watson was in the march, that was because he was my school mate, but he was certainly not rabble-rousing, only when he was at school. Madam President, many of us who were there may remember that there was a fringed element that chanted from the commencement of the march, "Sandiford must go, the people say so." Madam President, we have been properly wooed by the leaders, our friends of the Labour Party who spoke to us and gave us advise and/or the new Democratic Labour Party that we had to be careful of those who would be in the crowd but who would not be of the crowd and that we had to protect the integrity of what we were doing.

Ma'am, therefore we realised that not everybody who was there would be with us and that not everybody who was in the march had the political instincts of politicians who may have been in the march, there were some who were there in essence in what was a protest exercise and they should have treated that very much as we have treated the exercise in 1991. We prayed, we marched, we spoke and the next day after the march we engaged in a day of meditation involving the church all over again, and I am sorry that Senator Durant is not in his place right now. Ma'am, at that time, as we believe it happened last weekend, we thought that the march was therapeutic.

Madam President, it did other things too and we were concerned with many other things but what it did was that it gave a channel for the expression of deep-seated concerns that persons had. Did it produce results? Of course, in our case we were satisfied that it did, it created an atmosphere of subdued protest, so that 40 000 people descending on Bridgetown and marching through the city were able to do so without having a single window broken and not having the police to have to assert their authority on anyone.

No.D6A (27)5.11 p.m.

Now I hope that positive ideas and suggestions were voiced during that march, and that they will prove productive in the exercise of trying to find a solution to our problems. I do not believe that this is the time for us to gain Brownie points from what we are individually able to do. In fact, I agree very much with the Barbados Private Sector Association (BPSA), which I should wish to commend for a public statement it made a few months ago. It is a written statement which, if you have not seen it yourself, I am quite prepared to make a Document of the House, Madam President. It says in part: "We must all pull together to restore the economy of Barbados." Yes, there will be elections. Senator Walcott has indicated that he thinks it will go in June of next year. Somebody else whispered to me that it will be in June of this year, and I must confess that I do not know which June is the June or which June will be the September, Madam President. I can only tell you that this is not a time for putting the date first. We can put Barbados first and make sure that we have a cake and then argue about how to divide the cake. I think it is very important that we understand this.

This is what the Barbados Private Sector Association went on to say: "This is no time for partisan political thinking or advantage-seeking by the private sector." Then it did say, "... And the trade unions." I guess they wanted to give us a share in their humility.

I continue: "This is a time to analyse and tackle all our difficulties objectively and collectively, and to do so in the same spirit of cooperation which served us well in not

dissimilar circumstances 25 years ago, when we correctly rejected devaluation and fixed our foreign exchange and deficit problem.” Madam President, I think that you should accept that this speaker is no apologist for the BPSA. Knowing that I am no apologist, you would recognise that the statement needs to be examined in the same way that we have to examine those comments from time to time. Some of them will be critical and some will be said in language that we do not necessarily wish to identify with, but we have to examine the comments which are made to see the extent to which they are able to guide us in this journey to rebuild and to return Barbados to earlier days. The private sector wanted to remind Barbados that we did great things when we travelled this road before, and Senators Husbands and Boyce may be able to confirm that we were able to hold down wages. Senator Boyce was advisor to the employers at the time. We were able to hold back the slide on jobs; and even though Public Service persons lost work, we were able to significantly reduce the numbers and establish a formula which ensured that wherever possible, no household was left without somebody in that household having a job.

We monitored and we held down prices. We shared information, making it still true then as it is today that the pen is mightier than the sword and that it is better for us to meet and discuss our problems rather than to throw stones across the street on a dark night, knowing that people in glass houses should not be throwing stones. We demonstrated to the International Monetary Fund and to the World Bank that we had the collective will to rise. We successfully tackled efficiency and productivity. The challenges from productivity is a subject that is raising its head again, because when we first overcame in the early 1990s and the employers started making money again, they stopped sharing information and stopped discussing the matter of productivity gains. That is so in the records, and those who very often would want to say that I err are able to check all of us who were there and who know that this is the way it was. If now we are hearing the same matters being talked about again, it is because we had short-term memories and we were concerned only with dealing with our issues for the ‘then’ and the ‘them’, and not for the ‘them’ and into the future. Herein lies our problem.

We created in our country the Barbados tripartite social dialogue as part of the social accord lifeblood of our country and our people, and it worked. If it does not work today, it is because we still believe that if you get it fixed, then forget it; it is not going to happen again so do not worry to keep it the way it should be. Yes, we can do it again, and I firmly believe we can do it again, and I firmly believe that we have to make the effort; all hands on deck. Last year I spoke about a ship but that was a different ship. This year I am arguing that all of us have roles to play on that ship. We in the trade union movement must never surrender because of our unbecoming modesty. We should

never surrender our right to tell the story as it took place, because if we stop telling the story, then many of the people in our country, particularly in the political arena as people struggle for leadership advantage, then we will find those people downplaying the role that labour played and endeavouring to argue that because they cannot deal effectively with the power of the employer, they will take out their anger on the worker since the worker is a smaller voice. It has to be recognised that this is not necessarily true. We used to sing some years ago, “The merchant has the money but the workers have the men,” and we have tried to take that into a lower position because some employers started to get jittery whenever we sang ‘Solidarity Forever’. We have tried not to sing it for the Governments that we have had in the expectation that they know the role and they appreciate what can be done.

5.07 p.m.

Unfortunately, as I speak today, that is a wish devotedly to be desired. Employers and Governments have gone on record to chronicle labours efforts in this effort to build Barbados via the workers of the country. The Prime Ministers we have had over that period have also gone on record and expressed appreciation for it. The problem therefore, as I see it, Madam President, is that if there is a deterioration, and there is, the result has to be in the negativity which has come about when once we showed signs of upward movement. Upward mobility sometimes causes the climber to forget the lower rounds from which he does aspire to climb the ladder, that is what cousin Shakespeare has said sometime before and that negativity comes by the employer and from the employer, it comes sometimes from the Government as an employer and it comes from the Government as Chairman of the social dialogue exercise. When the social dialogue exercise was planned making provision for the co-opting of other interest groups the intension was to have four major meetings in a year. When we started to see our way forward we have had zero meetings of the full social partnership in many years so that now in 2017 we are having all over again to put forward proposals for quarterly meetings. If people do not talk and they do not share common problems and they do not get commitments to deal with those problems then the problems are going to go in the directions of the people who are suffering and they will not be a common approach to how they should be resolved. Nowadays, I can speak with authority only for the Barbados Workers’ Union whereas when I spoke earlier, I had some permission to speak for a bigger body, and I can tell you that the commitment and the will of the Barbados Workers’ Union towards working with employers, working with Government and working with all of the relevant sectors to make Barbados viable and strong not necessarily for one group but for everybody that still remains the thrust of the work we are doing. We have changed the guards, we have not changed the principles and I mean “p-l-e-s”.

Barbados therefore, identifies the call wherever that call is coming from to join in efforts to overcome the challenges which we are faced with today and which we must be able to convince, not only Barbados, but the world that treats with Barbados to convince them that Barbados did it before and that Barbados is going to do it again with the help, the strength and the guidance of the mighty one.

Regrettably even as I speak to you about this though, I am forced to tell you that we are forced sometimes to identify with the children of Israel in their reflection recorded in verse 8 of Chapter 1 of Exodus where it is written, "And there arose a new Pharaoh which knew not Joseph." I have spoken about the work of Joseph in the 1990s and I have spoken about how Joseph, together with those others who needed to correct the elements of this advantage that the famine had brought to Egypt, Joseph did what had to be done and yet a new Pharaoh arose. I gather that the NUPW and the Barbados Secondary Teachers' Union and I can tell you that in my certain hearing they have similarly expressed the concern that Pharaoh is a Pharaoh whom the meet and they seem to be incumbent by the advice which that Pharaoh gave to his Prime Ministers and his various other ministers. Perhaps I should not use the word ministers because then it makes it much too modern as an analogy, by the Pharaoh spoke to his advisors. They are govern by that the same thought of the Pharaoh's advice where he said, "Let us deal wisely with them lest they multiply and join also with our enemies" the impression being given by the Pharaoh that if we were not careful to keep the Israelites in their place then they would join with the opposition and cause embarrassment to the Government. Surely, if Joseph was still remembered, this ought not to have been the case and I would love to believe that the analogy is broken where we say that there was a new Pharaoh which knew not Joseph because I am of the view that Joseph is well known and it would take many Pharaohs before Joseph is not known to the Barbados community and the Barbados political leadership.

The Barbados Workers' Union has given and will continue to give full energy in properly gearing for work in skills training, in conflict resolution, in productivity and I have to repeat that for some lecturers, in productivity.

Asides.

Senator Roy TROTMAN: Madam President, protect me please.

In the work that one of our agencies is responsible for, the work of the National Initiative for Service Excellence (NISE) and for the training that comes from NISE, we take credit for that. In our insistence on a week of excellence and that every week should be a week of excellence and in concessionary bargaining but we are equally insistent that our energies must be spent in insisting

on information sharing, in insisting on respect for the person, respect for the rules of the game, with respect for the practices and for humbling insisting that common courtesies should be exercised and the more we believe that we are empowered by our office the more we should humble ourselves to understand that our office imposes certain demands on us for courteous behaviour to the people with whom we exchange discussion and our intercourse should be involved in courtesy. We should not have situations where we can have Chairman of Boards, chairman for as many as four years and refuse requests to meet with them. This is happening.

Senate D 6A Seq 29

We should not have a ministry that takes a person serving on a Board and the Union that puts up that person off of the Board simply because the Union took a matter before the Employment Rights Tribunal and ever since then the Board has been restructured by one.

Common courtesies, and whether that is in on party or any other party, is not going be the grain that is going to be planted to produce any fruit worth anything for anybody. If we are going to build it, we have to build it because of the neutrality of the respect that has to be given to all and sundry. Whether you like the individual personally or not, it has nothing to do with what is due. and respect must always be due. Nuff respect, Senator, as people say sometimes.

When we try to deal with this problem we ought to be able therefore to recognise that the request for dialogue must be entertained and that dialogue properly addressed where the concerns of the workers are not able to be met. The request to meet can cause a change of the position of the workers' representatives. We have found that it causes employers to change and we want to believe that it causes Government to change because social dialogue is the only approach which is going effectively to take us over the top. Where the expressions by one side or the other are vapid, we must deplore them, Government employer or who.

