

No. 2

THURSDAY

Second Session

10th January, 2002

Seventh Parliament

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

THE

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

ADVANCE COPY

OFFICIAL REPORT

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THE

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE SECOND MEETING, SECOND SESSION OF THE SEVENTH PARLIAMENT OF SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES CONSTITUTED AS SET OUT IN SCHEDULE 2 TO THE SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES ORDER, 1979.

SEVENTH SITTING

10th January 2002

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

The Honourable House of Assembly met at 10.10 a.m. in the Assembly Chamber, Court House, Kingstown.

PRAYERS

MR. SPEAKER IN THE CHAIR

Honourable Hendrick Alexander

Present

MEMBERS OF CABINET

Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, Planning,
Economic Development, Labour, Information,
Grenadines and Legal Affairs.

Dr. The Honourable Ralph Gonsalves

Member for North Central Windward

Attorney General
Honourable Judith Jones-Morgan

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign
Affairs, Commerce and Trade.

Honourable Louis Straker

Member for Central Leeward

Minister of National Security, the Public Service
and Airport Development
Honourable Vincent Beache

Member for South Windward

Minister of Education, Youth and Sports
Honourable Michael Browne

Member for West St. George

Minister of Social Development, Co-operatives,
The Family, Gender and Ecclesiastical Affairs
Honourable Girlyn Miguel

Member for Marriaqua

Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries
Honourable Selmon Walters

Member for South Central
Windward

Minister of Health and the Environment
Honourable Dr. Douglas Slater

Member for South Leeward

Minister of Telecommunications, Science
Technology and Industry
Honourable Dr. Jerrol Thompson

Member for North Leeward

Minister of Tourism and Culture
Honourable Rene Baptist

Member for West Kingstown

Minister of State in the Ministry
of Education, Youth and Sports
Honourable Clayton Burgin

Member for East St. George

Minister of State in the Ministry
of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries
Honourable Montgomery Daniel

Member for North Windward

Minister of State in the Ministry
of Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Trade
Honourable Conrad Sayers

Member for Central Kingstown

Minister of Transport, Works and Housing
Honourable Julian Francis

Government Senator

Honourable Edwin Snagg

Government Senator, Parliamentary
Prime Minister's Office, Special
Responsibility for Labour and
Grenadines Affairs

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE

Honourable Arnhim Eustace

Member for East Kingstown/
Leader of the Opposition

Honourable Terrance Ollivierre

Member for Southern Grenadines

Honourable Juliet George

Government Senator

Honourable Andrea Young

Government Senator/Deputy Speaker

Honourable Gerard Shallow

Opposition Senator

Honourable Major St. Claire Leacock

Opposition Senator

ABSENT

Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday

Member for Northern Grenadines

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY 10TH JANUARY, 2002

PRAYERS

Honourable Mr. Speaker, read the prayers.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY MR. SPEAKER

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Before, the Obituaries and before I take my seat, I want to take this opportunity to wish every member of Parliament and public in general, happy and a prosperous New Year. And for us here in Parliament I hope that we continue to have co-operation as we conduct the business of the people here in this Honourable House. Thank you, very much. [Applause].

CONGRATULATORY REMARKS

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like very much to congratulate the following persons who have been given awards by Her Majesty the Queen, in the New Year's Honour list 2002. The matter has already been made public, but I think this Honourable House ought to put on record our appreciation for six Vincentians who have been granted, these awards. Christian Ivor Martin, Commander of the Order of St. Michael and St. George, C.M.G. for his services to the Financial Sector. He is well known Mr. Speaker. Mr. Martin is a distinguished scholar, of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, he worked for many years before Independence and after Independence in the Ministry of Finance and at one time, he was Cabinet Secretary, and was the architect of the economic development programme under the late great Rt. Honourable Milton Cato. And he went off and was a Senior Lecture at a University, in the United Kingdom, the University of Bradford, then worked for dozen or so years, with the very impressive United Nations Organisations, UNEDO, and he returned here in retirement, and when we asked him to take on the job as Fiscal Advisor to the Prime Minister he very kindly consented to take up that appointment.

I notice in one newspaper, Mr. Martin is prematurely knighted. He is called Sir. In fact I thought it said Rt. Sir Ivor. The C.M.G. is not a knighthood, it is one of the highest honours a public servant can get. The knighthood would be the K.C.M.G.