We have to be careful to ensure that what we build in this country is labour that is willing. As Senator Ince very often says, his own special mantra, labour plus capital equals success. He wants, he says, always to make sure that we do not misunderstand and use an economic phraseology to say that labour plus capital equals profit because he argues that the end result is success and that that success properly taken care of leads to profits, and so I would wish to share in the understanding that labour has a vital role to play especially in this time and part of that role has to be to educate, to inform and to help to guide the nation as a whole into the understanding that this is a moment to concern and to involve all of us rather than to have the nation understand that each person or each man, to use

Barrow's language or the language of the apocryphal statement, and I am not sure it was apocryphal after all, of 1964 over the sugar issue where the comment is that the Right Excellent Errol Barrow was supposed to tell Frank Walcott every man 'brek' for he self over the windfall issue. We cannot afford that approach to the issue before us.

Madam President, I know that very shortly I am going to be having the challenge of time so let me introduce a very important thing which the former speaker knows I have to touch on. He is somewhere listening to this comment. Part of the challenge which is before the Government and which will be before everybody is the question of the demand which seems to be on the mouth of most economists, the demand for privatisation. I do not say that from a position that argues that privatisation is necessarily a bad thing but I would say that what is a bad thing is privatisation willy-nilly. If you privatise or you divest without there being a fundamental arrangement that you have to deal with your responsibility as a Government, then the divestment and the privatisation will not achieve its purpose, for indeed the purpose of a Government is not merely to divest to net \$10 million, the purpose of divestment should be part of a wider economic intention or overall aim to grow the economy of Barbados and to develop the society and the country at the same time. If we only deal in dollars without sense then we have a very serious problem. We need to have dollars and sense.

Now, if somebody puts up an argument ever so subtle that there will be privatisation, one must not expect trade unions to say oh the great Solomon has come to the bar, we must expect the unions to want to challenge that because for one thing employment in the public sector has greater security by and large, there is better wages by and large, it has conditions and an environment which, except now for some Hitlers that have taken over some Boards, are better conditions than you would get generally, so if somebody tries to move a body of workers from that position they are not going to welcome it with open arms, they are going to demand to see the full presentation, the full proposal, so if people challenge that we must not say that they are wrong or that they are convenient in their memory. That is why I am a little surprised that we had some push back from some Members in the Other Place who dealt with the question of the Barbados Workers' Union and privatisation and challenged us not to recall that they worked with us to develop UCAL. Of course, we had put the UCAL proposal long before to the Democratic Labour Party and as happened, with the good word, when the people to whom it was given did not take it, then we had to take it to the Gentiles. I was then a Jew and now I belong to no religion, so you can take it in that context. Yes, we took it to the Democratic Labour Party and they did not go with us but the Barbados Labour Party under the Right Honourable Prime Minister Arthur agreed that the

Transport Board should stick with its core functions and that the core functions should deal with taking people to and from their places of work or entertainment or education or whatever else and that the work of the servicing and the maintenance of the fleet should be given over to a body of workers who were going to put up the money of the severance payment they got into building that company and making it a worker-owned worker-managed company. They asked me to chair it because I was a trade union leader not because I know about engines or repairing them. This was seen as part of a Government programme which in my view reflected the vision which Prime Minister Barrow had had of political enfranchisement to be followed by economic enfranchisement and echoed subsequently by Prime Minister Sandiford.

Senate D6A Sequence 30

Madam President, this was going to be part of that exercise where workers would own the company, workers would manage the company. We did not think we would do so only by meeting on a Friday night over drinks but got a very careful, useful and efficient consultant. He is in the room and I will mention him later on.

Madam President, I go on to say that what other things we sought to do was to support early development for this company. The former Right Honourable Prime Minister Arthur indicated in the Other Place that he undertook to give BD\$2 million for that development, plus a state-of-the-arts workshop and we, including Minister Clarke as he was then in the Other Place, went looking for the place to put the workshop because we were concerned with empowerment for working people. If you want to use the analogy we saw this as a classic example which should be used by Barbados to see how workers, 150 or so plus others who invested their severance even though they could not get work could invest their own money to manage a company that would be the ideal and which would bring credit and glory to the people of Barbados. Madam President, in order to make that work we all agreed to the exclusivity of the contract we would have to supply the work for the Transport Board. Senator Jerome Walcott, Chairman of the Transport Board could confirm that exclusivity. I know that on call-in programmes I have been called a child of the devil for making reference to it but it was, in fact, that. Ma'am, Senator Boyce was the advisor.

Madam President, I mentioned this to say a number of things, one is that in the third year UCAL was able to declare a dividend, and Senator Boyce will confirm this, because the work plan was fine and because the people had the will to build. Ma'am, those of us who are bible readers will join with Senator Durant to let you know that even though Nehemiah, Sanballat and Tobiah were ready to pull down, the people had a will to build, they had a mind to work, with sword in one hand and the tools of the trade in

the other, and UCAL functioned but declared a dividend and thereafter both Administrations proceeded to dismantle the vision and to funnel the profits to areas where there was more favour for them, I suppose.

Madam President, somebody some time told me that I did not know what I had to do if I really wanted UCAL to succeed and I argued, as I have told my children before, that you should never work for your money twice. Those who know what that means will tell those who do not know, so that UCAL was denied from very early the opportunity to provide parts for the Transport Board, it was a labour-only contract. After two years efforts were put in place for the Transport Board to go back to its core functions. I must say that Senator Walcott was no longer Chairman of the Transport Board at that time so that we can give him his escape route, he had been moved to other places. By year three works started going to other garages which were not part of the publicly declared plan to make worker/ownership part of the reason for the forward progress that Barbados would make.

Madam President, I mention this not because I want necessarily to talk about UCAL, although I have to because they still owe us an awful lot of money which we are not getting. In fact, the Transport Board hardly gives us any money on a monthly basis and we have to go cap-in-hand when we cannot find them to the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs and ask him kindly to prevent persons from going too many more days without any wage for the week, because that is where the matter is now. Madam President, the Transport Board stopped paying on time, they then stopped paying all together and so we rely on the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs.

Ma'am, we know that if the wages bill comes to \$25 the Government would only pay you that \$25 and so you would not be able to pay the social charges such as the National Insurance Scheme, the Barbados Revenue Authority and other social charges, and so we have constantly to be asking the Minister to understand that if we are not paid then we cannot pay those other social charges and so you would have to forgive us, because you must forgive us our trespasses as we forgive you for trespassing against us. Ma'am, that needs to be the approach that has to be taken on issues of this sort. Madam President, we need to meet with the Government and to confirm the figure which is well over \$20 million - and ever so often we hear claims that that is not true but the records will show and we would want that done because if there is an accident tomorrow somebody has to be able to show the correct information.

Madam President, what I am saying should act as a warning, that warning should be that if we are going to be asking Barbados to corporatise or if we are going to be asking Barbados to privatise, then we must recognise that

there are going to be challenges which will confront these persons. When the Government of the day, the Barbados Labour Party thought of corporatising the Bridgetown Port we indicated to them that while that may appear to be an idea that we could live with, what we had to be careful to recognise was that we did not wish to have a position where the workers at the Port would be asked to go to the bank to borrow money to buy into the corporate structure and that therefore the Board of the Port should be willing that where people indicated an interest, they would give them credit for a certain percentage of those shares and that that would be worked out by the labour deducted on a weekly basis over time. Ma'am, if we were in a crisis then clearly that approach cannot do if you want ready cash, but I would not be advising anybody where we have the UCAL/Transport Board experience to ask anybody who has invested their few thousands of dollars in the business, to go into a similar arrangement where overnight somebody, anybody, Minister, Board Chairman or whoever could decide that the area for trading would now have to be varied from what the plan is, without any notice being given and that the entire exercise philosophically, tactically and morally become barren and destroys the well-being of that group of people and the welfare of the people as a whole.

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

Senator SIR ROY A. TROTMAN: ... I would wish to say that where there is going to be a question of any discussion on shares divestment, that it has to become the subject of very careful discussion and consultation, and that the best interest of all the parties, including the workers and their representatives, must be taken into consideration. These are difficult times, Madam President. These are times where some people may appear to have all the answers. On our programmes, some are making it clear that they do have all the answers, and some are saying that they have been given a special word from on high. What we need to do is listen very carefully, give every man thine ear; but to act on everything we hear is not possible. We have to be careful, we have to be wise, and we have to be ready to consult fully.

The labour movement stands ready to play its role in turning around the affairs of our country. The labour movement says only that Government has to understand that we cannot work on our own. We have to work with an employer class that is ready not to pass the buck, pass the burden and the responsibility, and therefore reduce jobs wherever that is possible but never seek to reduce profit levels. We have to be ready if they are going to be bullets to be bitten, and everybody has to demonstrate up front a willingness to treat in a manner that tells us that "all o' we is one". I thank you very much.

SUSPENSION

Senator Dr. Hon. E.R. BYER-SUCKOO: Madam President, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 6 p.m.

The question that the Sitting do now suspend until 6 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Her Honour THE PRESIDENT suspended the Sitting accordingly.

5.39 p.m.

RESUMPTION

MADAM PRESIDENT: This Sitting is resumed. Senator Ince.

Senator J. INCE: Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, the Appropriation Bill that we normally call the Estimates seeks to outline the economic policies of the Democratic Labour Party (DLP). Those policies, Madam President, that seek to development the agriculture sector, the industrial sector, the manufacturing sector and at the same time foster growth in the tourism and offshore business sector. Madam President, this Administration say to Barbadians and we have repeated it over that part of our policy is to restructure and diversify this economy. When we look at the principals of management of the economy, Madam President, in 2008 in the midst of one of the worst recessions we said to Barbados is not just an economy, it is a society. We also indicated, Madam President, that the objective of this Administration is the management an economy that is socially balanced, environmentally sound, economically viable and characterised by good governance.

Madam President, the Estimates before us seeks to highlight Government's expenditure and revenue for the financial year 2017 to March 31, 2018. The allocation of that revenue to the various Heads and Subheads, the impact of expenditure, Madam President, and revenue on those areas that are critical in maintaining those essential services for all Barbadians and visitors alike. Madam President, it also highlights our capital works programme, critical to the country's infrastructure for the movement of goods and services. It also highlights our prospects in the tourism, agriculture and construction sector. Madam President, it speaks to our fiscal deficit for the financial year and how the deficit is going to be managed. These Estimates, Madam President, also highlight our sources of borrowing to finance the deficit and the impact of those borrowings on the short medium and long term viability of this country and this economy. Madam President, many times I listen to those voices who want to create the impression that this country or this economy has fallen apart, that the people in Barbados are in some wonderland, that this Administration and the leadership of this Administration do not know what

we are doing for the people of Barbados and it seems to me that words like "debt", "fiscal deficits", "borrowing from the international market", "printing of money" and "foreign reserves" only started in 2008. That is what they want us to think but I have said it over and over again, Madam President, this country Barbados was built on honesty, hard work and debt; borrowed money.

In addition to that it was that gel between labour and capital, the voices of labour and the voices of labour, Madam President, are the unions, the representatives of the people who do not have a voice and as a result of having labour plus capital a statement that I use often, I say labour plus capital equals success. We have a Barbados that we can be proud of and these Estimates today, Madam President, speaks to that Barbados. It speaks to the direction this Government is taking to enhance the lives of our people, to enhance what we call the revenue base of this country and of this economy so do not let us be daunted. I do not want the people of Barbados who are listening to us to be daunted by negative comments, comments that are baseless.

Madam President, this country, despite the downgrades, is seeing economic progression, not economic regression. Madam President, we have a housing programme that is unprecedented. When we look at what we have achieved in housing, when we look at what we have achieved in reforming the health sector, when we look at what we have achieved in reforming the tourism sector, when we look at what we have achieved and clearly outline a plan for the agriculture sector of Barbados ... Madam President, I listened to Senator Walcott making some comments about VAT and I made reference to statements I have made in this Senate over and over about VAT and the Senator went on to calculate the total VAT from 1997 to 2008 under the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) and then went on to compare that analysis with my statement, I am going to repeat it. I thought that I had laid out the analysis of Estimates. Madam President, can you recall that in the Estimates of 2015/2016 when the goodly Senator made a query as to not seeing moneys allocated for garbage trucks and I said to the Senator at the time, you are not going to see the word garbage trucks, you are doing to see capital equipment, for all of the years you have spent almost 50 per cent of your time as a minister, you should have known by now how to interpret the Estimates. Madam President, I made it absolutely clear that between 2000 and 2005 were the richest years for the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) in this country.

Senate D 6A Seq 33 6.19 p.m.

I never said 1997. I identified those years. I said 2000 to 2005. Madam President, I indicated to this Senate and to this country that the VAT collected between 2000 and 2005 was \$3.2 billion; excise tax collected was \$872

million; and import duties were \$998 million for a total of \$1 861 090 000 in taxes between 2000 and 2005.

I also stated, Madam President, that when you look at the overall collection of taxes, both direct and indirect, and this is just the areas that I am speaking about, between 2000 and 2005 the Barbados Labour Party collected \$10.9 billion in taxes, the exact figure was \$10 941 040 000, and I ask the question, look around Barbados and tell me what you see in housing or tell me what you see in the Barbados Water Authority or what you see in the roadworks programme for \$10.9 billion in taxes.

Madam President, the goodly Senator went on and did a little arithmetic. This Administration through our Fiscal Consolidation Programme increased VAT from 15 per cent to 17.5 per cent. On the other hand, the Barbados Labour Party reduced the VAT on goods and services in the hotel sector from 15 per cent to 7.5 per cent, remember that, removed the VAT on computer equipment and created a basket of goods. Do you not think that if you removed all of that VAT that your VAT is going to be less than mine that increased it to 17.5 per cent? The Senator is saying that this Administration collected more VAT not realising that they reduced the VAT and we increased the VAT. It is obvious basic common-sense, basic arithmetic. Madam President, if we increased the VAT to 17.5 per cent and you reduced the VAT by almost 50 per cent, do you not expect to get less VAT revenue than this Administration? Do the five-year comparison, that is what you call analysis.

Madam President, the goodly Senator is an outstanding surgeon who is grounded in science and you would expect that his analytical work would be a lot better, but he is saying that we collect more. Do you not expect to collect more at 17.5 per cent? They removed all of the VAT from computers, reduced VAT to the hotel sector and created a basket of goods, and then you are saying that this Democratic Labour Party collected more money in VAT.

Madam President, when we speak to the debt of Barbados and of deficit financing, deficit financing looks at borrowing as well as the printing of money. Madam President, I found it amazing that the Barbados Labour Party turned their attention to the Central Bank of Barbados and I asked myself the question: Do Barbadians know that the issuing of Treasury Bills and Debentures or Treasury Notes through the Treasury is the printing of money? The attention was turned to the Central Bank of Barbados to make Barbadians believe that this Administration was committing a criminal act when the Barbados Labour Party used both the Central Bank of Barbados and Treasury to print money in this country. Madam President, let me give you an example. In 1999 the economy grew by 3.1 per cent compared to 4.4 per cent in 1998 with a decline in the Gross Domestic Product; the fiscal deficit widened to 2.7 per cent of Gross Domestic Product, three times higher the

rate in the previous years, and the deficit in the previous year was 0.8 per cent; the Central Bank of Barbados made two issues, \$113 million in Debentures and on top of that the Treasury Department, under the instruction of Government, issued three-months Treasury Bills at 6.05 per cent and six-months Treasury Bills at 6.57 per cent. Within that year of 1999 there were 23 issues of Treasury Bills and three of the 23 issues were undersubscribed by the amount of \$40.7 million. Who took up that position? The Central Bank of Barbados.

Madam President, the Central Bank of Barbados is what you call a fiscal agent of Government and the Treasury Department and the Consolidated Fund are fiscal agents of Government not a commercial bank down Broad Street or not the credit unions of Barbados, so in times of economic challenges these entities are supposed to assist Government but there are persons who would like us not to take this approach because at the end of the day if we do not take this approach then it suits their agenda to have the people who live in the countryside of Barbados not getting any buses, so if you live near the Old Works Hill in St. George you would have to walk to Boarded Hall or if you live down in Belleplaine you would have walk up the East Coast Road to Horse Hill or if you live in Bayfield in St. Philip you would walk to Six Roads to get a bus, that is what they would like to see.

Madam President, in relation to the whole idea about financing and the printing of money, they printed money through the Treasury along with the Central Bank of Barbados and funnelled that money into the National Insurance Scheme. It is very important that we understand. I have always said that if you want to hide anything in Barbados to put it in writing, put it in book, place the book in the library and it is going in to stay there.

Madam President, when we speak of these things, in 1995 we had the balances at the National Insurance Scheme, which is supposed to assist us. I heard a lot of talk about utilising the National Insurance Scheme and that people are worried about the National Insurance Scheme funding. Madam President, in 1995 we had at the National Insurance Scheme, we are speaking about the printing of money, Treasury Bills of \$2.0 million. This is 1995.

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The Barbados Labour Party came to office in October, 1994, so I gave them the benefit of the doubt between October and December but in 1995 there were \$2 million in Treasury Bills; Debentures, \$349.7 million; Development Bonds, \$22.7 million. Madam President, at December 2007 when we look at the balances within the National Insurance Scheme you had something looking like \$120 million in Treasury Bills, \$838 million in Debentures, and then Bonds which came up to \$1.4 billion.

Madam President, are you saying to me that in 1995 the assets within the National Insurance Scheme portfolio were \$468 million and that by 2007, based on what I have here, you have a \$1.4 billion at December 31, 2007? Ma'am, if that is not the printing of money, then tell me what else is it? Ma'am, so that it is alright for the Barbados Labour Party to print money to the tune of \$1.4 billion, despite solid economic growth, despite low unemployment rate, despite an abundance of VAT and all other taxes. Madam President, this Democratic Labour Party being challenged by the fact that we were losing \$200 million a year in the International Business Sector, being challenged by high energy costs and having an energy bill of well-over \$800 million, being challenged by the Organisation of Eastern Developing States, being challenged by lower prices as far as our exports especially sugar was concerned, having challenges within the rum industry, yet, Madam President, in the face of all of this we were able to complete houses at Valery, we finished the project at Country Park Towers where the Barbados Labour Party sold land at Kent to complete Country Park Towers but it never happened.

Madam President, they would want us to believe that there was no such thing called a recession, but I can remember and I have outlined clearly that this recession was not driven by the normal theory of economics. Ma'am, I will say it over and over again that this recession was driven by a collapse of the global industries. I say to Barbadians that this recession was going to run long, that it was going to run hard and that it was going to run deep. I said that it was going to threaten lives and businesses. I said that we were going to see an unprecedented rise in the cost of living. I said that we were not going to see any improvements until late 2014 going into 2015 and that any improvement we would see was going to be marginal. Madam President, I said that from 2008.

Madam President, this Democratic Labour Party indicated that we would have challenges but that if we do have improvements that those improvements were going to be marginal, but there are those who believe that the answers lie within the bosom of the Leader of the Opposition, that they are going to wave a magic wand, that all the tourists are going to come from down by the Cement Plant and so you do not have to worry about tourism, that the foreign reserves... Ma'am, that is the impression that they want to give Barbadians.

Madam President, when we speak to the printing of money and to foreign reserves, leading up to the 2008 elections the Barbados Labour Party printed money in the amount of \$200 million Treasury Notes and Debentures. Madam President, it is in the Estimates and if the Senators here want to find it, then I will do so. Madam President, I have always heard the statement from the former Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs who is now the

representative of St. Peter and now being repeated by the current Leader of the Opposition, including their economic advisor, Dr. Clyde Mascoll, that at December 31, 2007, the Central Bank had carried no debt. Madam President, they want to give the country the impression that they had no debt as at December 31, 2007.

Madam President, when speaking of debt if you were to look at the reports of the Central Bank of Barbados and the Accountant-General Reports, 2005 and 2006, Madam President, you would see that the Barbados Labour Party did what is called balloon borrowing, where they borrowed \$635 million in Debentures between 2005 and 2006 and rolled that debt over as a balance brought forward, so that you would never see anything happening in 2007 under the Government but they brought forward \$635 million in Bonds and Debentures thus creating the impression that they did not print money. Madam President, take a look at the Annual Report of the Central Bank of Barbados for the year 2005-2006.

Ma'am, that was on the local side. The former Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs gets in the Other Place and reminds Barbadians about it, but when you look at the numbers and you look at the foreign side you would see that they increased Bonds and Debentures on the foreign market: in 2005, \$576 million; in 2006, \$640.3 million. Ma'am, not only that, they also bought \$334 million in equities and US\$118.7 million in Treasury Bills. Madam President, that is the Government who is saying to us that the whole idea of printing money is wrong.

Madam President, I heard the former Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs questioning the printing of money, but Barbados has no wheat, barley or copper, all that we have is our people and in order to keep the economy in the direction that our children can wake up tomorrow and can have school meals, that if you want to purchase a car in Barbados tomorrow you can do so, that if our retirees want to go to the health clinics and to the hospital to get drugs and medical services that they can do so, Madam President, that is the reason this Administration printed money, but all of a sudden it seems like the whole idea of printing money is a terrorist act or a criminal act, so that we must destroy or dislocate Barbadians in order to please a selected few.