Then Joel Fitz-Gerald Huggins who has been awarded the O.B.E., the Office of the most Excellent Order of the British Empire for his distinguished services in the area of electricity.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I feel a particular personal pride in this honour to Mr. Huggins, we were at the Grammar School and we taught at Bishop's College Georgetown for a year before we went off to University and he has served with distinction as General Manger of the St. Vincent Electrical Services under three successive Governments and I think that is an excellent record and it speaks to his own professionalism and I would like to congratulate him.

And then there is Leopold Parnel Errie Stoddard, the Office of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, the O.B.E. for his distinguished services in St. Vincent and the Grenadines Royal Police Force. Mr. Stoddard has retired some years from the Police Force, but he has made policing his life. He rose to the rank of Deputy Commissioner.

Mrs. Pearl Agatha Elritha Best of Park Hill and Bellevue has been awarded the M.B.E. She is a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire for her distinguish services in Education. She has been a Primary School Teacher for all her working life, and she has been excellent at her job and it is important for us to recognize the teaching profession, this profession being the one more than any other that moulds and trains our children.

Ms. Rhonda Patricia Fraser, popularly known as Pat Fraser, the Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire for her distinguished community services. Pat Fraser, has done outstanding work in community services, in the NGO movement, a social worker. She currently heads the Public Assistance Board and Ms. Fraser is from Sandy Bay, she is a Calinargo, a Garifuna, I believe that she is probably, -- if she is not the first, I believe she is the second individual from the so-called Carib community to have been honoured by Her Majesty.

Then Aldric Peter Williams, member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, M.B.E, for his distinguished services in the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Royal Police Force. Mr. Williams is also retired, and he rose to the rank of Superintendent of Police and has given excellent service to this country, in the security force.

Mr. Speaker, if I may just say, that there have been discussions about the issue of National Honours, and this Government intends to bring to Parliament a Bill on National Awards, on National Honours. But this is a matter that we have to subject to wide spread consultation. Because there are various models to be implemented. Barbados I believe, has these traditional honours and also national honours existing side by side. Some other countries only have their national honours. Some only have these particular honours by our Head of State, Her Majesty, and the Queen. And since this is an issue that concerns everybody I don't think it is a matter upon which any one of us should impose our own personal view, my own views are well known, but I believe that the country should have a say on these matters. Of course, when we have constitutional reform, and if the people of this country decide that they would wish to have a Republic System of Government as distinct from a Monarchial, I no doubt it would follow inexorably that Honours emanating from Her Majesty will then no longer be applicable, because you will not have Her as the Head of State. But in so far as these are the only honours which currently exist, I think it is important to say that they ought to be continued until we have

a departure in formal legal terms. I know that there are many persons from the Black Power Movement and anti-colonialist who are willing and readily accepted these honours. And this is no discredit to them. I am not making a point, which is adverse, I am simply stating a fact, different persons may draw their own conclusions, I am not drawing any.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I would also like to congratulate the Seventh Day Adventist Church who will be celebrating their 100th Anniversary of Adventism in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The Seventh Day Adventist work started in St. Vincent in 1902 when a foreign-based Missionary Elder Van Deusen arrived in the island and began street meetings in Kingstown. The first parcel of land was purchased in April of that year and the first church building was dedicated in July of the same year. The Church was incorporated in 1938.

Now it is remarkable that someone coming here in 1902, to spread the word of Adventism, this would not have been a period, which would have been receptive to any other than the three big churches. The Anglicans, the Methodist, the Roman Catholics. Indeed, in the early 20th century the Administrator Murray set about to have the Spiritual Baptist Church declared to be a blot on our civilization and that it was pagan, and had it banded, it was only many years later, decades later that the un-banding took place, so it could not have been easy, - I could imagine in 1902, Mr. Van Deusen around the street corners, no public address system, none of these hand held amplified instruments, with his Bible speaking about Adventism, it is absolutely remarkable the difference a human being can make. Tremendous. And he laid the foundations. And from these humble beginnings, the church has grown tremendously, today it has membership of just over 10,000 that worships in 32 congregations.