Madam President, I must say to you that this Democratic Labour Party has done extremely well in these challenging times. I would remind Barbadians that not facing a recession of this magnitude the Barbados Labour Party was in office from 1980 to 1986, until we had elections. Madam President, these are some of the measures taken by the Barbados Labour Party but now they would want to tell us that the measures that we have taken in order to manage this economy have not worked. Madam President, the Barbados Labour Party banned the

importation of cars for six months in this country, now I am hearing that other countries are laughing and that sooner or later will soon start to import bicycles. That was the comment of many of our next-door neighbours.

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They banned the importation of motorcars for six months and laid off 5 000 public workers, Madam President. Do you know people have forgotten that? Five thousand public workers. They then took the non-contributory pensioners from the Consolidated Fund. These were persons who had never paid a cent in National Insurance, never made a contribution to the Scheme; and they transferred the non-contributory pensioners from the Consolidated Fund to the National Insurance Fund, Madam President. This was done in order to cut expenditure and to avoid the extreme austerity measures of the International Monetary Fund. Madam President, those non-contributory pensioners have caused that NIS Fund to haemorrhage up to today.

In addition to that, they removed two pensions. They said if you got the Treasury pension, you could not get the NIS pension. If you were in the Public Service prior to 1975, those were the measures taken by the Barbados Labour Party; that you could not get the two pensions, and many of our public servants are feeling the hurt today because they were not allowed to get the two pensions under the Barbados Labour Party if they were in the Public Service prior to 1975. Madam President, now they are jumping around and want to tell Barbadians that what we are doing makes no sense; but I am saying to Barbadians that they gave us a vote of confidence in 2013 and, I am saying to the Opposition, they are going to give us another vote of confidence whenever that Election is called. I am confident about that; confident about it. We have a case to put, and Barbadians understand. I always hear Barbadians are no fools. The days where one house got the newspaper are over. Barbadians now have access to the print media electronically, they also now have Social Media, and they have all of these things, so you cannot fool Barbadians anymore.

This Democratic Labour Party, we have laid out a plan for Barbados. There is no restructuring and diversification programme that is not going to create some level of discomfort, Madam President. I have said over and over again, compare restructuring and diversifying to refurbishing your house. You are going to get some dust. There are days when you will have to eat from home. Some people leave home and go and rent when they are refurbishing their premises. Sometimes you fall out with your neighbour because the carpenters are working on weekends and they want to get some rest. Those things happen; so with the restructuring and the diversifying of this economy, we are going to get some fallout but at the

end of the day, Madam President, what I am saying to Barbadians is that what we are doing now is pruning those beautiful trees within the economy that have some dry branches. We are pruning. Once we have pruned, and not only pruned, but we are also removing a lot of the overgrown bush - if you want to make it simple and call it that -- within the economy. Once we have finished, Madam President, we are now going to add what you would call some 12-12-17-2, which is an agricultural term. Once we have added the 12-12-17-2 that are the policies of the Democratic Labour Party, you are going to see some lush growth. You are going to see fruits of our labour. That is what we are doing, and once we have completed that, and those fruits begin to grow, the leaves will be green and lush, Madam President. That is what 12-12-17-2 does to the plants, and that is agricultural language, Madam President.

I am saying to the people of Barbados that despite the discomfort, there are good times lying ahead. There are good times, because we are putting those necessary things in place. Do not let us be fazed. Madam President, I would remind Barbadians in this Senate what Matthew Chapter 9:17 says. You cannot put new wine in old skins, if not the old skins are going to burst; and we have no intention of restructuring and diversifying the economy and allowing new wine for the prosperity of this country to go into old skins to put us back where we are. It is not going to happen, Madam President. We have taken on that role of looking at those agencies that have challenged Government.

Madam President, I have heard comments about the Barbados Water Authority over and over again. I have heard it said that we built this building for \$65 million. Madam President, I am proud to say that every project this Democratic Labour Party has embarked on since coming to office came in on time and within budget, and I ask the Opposition -- they are sitting here -- to get up on a Point of Order and identify one project; one. Madam President, this is why I made reference to not putting new wine in old skins. There was a situation at Water Authority where the buildings were run-down, and if you are going to consolidate Water Authority and create that efficient service for the people of Barbados, it is better to create that service under one roof, Madam President.

Madam President, let me give you a rundown on what we gave the Barbados Labour Party in 1994. They want to talk about the Barbados Water Authority (BWA)? Madam President, we gave them a Water Authority worth \$189 million. I have repeated it in here. Madam President, the BWA had no debt; no short-term or long-term debt. Let them go and check the Annual Reports. The debt was simple accounts receivable, customer deposits. When this Democratic Labour Party established the BWA as an agency, we established the BWA to help pay the bills of

Government, Madam President. That is what the BWA was established for; to help transfer monies to the Consolidated Fund. Madam President, in 1992 the BWA made \$5.2 million in profit, in 1993 it made \$6.18 million, in 1994 it made \$7 million, and in 1995 when the Barbados Labour Party took over, the profits of the BWA started to dwindle. The profits fell from \$7 million to \$3.3 million. We are talking about financial terrorism?

I am going to remind the goodly Senator Abrahams. He likes to make this comment about 'Judas kind' but let me tell him where the Judas kind is. Madam President, we gave BWA cash-in-hand \$11.2 million, fixed deposits \$6 million, Treasury bills \$6.5 million. We had inventories of \$10.5 million, with retained earnings of \$7.9 million, Madam President, and the pension fund of the BWA workers was calculated and paid up. Madam President, we came to office and found the BWA in debt - \$125 million in accumulated debt -- and collapsing. It could not buy diesel for the trucks, it could not purchase parts for the trucks, and we increased water rates by 60 per cent to save the BWA. In addition, Madam President, look at our mains programme. Under the Barbados Labour Party, they borrowed money for the mains programme and there was not a main. They all burned in a mysterious fire down Graeme Hall a Friday evening. That is where the Judas kind is. Senator Abrahams speaks about a Judas kind, Madam President?

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Madam President, we have completed a water metre programme. When you look at what we have done with the water augmentation project in St. Philip we had a situation where the mains were collapsing. You had the reservoirs collapsing, almost 60 per cent of our water was wasted through leakages and we took it on. The Minister Estwick took it on under criticism from the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) and we never for one day said that we were going to give up. We created that environment, Madam President, brought back some level of respectability when it comes to water in the parishes of St. Joseph and St. Thomas. We are not 100 per cent perfect, the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) never said that we are perfect but we rose to the occasion and we answered the call. With all of these variables against us, Madam President, including the downgrades and we were supposed to implement measures in order to please the Standards & Poor's and the Moody's, we were supposed to cut back deficit. Madam President, what we said to Barbadians was that we were going to reduce the deficit gradually, not in any hurry. We are going to reduce the deficit and we asked Barbadians to understand clearly what we are doing. Madam President, in 2008/2009 we had a fiscal deficit of 4.8 per cent. In 2009 to 2010, 8.6 per cent; 2010/2011, 8.8 per cent; 2011/2012, 4.5 per cent; 2012/2013, Madam President, do not let us forget our deficit rose to 11.2 per cent an all-time high but we did

not run away. This Administration said we are going to manage it for the people of Barbados and we did not run away. We said we were going to reduce it gradually, Madam President, and that is what we set out to do. I must say today, Madam President, that in these Estimates you are now seeing a fiscal deficit of 5.1 per cent but I ask the question back then, when we speak to the debt, how did we get here? When I hear the Opposition speaking to the debt of this country, Madam President, I outlined to this Senate that our total debt as December 31, 2015 was \$12.4 billion and I also highlighted how our debt increased over the years. In 1991, \$2.4 billion; in 1992, \$2.5 billion; in 1993, and Madam President, by 1996 we were \$2.28 billion, an increase of \$256 million or 9.95 per cent. Government total debt, Madam President, so when I hear the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) wanting to create this impression that all of this money was borrowed under the Democratic Labour Party (DLP), I want Barbadians to remember that we brought loans to book and we sought the guarantees. Government is not a one-day operation. Both Administration borrowed, and the total Government debt for 2008/2009 financial year, Madam President, stood at \$6.2 billion and we brought to books, this is moneys borrowed by the Barbados Labour Party (BLP), \$1.9 billion to give us a total debt at December 31, 2013 of \$8.2 billion. Madam President, this Government sought guarantees for \$1 073 964 000 and out of that \$909 855 589 represented the moneys borrowed by the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) that no guarantees were sought, nothing came to Parliament because they failed to amend the Special Loans Act. They came to office in 1994 and did not amend the Special Loans Act under no time and we came to office in 2008 and amended the Act, brought the loans to books and as a result of that, Madam President, our debt stood at \$12.4 billion. The Barbados Labour Party (BLP) represented \$8.2 billion and the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) \$4.2 billion. That is how we got there but you have this shouting and huffing and puffing that the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) borrowed this money and it was all the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) moneys, this hot air. Madam President, some of our challenges is the unproductive debt. I have always said that one of our challenges in our debt is something called unproductive debt and unproductive debt is when you borrow money, the projects do not fall within line, or the revenue generated is not there so you have to call on the Consolidated Fund. We have millions of dollars of unproductive debt so it is important, Madam President, that we manage our debt and what this Administration is doing is that we are managing out debt. We are managing the people of Barbados' money. That is what the debt is. When you are managing debt you are managing the people of Barbados so we are not going to be phased by any downgrades. Standards & Poor's have their work to do and Moody's have their work to do but at the same time when those downgrades happened under the Barbados Labour Party (BLP), when we were warned about the increasing debt as I just outlined, when we were

warned about running two high fiscal deficits the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) knew very well that to cut the deficit to that manageable level to suit Standards & Poor's. The former Minister of Finance knew that very well. He knew very well that if he had done what Standards & Poor's wanted him to do that this country would be chaos because the only thing that we have is our people, but now we are facing downgrades when we got downgraded to a triple B+, Madam President, that is the lowest investment grade, we were are the doorsteps of junk bonds status. We were sitting on the steps just waiting. We were downgraded to triple B+, the lowest investment grade and after that is speculation, what you call speculative grades. Madam President, it is important to know what it is and what it means. We have a lot of people just keeping noise, as I said.

Madam President, Standards & Poor's triple C+ says that you are vulnerable. It also says, along with Moody's that the dependent on favourable business financial and economic conditions that is what your economic performance depends on to meet your financial obligations. Madam President, what I smiled at, I am hearing the words and I do not get caught up with the numbers, I am hearing that we got downgraded 19 times. Madam President, when you look at it, and I looked at the downgrades, this country got downgraded nine times but for purpose of politics and sometimes I call it idiotic behaviour they multiply the nine by two and called it 18. When you look at the downgrades they would take the nine and multiply it by two. Standards & Poor's and Moody's downgraded Barbados in the same time zone and if you are a student of finance, Madam President, you would know that if you grade something in the same time zone, what we call real time, Barbados was downgraded in real time by two entities

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Within the industry you see that as a downgrade but in Barbados with all of the brains we have, they multiply it by two and call it 18 because it sounds like the country is falling apart. These are persons who are supposed to have Master's Degrees and PhDs but they forget basic arithmetic, basic statistics. That is Statistics 101 that they teach you at the University of the West Indies where if you measure something in real time it cannot be two. They went on and multiply it by two. Could you imagine marking an exam with these brains that do not understand basic statistics in arithmetic? They multiply 9 by 2 because it sounds like everything is going wrong in the country to make people believe that we are at rock bottom, that Barbados is no more.

Madam President, we are going to press on. This Administration has faced these types of challenges before and the people of Barbados saw the results when we had to restructure and diversify the economy under Sir Lloyd

Erskine Sandiford. This is not the first time for the Democratic Labour Party to face these types of challenges. I have said over and over again that whenever this country is at a crossroad and whenever lives and businesses are threatened the Democratic Labour Party is in office to lead the people of Barbados. That is not by accident, that is divine intervention. That is no voodoo economics, that is no witchcraft, that is divine intervention at its best and if it upsets individuals that this Democratic Labour Party is in office, I am saying to this Senate and to the people of Barbados we are going to join hands with you and serve a third term, we are going to take you to that promise land and we are not going to build any idols at all, we are going to build structures that are viable, structures that create employment for the people of Barbados and structures where our people when they wake in the morning can see the hands and the fingerprints of the Democratic Labour Party. Madam President, that is what this is all about. It is not about self or a badge of honour. It is not that. It is not about getting popular or going on twitter and youtube. It is not that at all, so do not let us get carried away. We get caught up and then the Opposition wants to come and tell the people of Barbados that they have answers. What are the answers? Tell me what you are going to cut?

Madam President, I made a statement about devaluation in this country. I have said over and over that when we speak to devaluation we are speaking about destroying the people of Barbados, that we had nothing except our people, that our exports are minimal and we have no impact on international trade.

Madam President, I heard the former Honourable Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, the Honourable Member for St. Peter, asking us to consider fixing the Barbados dollar to the basket of currencies. Madam President, I said publicly that when you look at the Barbados dollar... Sometimes you have to wait. I learnt how to wait and listen and I smiled when I heard the former Honourable Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs asking us to consider the value of the dollar and having it fixed among the basket of currencies. Madam President, there are five basket of currencies as far as international trade is concerned: the US dollar, the Pound Sterling, the Euro, the Japanese Yen and the Canadian dollar. Within that basket, there is no Barbados dollar when it comes to international trade. The value of the Barbados dollar lies only in if this Senator goes down the street, stops at Collins Pharmacy or Cave Shepherd, purchase a shirt and that cashier gives me the change in return. Madam President, if the St. Lucian Government says to the Government of Barbados tomorrow that they do not need the Barbados dollar it has no value in trade with St. Lucia, we have to convert it to US dollars. If the Government of St. Vincent says to the Government of Barbados that they are not going to take the Barbados dollar, we have to convert it to US dollars.

Madam President, I cannot pick up a phone and ask the Government of Japan to send me 10 motorcars and say to the Government of Japan or the person who is doing the invoice that I am going to send them Barbados dollars, the person would want to know if I am crazy. Barbados dollars. I have to convert that money to US dollars or the Japanese Yen.

Madam President, when I made the statement that when you look into the basket of currencies the Barbados dollar has no value in international trade... I never said that the Barbados dollar does not have a value. Some person called the former Honourable Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, he read the story and he jumped up, as I said, like a bull in a china shop... I have always said that, so when you are asking us now to look at fixing the Barbados currency... The reason why currencies appreciate and fluctuate is because of something called commodity trading. Barbados have no commodities. What are we going to fix the Barbados currency against when we have already fixed it against the US dollar that is the international reserves currency for international trade, and then the former Honourable Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs said that I want a psychiatric evaluation, well I think he better check his head because he is asking this country to consider fixing... What are we going to fix it against? We have nothing to trade, we have no commodities so when you see the dollar appreciate you are speaking to a currency trader.

Every now and then, Madam President, I will go and test my arm in a demo operation, on Bloomberg or somewhere, to see if I would still remember what to do. Currencies appreciate and depreciate because of commodity trading so when you see a currency appreciate it means that the price of barley, the price of wheat, the price of gas, copper, gold or something has gone up. You trade currencies because you have a buffer. Tell me what Barbados is going to fix again. We are supposed to fix our currency into a basket of currencies that has no influence on the Barbados economy. These are the types of things that people want you to believe.

Madam President, I have said it over and over again. I respect people and I respect people's ideas, but it does not matter to me how many titles you have behind your name or how long you were the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, if you say something in this country and I do not agree with it I am going to say that publicly without fear and trembling. When you talk fixing, you are going to float.

Madam President, when we speak to the Estimates, we can get this deficit down at the stroke of a pen but what would happen to the people of Barbados. Madam President, all we have to do is to take \$589 million out of the general expenditure and that is going to reduce our overall fiscal

balance to 10.1 per cent. When you take out of amortisation debt and interest payments and principal payments that will reduce your fiscal deficit to 1.1 per cent, that is easy but tell me what is going to happen to the private sector, with goods and services, with the children getting School Meals tomorrow, and to the elderly, so you go to please

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international agencies and at the same time you destroy the social fabric of the country. Madam President, when you destroy the social fabric of Barbados we are destroying labour, do not let anybody fool us, as I said Barbados was built on labour and labour plus capital equals success. There is a theory that labours plus capital equals profit but I always change it around and all of us are labourers.

Madam President, it is very important that we listen and understand the policies of this Democratic Labour Party Administration. We have delivered in areas that are important. We have not done everything perfectly. We have not executed all of our projects at 100 per cent but as I always make the statement to show me a perfect man or woman or a perfect Government and I will take you down to Lexi's, Oistins and show you Jesus and his 12 disciples doing line dancing. Ma'am, that is the type of thinking, that we are not perfect but that we have delivered and I am confident saying to this Senate and to the people of Barbados that we are going in the right direction, to keep faith in the Democratic Labour Party Administration, keep faith in our policies, keep faith because this Democratic Labour Party is the party of choice for the people of Barbados. Madam President, with those few words, I am obliged to you.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Senator Lady Haynes, you have the Floor.

SENATOR CAROL Lady HAYNES: Madam President, I rise to lend my voice to this Appropriation Bill, 2017, in what is seeming to me to be the dead of night but I will try to get my head around it. Ma'am, I have concerns, I am obviously concerned about the \$1.586 billion debt that we are facing. Ma'am, as they say, a picture is worth one thousand words and a few weeks ago I saw a diagram, what I believe the young people call a main on Whatsapp of what is called the snowball of debt. I do not know if anybody had seen it but what it had was that it was a global picture of countries according to their indebtedness and the most indebted countries were at the centre moving right out to the periphery.

Madam President, as I looked at the periphery and moved in I was stunned to see us there with Ireland, Italy, Greece, Cyprus, Portugal, Lebanon and in our Caribbean with Grenada and Jamaica. Ma'am, that for me really was

very sobering because I saw it in a pictorial kind of representation and I too like Sir Roy was struck by the statement from the Barbados Private Sector Association and I felt that in a lot of ways it encapsulated several of my own concerns. The lead concern was the lack of confidence of investors, lenders and entrepreneurs, both foreign and domestic, in the ability of this Government to meet its commitments especially in the longer term. It then spoke to the printing of money, to the imbalance of earning and spending of foreign exchange worsened by foreign exchange leakage, it spoke to low levels of productivity, impediments to entrepreneurial activities and a few other things. It was a positive article because it did offer short term solutions and the one that struck me was their recommendation for Oversight Committee as a Subcommittee of the Social Partnership, the sole purpose would be to monitor the fiscal, monetary and quantitative targets set by Government to ensure that they are met and to advise on any necessary remedial action.

Madam President, under the long term goals they spoke to reform governance, an innovative, entrepreneurial and competitive business community, a transformed public sector, a united Trade Union Movement but again the one that caught mine eyes was an educational system designed to satisfy and develop the diversity of students' potential in its entirety, that produces entrepreneurs and innovators and citizens who understand and value their social responsibilities, their democratic rights and the principles of accountability and transparency in public governance, and as Sir Roy had said in his presentation, the appeal for a process to be started towards achieving a consensus on best we can together meet these challenges. Madam President, a real call for the involvement of the Social Partnership.

Madam President, at around the same time Sir Geoffrey Cave wrote a detailed letter to the papers appealing to Barbadians to rally together urgently, to rescue our foreign exchange position. Again, he said, "As I pointed out before Government is not some entity separate from us, Government is us and if we do not all work together and demand ongoing cooperation, public reporting of the progress, hugely important changes and decisions will be forced upon us by others because of the urgency of this situation."

Madam President, I think those two statements and the letter encapsulates a lot of my own concern. I add to that the high cost of State-run corporations but search as I might the Estimates I could not find the transfers and subsidies listed there so as to be able to speak to that in a more efficient manner but I know, as I think Senator Ince referred to that, change the dealing with the State-run corporations.

Madam President, in addition the reports from the Barbados Audit Office and the National Housing

Corporation High-rise apartments but Senator Walcott spoke in detail to that that was a pretty staggering report for me, it brought to mind one of my favorite Bajan expressions, which is to study the end before the beginning. If the goal of the National Housing Corporation is in fact to provide affordable housing then this certainly has not been done in this instance.

Madam President, under the recommendations I think what should jump out at all of us is recommendation No.7 which says that the Board should ensure that adequate financing is available prior to the start of each new housing project. This report from the Barbados Audit Office is really of concern. Mindful that the mission of that office is to strengthen public accountability, I think it is important that reports like this are not just filed but that we pay attention and really try to ensure that the next report does not reflect these kinds of statements.

Madam President, I move on to my concerns around health related matters. Of course, I know you would expect among matters related to HIV and I would then also touch briefly on matters relating to youth under the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

No.D7 (39)7.20 p.m.

Madam, the chronic non-communicable diseases of course are an over-riding concern for health planners, and much has been done by the Ministry of Health to address this, but this is yet another area where I think the Social Partnership could and should be actively engaged. I am not aware that any formal surveys have been done as to the effect of the ten per cent tax on sweet drinks instituted in last year's Budget. Anecdotaly, I gather that the comment which I have heard being made is that the ten per cent may not have made a significant dent in the use of sweet drinks, largely due to the fact that the retailers may have kicked in and absorbed some of the tax. Madam President, if the public sector were more integrally in a joint project, you could then engage retailers as part of the private sector to take a long look at the content of the sweet drinks currently on the market, and to provide healthier options while at the same time trying to reduce sugar content in the current drinks; and in the same vein, to engage the fast-food suppliers as partners in providing healthier options. I did note that speaking in the Other Place last week, the Minister of Health spoke to public-private sector partnerships with fast-food providers, and I would certainly think that is the essential way for us to go forward. I allude in this speech quite a bit to public-private sector partnerships, but I think in saying that, I want to make it very clear that I really believe that public-private sector partnerships must be Government-led. You can involve the private sector and I would want to see the private sector stepping up in a lot of areas, but it must be that

Government cannot renege from its responsibility; it must be led by Government.

Dr. Godfrey Xuereb, the PAHO (Pan American Health Organisation) representative for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, did a comprehensive presentation recently on sugar-sweetened beverage taxes in the Caribbean, entitled 'Progress and Challenges'. He shared that apart from Barbados, these taxes have already been implemented in Dominica and St. Vincent, and were being planned in Jamaica, Antigua and Grenada. Perhaps then this calls for a coordinated plan from CARICOM. I do know that CARICOM, at the tenth anniversary of their historic Port-of-Spain Declaration, pledged to address issues such as elevating taxes on foods which are high in sugar, salt and trans fats; and I would hope that we could put pressure on CARICOM to ensure this is done as quickly as possible. Dr. Xuereb also looked at three statistics as to why we need to reduce the consumption of sugar, all based on childhood rates status in Barbados. The first one was that in 1975 thirty-nine per cent of our children were classified as malnourished. I was here then as a young doctor, and I really cannot share that statement without paying tribute to the late Dr. Sir Frank Ramsay who was a paediatrician. Dr. Ramsay did yeoman work in setting up a malnutrition centre for children, and in fact the end result of that is that we no longer see protein malnutrition in Barbados. However, in 1981 twenty per cent of our ten- to 19-year-olds were overweight, and in 2011 forty-six per cent -- almost half of the 13- to 15-year-olds -- were either overweight or obese. Added to that in 2011, over 73 per cent of students stated that they usually drank carbonated soft drinks one or more times per day. That is for me pretty staggering, and I would hope that in some way we can, as I said, maybe through CARICOM as well as locally, really do something aggressively to ensure that we can reduce the sugar-sweetened beverages.

I would here also like to recognise the efforts of the Heart and Stroke Foundation under the leadership of Ms. Gina Pitts as the chief executive officer initially, and more recently Mrs. Fiona Anthony, in developing a teenaged Kicks programme, Youth Gym. This holistic programme is for children from the ages of eight to 20 years old. It runs on Saturday mornings, it is a weekly programme for obese children. They are in the gym for an hour to 90 minutes, and it also educates their parents, guardians and caregivers at the same time as to how to make more healthy meals. It also provides exercises for the adults, so they do line dancing while the children are actually working in the gym downstairs. As a member of Government's National Task Force on Obesity, Professor Anne St. John three years ago established a dedicated clinic for obese children at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital due to patients who had been referred for the management of their obesity. It is partnerships such as these which I think would need to be seen as pilots, and we need to build on them because this

would be an excellent flagship programme for public-private sector partnerships and funding as they seek to mould the lives and the lifestyles of young Barbadians. I hope that there is a model somewhere for easy access when members of the private sector seeks to establish meaningful private-public sector partnerships.

As I mention private-public sector partnerships and the Ministry of Health, I would like to mention the Broadway to Barbados Trust, chaired by Mr. Robert Bourque, who is the executive trustee; and, as we say these days, "for full disclosure," let me say that I am also a trustee. This is why I know a lot about this particular Trust. These shows started 17 years ago as a fund-raiser for the Barbados Turf Club, and over the past five years Mr. Bourque had the foresight to establish the Trust and to link it formally with funding for the QEH. At the end of the 2017 show this year, the Trust has raised \$2.5 million for Phase 1 of its partnership with the QEH. The first series of funding was used to equip the Medical Intensive Care Unit (MICU) and to provide training for the nurses there; and through the persistence, vision and planning of Dr. Anne-Marie Hassell, who is the consultant in charge of the MICU, it has committed to funding the online training of 20 MICU critical care nurses over a two- to three-year period, which will provide them with certification in critical care. The good thing is, because it is an online course and it has been done over a longer period of time, they can fit it in at a time that is good for them. I would want to hear, though, Senator Walcott's comment as to the need for increasing the nursing establishment of the MICU. This is truly a First World unit. For those of you who have not seen it, I would really recommend that you go in there some day and look at it. It is First World in terms of how it is set up, but it is actually also very Caribbean and very Barbados in that there is a lot of use of wood. It is a beautiful unit, and it is a shame that only half of it is currently functioning.

The first use of funding was used to equip that unit and to provide training for the nurses. Then the Massy Foundation of Barbados similarly, along with the Trust, founded a similar Internet training programme for 40 nurses from the Accident and Emergency Department. The Trust is now moving to aggressively seek partners in the private sector and from the general public. The Trust's sole mandate is to assist the QEH with new diagnostic or monitoring equipment in order to provide ongoing maintenance support and/or service warranty protection on the equipment provided, as well as special funding for specialised acute care programmes.

I would strongly recommend to everyone the funding of the \$200 emergency supply packs, which are used in both the ICU and the A&E Department. The supplies are purchased directly from the suppliers and released on receipt of a requisition authorised by a head of

department at the hospital. The Trust has the permission of the QEH's Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Dexter James, to work directly with the heads of these departments - the medical ICU and A&E -- to identify and then prioritise the needs of these departments. This model of funding ensures total accountability and transparency. Having completed equipping the ICU, the Trust has moved on to helping to fund the major initiatives and to equip the A&E Department, working closely there with Dr. Chayne Williams, the consultant in charge of A&E, and more recently with Dr. Gillian Birchwood in the Paediatric ICU in training and the handling of emergency care of children.

7.27 p.m.

Earlier this year, in conjunction with the Government of Israel, a number of junior doctors at QEH were trained in the extensive use of new modern ultrasound machines in areas such as heart and lung assessments, ectopic pregnancies which are pregnancies in the ectopic tube outside the uterus, kidney stones, localising and removing foreign bodies, and deep vein thrombosis which are clots in the leg which if not treated can cause clots in the lungs which can be fatal. All of these provide quicker diagnosis and improve the accuracy of medical care.

Under the heading of the all-important area of training within the Ministry of Health, I want to speak to the training of medical and paramedical professionals which Barbados Association of Medical Practitioners (BAMP) does. It does with the support of many of the pharmaceutical companies for over 40 years. Over the more recent past, certainly more than 20 years, BAMP has been in partnership with UWI in providing this continued medical educational. The success has hinged on the selfless service of those members of BAMP who have served on the CME Committee many of them for more than 20 years, certainly Professor Fraser, I am sure, had more than 20 years and it also hinged on the generosity of the contributors who gave of their time and expertise without charge. It is my understanding that this does not necessarily obtain in other jurisdictions where CME is seen as a business. Certainly I can speak for the US where in the American College of Family Physicians of which I am a member, continued medical education has a significant cost. Since the medical profession in 2011, Madam President, attendants at the prescribed level of CME hours is mandatory in order to register annually to practice as a doctor and this is as it should be. The result of that is that our public can be comfortable that when they access care, they are accessing care from competent professionals who have taken the time to update their knowledge skills.

To provide a little bit of history, in 2004, BAMP subvention was \$20 000 and this has been reduced systematically to the extent that in 2015 and 2016 it is \$7 040. Madam President, I am well aware that there is no

sympathy and no appetite in hard times to discuss support of professional organisations and, in particular, the doctors, however, Madam President, I believe that I can make a strong case for the support of continuing medical education in an atmosphere where previous support from pharmaceutical companies has dwindled due to their own financial challenges. That support is critically important to the assurance of our public that at least for the 420 doctors who are members of BAMP roughly half in the private sector and half in the public sector, those doctors whom patients see continue to update their knowledge and skills in a timely manner and I therefore see the provision of continuing medical education should be considered as a public good. BAMP in May 2016 cost \$65 169 to run and a revenue of \$46 900 therefore incurring a debt of \$18 269. BAMP in partnership with the UWI, runs two CMEs every year and therefore realistically, if only to cover those two weekend continuing medical educations the subvention required would need to be closer to \$40 000.

As I am dealing with funding let me turn to area with which I have had the most experience over many years and that is the HIV/AIDS programme. Let me begin with a genuine concern which I have articulated before and that is the thinking where we say that as we focus on chronic non-communicable disease, we need not worry anymore about HIV because it is essentially under control. That is very dangerous thinking, Madam President. As long as people continue to have unprotected sex, HIV will be a concern.

Last year, during the visit to Barbados of the Executive Director of the UNAIDS, UNAIDS meaning the UN organisation responsible for the coordination of HIV partners, programmes and strategies, I learnt that he was informed that the Government of Barbados no longer sees HIV as a priority. That comment I found strange at the time because even if the Government no longer felt that, I thought it very odd that they would say it to the head of the UN organisation globally but the implications of it continue to be of concern to me.

First of all, under the current head doctor CDBs leadership of UNAIDS and for the 10 years before Doctor Peter Piot, HIV programmes in the Caribbean region had been supported and both CARICOM's span cap and the Barbados HIV Programme specifically have been hailed as best practice. I certainly am bias towards UNAIDS, Madam President. I represented Barbados and the Caribbean on the Board of UNAIDS from its inception meeting in 1995 until 1998 but this is not subjective comment. To chronical the work of UNAIDS in this region would take more time that I could possibly be afforded tonight, but let me just share two examples of the work done by UNAIDS in partnership with the Barbados Evangelical Association (BEA) and the Caribbean Broadcast Media partnership. When they produced and disseminated a booklet on health and HIV for clergy and lay people it had relevant questions and

answers. Doctor Nigel Taylor as Chair of the BEA, also Scott Commissioner and the Pastor of the Barbados HIV Commission spearheaded that programme and the booklet was funded fully by UNAIDS and was widely circulated among the evangelical faith base and used both in training of its pastor also among the wider membership. A previous study had been commissioned on gender violence which was analysed by a sociologist, Doctor Richard Carter, and that presentation was filmed and the CD produced is used annually by the Barbados Evangelical Association in look in at matters around gender violence. The faith based in its broadest definition has a long history of work and involvement with the HIV programme in Barbados and needs to be fully engaged to continue to be fully engaged in the HIV programme. I am happy to note that Pan Cap has this year, reconvened the regional faith-based leaders and is the process of establishing a consultative steering Committee for the implementation of a recommendations to end AIDS by 2030.

We get back to the start of my story. I seemed to me ungracious in the extreme for us to say to the UNAIDS that we no longer considered HIV a priority, particularly at a time, Madam President, when our incidence of HIV among males, incidence as in new cases, is rising again. Cases of syphilis, another sexually transmitted infection are on the rise again and these two statistics alone tells us that unprotected sex continues and that we remain at risk for contracting HIV.

In the early years of treatment, the World Health Organisation (WHO) was a co-sponsor of UNAIDS set specific blood levels in order to qualify for treatment and initially it was people with a CD4 count which is what you measure which is less than 250 and then that went to 350, and then it moved to 500. What that is saying is that we started treated people and the WHO recommended that you treat people earlier. In the old days, we treated them as they got sick and you could see it but more recently they have suggested that the earlier you treat them the better and this is called Treatment as prevention and it is now being recommended that everyone who is diagnosed as HIV positive should start treatment then. It is called the 'Treat All Campaign'. I was delighted to see the Minister of Finance announce last year that Barbados had accepted this position as that is truly the way to eradicate the spread of HIV. What that means is that everybody, who is HIV positive in Barbados would be eligible for Life Long Therapy with anti-retro virus treatments, however, Madam President, as I looked through the 2017/2018 Estimates in the Minister of Health, I could only see under 'Supplies and Materials', an increase in \$10 000.

Senate D 6A Seq 41 7.37 p.m.

I saw no change in operating expenses where sometimes these are hidden and I did not see enough

change under the Barbados Drug Service to explain or to justify where we will be doing that treating and so I am a little bit concerned about that because PAHO's survey in 2012 showed that the larger number of lives saved from AIDS is...if antiretroviral treatment is provided to every person who test positive with HIV.

The majority of HIV care is delivered at the Ladymeade Reference Unit (LRU). Again, PAHO in 2012 reported in a Report entitled "Evaluation of the Health Sector Response to HIV and STI in Barbados" that Barbados had achieved the HIV target of the Millennium Development Goal 6 which is to halt, reverse and spread HIV/AIDS, malaria and other disease as well as the target for the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and congenital syphilis for Caribbean and Latin America. Those successes are directly attributable to the services provided through the HIV/STI Programme of the Ministry of Health and particularly the Ladymeade Reference Unit.

Subsequently, in 2015, countries signed on to a package of Sustainable Development Goals which will now replace the Millennium Development Goals, but the UNAIDS target for 2020 calls on us to have 90 per cent of the people living with HIV, should be diagnosed, should have been tested, 90 per cent of those tested positive should be on treatment and 90 per cent of those on treatment should have their viral load totally suppressed. Our antiretroviral coverage currently is running at about 46 per cent which means that we still have a significant number of people to provide treatment for.

Government's plan is to decentralise care to selected polyclinics, however, the Ladymeade Reference Unit (LRU) will and must remain the flagship for HIV care. Until recently, again I have a concern here, the staff complement of the LRU included a consultant. That post has been frozen and I believe removed.

Madam President, I worked in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, granted many years ago, as a junior doctor and part of the learning process is to have access to experienced consultants in order to increase your knowledge and skills, so I am sure that 80 per cent of those cases in the LRU will be routine cases which can be adequately managed by a dedicated junior staff, but for the difficult and challenging cases, the cases of drug resistance and it's bizarre side effects, you do need the skills of an experienced consultant. If nothing else I have said today is heard, Madam President, I would make a plea that the post of consultant at the LRU be reconsidered.

Given my longstanding interest in HIV, and especially people living with HIV, I poured through the Estimates to see what kind of multi-sectoral programme was currently in place. Let me say, Madam President, that a multi-sectoral programme comes in many forms. When

under a previous Government in 2000 when it was set up, it was set up in the Office of the Prime Minister and all the Government ministries had an HIV programme at that time. It does not have to be that way, it could be one from the Ministry of Health, one from the Ministry of Youth or it could be run anywhere, but my commitment always was to make sure that it was multi-sectoral because I remain convinced that if the people think this is a health problem, immediately a lot of people cut off and say this is nothing to do with them, this is just for doctors and nurses. Madam President, the multi-sectoral programme as it was set up had an HIV desk or point person at least if not a committee in every ministry.

Madam President, when I looked I found that in at least four ministries, there was no longer any line item for HIV/AIDS: The Attorney-General's Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, the Ministry Of Agriculture, Foods, Fisheries and Water Resource Management and the Ministry of the Environment and Drainage. To be honest I must say that for the Attorney-General's Office I remember seeing last year that they had a fundraiser for HIV/AIDS and a sensitization, so obviously even although they did not have a line item they are doing the work, but my greatest concern I reserve for the HIV line item under the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation. Last year when I looked at it I noted, as you may remember, that it was zero in the vague and vain hope that was an oversight and that when I look this year I would see something different, so imagine my consternation, Madam President, when I check this year that for the second consecutive year I saw nothing for HIV under the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation.

Madam President, just to give you a little history, in the early years of the programme the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation along with a few of the key line ministries had the lion share in the budget to partner across ministries and the lion share of the work. In those early years the ministry supported consultants to create age appropriate HIV curriculums across primary schools as well as training for guidance counsellors in the secondary schools. We got the standard response that this was not something to be dealt with by teachers but rather by parents. Our efforts with Parent/Teachers Associations (PTAs) were abysmal as the majority of people who attend PTA meetings are the parents who are already engaged in the broader education of their children. Those primary school curriculums were designed in three groups: Age 5 to 7, 7 to 9 and 9 to 11, and the three curriculums were every different because for the most part in the 9 to 11 group once your children get to that stage they can teach that curriculum better than any teacher that you put in the room I believe, but for me the critical age was the 5 to 7 year group. Our first objection, of course, was that you cannot be teaching children about

sex at 5 to 7 years, but under the leadership of Dr. Vijaya Thani and Mrs. Dianna Edgehill the HIV/AIDS Commission and the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation together designed a curriculum on abstinence for that age group and it was abstinence at its broadest level, abstinence from peer pressure, abstinence from drugs, abstinence from cursing, abstinence from bad behaviour and, of course abstinence from sex and we were quite comfortable that was a model that worked.

Madam President, I had hope by now to see investment in a much more technological if slanted programme appropriate for today's children. Our children as you know are growing up in a technological age. Before I left the Commission we met with the Minister of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation and the ministry officials and discussed the concept then of virtual classrooms and engaging social media so as to decrease significantly the manpower required for education on HIV. The use of cell phones in this play-friendly methodologically was also entertained, and I therefore left that meeting, this was eight to nine years ago, excited at the future of information sharing and learning in virtual classrooms.

Madam President, any mention of the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation I would have to mention Reverend Hughson Inniss who was then an educator in the Ministry of Health and did a record number, and by that I mean thousands, of sensitization sessions in secondary schools across Barbados and in communities. I can remember the early days when he met with teachers, some of whom were totally uncomfortable with any discussion around sex or sexuality much of which was related to the strong religious and moralistic beliefs and we were therefore hugely encouraged by the involvement of the faith-based in that education.

We also considered having HIV education and awareness teams which will consist of a retired public health nurse, a guidance counsellor who is comfortable with it, and teachers that were comfortable with dealing with this issue, but that initiative sadly never took off for the lack of available manpower, but we recognised the contribution of our then Chief Education Officer, Dr. Wendy Griffith-Watson who was fully engaged in these discussions.

Madam President, would this not be an excellent way to use Whatapp and Instagram to spread thought-provoking discussions and information on reproductive health, HIV, STIs and other lifestyle issues through social media channels.

Madam President, every life matters and for me the lives of those who have been discriminated against so frequently matter even more. This is what makes us a

caring and humane society. In that vein I would want to share my concern once again about the long promised antidiscrimination legislation which has not yet seen the light of day and certainly not the light of Parliament.

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Madam President, discrimination makes people go underground, sharing a positive HIV diagnosis will therefore only provide fodder for discrimination and in addition any change in lifestyles to have protected sex may signal that you have something to hide and so the cycle of unprotected sex continues and the spread of STI's, particularly HIV and syphilis starts to rise.

Madam President, I hate to even admit that the record of which the HIV programme was so proud of, where we were able to say that over seven years that Barbados has had no HIV-positive baby born to a HIV-positive mother, that has crashed to the ground. With the recent release of the most recent surveillance figures for 2013, two of the 25 HIV-mothers had HIV-positive babies. For me this is a real tragedy and I think it is something that as country we cannot ignore it.

Madam President, I heard that in that presentation of the recent HIV statistics and a little bit of history the rising prevalence among men, the rise in the new cases of syphilis, the sad presence once again of HIV-positive babies even if is one, I hope that that underscores the critical importance of ongoing attention to HIV and STI's prevention programmes, in tandem with the treatment for all programmes if in fact we are to achieve an AIDS-free world by 2030.

Madam President, in the 1980s and 1990s we were working with making people comfortable about discussions on sex and sexuality. Without opening the can of worms I hope with the advent of antidiscrimination legislation we can see issues like homosexuality becoming a public health discussion and not one related purely to morality.

Madam President, I want to turn to youth, in particular in the context of our athletes and the funding and support which is currently provided. I have had particular pride in following the career of one of our leading athletes, Akela Jones, whom I first met when she was about eight years old. I am sure that many of you like me followed with baited breath as she competed her herculean feats of the heptathlon in the Olympics. Her final placing, though far from the medal stand, left us much to be proud of, but if we are honest we want to see our athletes take that next step, we want to see them stepped onto that podium and one day to hear our National Anthem being played as we have rejoiced so many times with some of our Caribbean brothers and sisters in Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, the Bahamas, St. Kitts, and most recently Grenada but to make

that additional step, Madam President, we have to first of all invest in training our potential athletes seriously so as to initially to be able to compete favourably at the CARIFTA games and thus catch the attention of the coaches who scout for talent and then once they get their scholarships overseas, because there are scholarships and our young people are getting track and field scholarships, we will continue to give them the support which they must have if they are to compete on an even playing field with the other gifted athletes globally.

Madam President, I am not saying we are not training everyone, we need to train all our children across our schools because that is how you will find the talent, but having found the exceptional talent we need to be able to move them to that extra step. Madam President, let me also say that we need to consider the talented athletes who may not be academically gifted, who may not be able to get a track scholarship and those children we should be able to provide them the kind of training right here in Barbados that can take them to the Olympics.

Madam President, I can think of similar young athletes who are brimming with promise, to mention just a few there is a young boxer Mary Fraser who is also track athlete. Mary trains with her father who is a cyclist. He rides on the Garrison and Mary runs with him when he rides. She is an absolutely superb young athletes. There are also our young hurdlers, Rivaldo Leacock, Ryan and Shane Brathwaite who are already competing overseas, Mario Burke, Ramon Gittens, Jonathan Jones who had the second fastest time in the 800 metres in CARIFTA games last year. I do not mean that he had the second fastest time but that he won a goal in CARIFTA but that his 800 metres time was the second fastest time in the world last year. There is also Sade' Williams out of Harrison College who ran qualifying times for the Olympics last year. Sadly, she got injured and was not able to travel with the team.

Madam President, already this year I am sure you have seen a number of our young athletes have already qualified for CARIFTA games this year. Mario Burke and Ramon Gittens both have times in the 100 metres precariously close to the 10 second, Mario's best time is 10.21 seconds and Ramon's is 10.02 seconds. Sade' Williams has done 11.66 seconds in the 100 metres and both Sade and Ramon qualify for the Rio Olympics. Ramon qualified for the Pan Am Games and believe it or not, Sade' qualified at BSSAC last year. Jason Wilson, our Olympic triathlon competitor has a time of 1:49:19 and he placed 5th in the Pan Am Games last years.

These athletes are all on the way to becoming elite athletes but we must treat them that way and as much as Digicel's sponsored cricket which may not be a good example, but we thank Digicel, we need to see other private corporations coming forward to assist Governments in

ensuring that we can take these young people that extra step and that we can put them on the podium at CARIFTA, at the Pan Am Games and at the Olympics in 2020.

Madam President, I also want to mention lawn tennis where Darion King has achieved the highest world ranking ever achieved by a Bajan. He currently ranks No. 121 in the world and as recently as last week at the ATP Circuit in Indian Wells in this second round match he did the astounding of taking a set of Gael Monfils who current ranks No. 11 in the world and our Darion King took one of the three sets off him. He is that close to the top. He has a brilliant present but he also has significant past, in that he was also part of the team that gave Barbados its first overseas Group 2 victory in the Davis Cup which was played in Paraguay and he deserves to be assisted to ensure that his future is as good as his past and his present and I would hope that someone in corporate Barbados or some people would help and assist the Government to ensure that this young man and the other talented tennis players behind him can get the support that they would need.

Madam President, supporting athletes does not only help them but it does much for the image of the country, it does much for our pride in ourselves, and it goes without saying that in many ways it increases the potential for foreign exchange, it attracts athletes to Barbados for training, it attracts tourists to watch these meets, and if we do it well enough we attract athletes to train here.

Madam President, I was so proud recently and I will give you an example of what athletes can do. Usain Bolt is an extraordinary athlete but I saw a document on Usain Bolt recently. He comes from a village in the country in Jamaica. He has put in a sewerage plant for his entire village. He has put in lighting for the entire village. He has Christmas parties for 100-plus children every year. I am not saying that our athletes are all going to do this, Usain Bolt is extraordinary, but who says that some of these young people are not extraordinary, they are doing great things and so we have to enable them to make that extra step.

Madam President, there is much ahead of us, CARIFESTA which showcases our Caribbean culture. I had difficulty in trying to find cross references of these in the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure but CARIFESTA is going to showcase our culture, it is a wonderful opportunities for Barbados to showcase its excellence in our artists across all the genres of culture and of course it provides avenues for significant revenue generation and foreign exchange for the country but revenue-generation for crafts people, our artists, vendors and hospitality sector across the board. One cannot mention CARIFESTA and artists without for a moment saluting the great late Sir Derek Walcott who has recently passed. He was St. Lucian and was absolutely an outstanding

contributor to the cultural world and of course we claim in the Caribbean.

No.D6(A) (43)8.02 p.m.

Before I close, I just want to speak to two other things again which I did not find, but two areas where our young people can get a second chance. I first of all want to commend the Ministry of Education's New Horizon Academy. I had the opportunity to see that. It is a model programme with an incredibly motivated staff who see themselves as the family of these children. They work with the children as precious and vital partners in their programme. I honestly had no idea that we produced that kind of programme. It is a beautiful new facility, and they tailor-make every child's programme according to where each child is. The particular child who I was interested in working with is not an easy child, and they just have absolutely absorbed this child. They love him, they care for him, they are doing a programme, and they speak about him as I would speak about my child. I really want to say that is an absolutely incredible programme which our Government is doing. Similarly, you know I always speak about Nature Fun Ranch in St. Andrew, which is another excellent programme that is rescuing our young people. Almost three-quarters of those children, 68 per cent of them, who have gone through that programme, have either exhibited 'block' and gangster behaviour, being uncontrollable at home, or acting up and having poor school attendance. That is their catchment area; and since the inception of that programme, of the 44 members who were referred to Nature Fun Ranch to be rehabilitated, just one child has re-offended while participating in that programme.

Madam President, I did start with a number of concerns, and I am an optimist; I am positive, so I do want to leave with some positive things, and finally to commend, again, our country on the physical development plan which is being worked on. I should not say "being worked on"; a document is completed. I went to one of the presentations, and it is absolutely visionary. It is looked at in the concept of a country which is scarce in water, land and food; and when you hear that, it is itself a little frightening.

We have a stressed transportation network, and they are looking at very creative ways of moving people in what they describe as mobility nodes. There are ten different sections to this: There is a Warrens section, a Wildey section, an Oistins section, and there is a country corridor, so they will have town centres. It speaks really to transformational change, but here is my concern: We need to be able to fund this. This is not in these Estimates as far as I can see, and I do not think they have yet got to funding, but this is the Barbados of tomorrow, this is the positive that we can look at. As we try to deal with our challenges, I

do need to say that we do have some very positive things going on in Barbados. Thank you.

SUSPENSION

Senator Hon. Ms. M.P.O. McCLEAN: Madam President, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

The question that the Sitting do now suspend until 10 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Her Honour THE PRESIDENT suspended the Sitting accordingly.

8.01 p.m.

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INCE, Senator J.
MCCLEAN, Senator M. P. O.
TROTMAN, Senator Sir Roy
WALCOTT, Senator Dr. J. X.**

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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 and date. The convening sentence in the source gives the date as Tuesday, March 21, 2017, but the heading and file name give Monday, March 20, 2017, which is used. Please confirm.

Q2. Masthead. The session is not stated in the source, so no session line is printed.

Q3. Dates in the text. The source gives ‘Monday, March 21, 2017’ (21 March 2017 was a Tuesday). The weekday and date do not agree; printed as in the source.

Q4. Senator Dr. J. X. Walcott, revenue figures. Several figures are given in a mixed form, e.g. Actual Current Revenue ‘April 2016 to January 2017 is \$2 087 005 million’, ‘\$2 806 009 million is expected to be collected in two months’ and expenditure of ‘\$4 240 072 million’; they read as thousands rather than millions. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Introduction of Bills and Senator McClean’s opening. Although Madam President was in the Chair, the Leader of Government Business addresses ‘Mr. President’ when moving the first readings, and ‘Mr. Chairman’ once early in her opening speech. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Speech labels. The Leader of Government Business is labelled variously ‘Miss M. P. O. McCLEAN’, ‘Miss M. O. P. McCLEAN’, ‘Hon. M.O.P. McClean’, ‘Ms. M.P.O. McCLEAN’ and ‘M. P. O. MCCLEAN’, and Senator Sir Roy Trotman also appears as ‘Senator Roy TROTMAN’. Printed as in the source.

Q7. Close of the record. The Sitting was suspended until 10.00 a.m. the next day with the debate on the Appropriation Bill, 2017 still in progress, after Senator Carol Lady Haynes’s speech. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The Senate met on Monday, 20th March, 2017 at 11.00 a.m., with Madam President in the Chair; prayers were led by Rev. Father Errington Massiah. The Leader of Government Business, Senator the Hon. Miss M. P. O. McClean, laid the Excise Tax (Amendment) Regulations, 2017 and the Needhams Point Holding Limited Annual

Report for March 31, 2014. Standing Orders 22(1) and 45(2) were suspended, and the Appropriation Bill, 2017 and the Excise Tax (Validation of Tax) Bill, 2017 were read a first time. The whole of the rest of the day was given to the second reading of the Appropriation Bill.

Senator McClean, speaking in what she reckoned to be her tenth Estimates debate, said the Bill provided for sums not exceeding \$1 816 827 953 for the year ending 31st March, 2018. She recalled starting secondary school the year Barbados became independent and succeeding her late brother Wendell McClean in the Chamber, said that over five years Barbados had forgone about BDS\$1 billion in taxes because of changes in international business, cited commercial bank assets of \$13 220 million in 2016, or 146 per cent of GDP, and spoke on tertiary fees, of which students would pay at most about 20 per cent, and on the work of her Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade.

After the lunch suspension, Senator Dr. J. X. Walcott replied for the Opposition, describing despair after nine years of Democratic Labour Party management, saying public servants’ take-home pay had effectively fallen by 11 per cent over eight years and that integrity legislation passed in 2012 had not been gazetted, and questioning revenue projections, a project that had had three groundbreaking ceremonies, and the HELP housing programme at the National Housing Corporation. Senator McClean rose on a point of order over a remark he attributed to others concerning workers.

Senator Sir Roy Trotman recalled the march at which some chanted ‘Sandiford must go’, argued that divestment must be part of a wider economic aim rather than a means to net \$10 million, and called for careful consultation with workers on any divestment of shares. After a further suspension until 6.00 p.m., Senator J. Ince defended the Government’s policies and its Fiscal Consolidation Programme, compared tax collections under the previous Administration, and noted the rise in VAT from 15 to 17.5 per cent and the earlier reduction of VAT on hotel services.

Senator Carol Lady Haynes expressed concern at the level of debt and the ‘snowball of debt’ diagram placing Barbados alongside Ireland, Italy, Greece and others, drew on the Barbados Private Sector Association’s statement, and cited figures on child obesity, including 46 per cent of 13- to 15-year-olds overweight or obese in 2011, and the ten per cent tax on sweet drinks; she ended on the planned mobility nodes for transport. On the motion of Senator McClean, the Sitting was suspended until 10.00 a.m. the next day.

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