Seventh Day Adventist operates two secondary schools, and three primary schools with a total enrolment of over 700 students. They have a dental clinic which is well established and provides a range of dental services to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and invite persons to go and see the high quality dental clinic which is well established and provides a wide range of dental services to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and I invite people to go and see the high quality dental clinic which the Seventh Day Adventist Church has here in Kingstown. The Church, I have been advised, employs 67 persons and another 20 on an ancillary part time basis. They are involved in a wide range of community services and they will be celebrating this historic milestone throughout the year, and they have a series of activities planned and I am congratulating the Seventh Day Adventist Church for their excellent work and I am doing so also at the request of the Executive Secretary of the Eastern Caribbean Conference of Seventh Day Adventist, Pastor Dermoth Baptiste, who had written to me and also the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs, to raise the matter during the first meeting of the House of Assembly 2002 and I am very privileged so to do, I have no doubt that the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs will have something more to say. They have sent a very long statement to me about the work and their whole history, and I believe that it ought to be published in the newspaper and no doubt they will do that.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I would like to congratulate, Prime Minister Patrick Manning. He is the new Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. As is known already, the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines sent Mr. Manning a letter of congratulations through me. Whatever the internal difficulties in Trinidad and Tobago that is for the people of Trinidad and Tobago to resolve with our help if need be in the Caribbean. But Mr. Manning is the duly appointed Prime Minister by the President of Trinidad and Tobago and in keeping with our usual practice to offer congratulations in this House to newly elected Governments, particularly in the Caribbean region. Since Mr. Manning's appointment as Prime Minister by President Robinson, I had spoken to him on three occasions on the telephone and we were to meet on Sunday actually in Trinidad, but our respective schedules made it very difficult for me to be with him in Trinidad for an informal meeting.

Mr. Manning and I attended university together, the same period, the University of the West Indies at Mona Campus in Jamaica, I knew him well then, and we played in the same steel band. You will be surprised to know Senator Leacock that I played the tenor pan, and Mr. Manning was in the engine room beating the triangle. He has told me subsequently that when I went on to do graduate work that he had graduated to the same tenor pan that I had been playing but I don't know, I have no specific recollection of that.

I am hopeful that the impasse in Trinidad and Tobago would be resolved. I know that when sometime ago in St. Vincent, as the Leader of the Opposition would very well remember, last year in April, the then Prime Minister, Mr. Panday came to St. Vincent to assist the resolution of the crisis of governance which existed in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. And I believe it is only right and proper that if there is a difficulty that the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines who is a friend of Mr. Manning, who is a friend of Mr. Panday, to see whether his good offices can be used in anyway and taking into account that Trinidad and Tobago is a major trading partner to St. Vincent and the Grenadines and there are so many Vincentians living in Trinidad and Tobago, and I myself on two fronts though I have not taken it up, and will not, and do not intend to, go through my mother I could be a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, because she is a Trinidadian born and through my wife who is Trinidadian born. So there are many, many reasons, personal, family, straight political, strategic, why we ought to stay engaged with Trinidad and Tobago and I am quite sure that Mr. Panday would appreciate that as would Mr. Manning. I want to congratulate the Patrick Manning Government on its election. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to endorse and to add to the sentiments expressed by the Honourable Prime Minister on behalf of the Seventh Day Adventist Church of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. It is widely known that the Seventh Day Adventist Church is one of the fastest growing churches in the world. Since its inception in the 1800's some century and a half ago, the SDA has evolved into a world wide body with a membership of over eight million people. This is a membership that has carefully studied the teachings of the Bible in search of truth, and who are devoted to making our world a better

place to dwell. A world in which people can come to recognize God as saviour, an opportunity for life after death and a future for all those who believe.

The Seventh Day Adventist body in St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a product of the Growth experienced by the International SDA. Its very existence for 100 years with congregations spread throughout the length and breadth of St. Vincent is an achievement, requiring great courage, skill and perseverance. This achievement is deserving of praise and commendations. Today, I join with all Seventh Day Adventists in this country as they celebrate their centennial. It is one hundred years of existence that Vincentians have come to associate with faith in God, revealed through Jesus Christ and through the teachings of the Bible. It is 100 years of teaching the good news of salvation. It is also 100 years for them as a faith community that has extended hands of hope, of Christian values, and Christian love. The SDA body has not only touched lives through its religion, in 100 years of existence the church has sought to better humanity, while many in our society are concerned with material progress, and economical development, the efforts of the church have been geared towards the achievement of human development. Throughout its existence, this church has been associated with assistance to the less fortunate; giving to the poor and the disadvantaged, they have long embarked on a programme, geared towards the elimination of poverty; contributions of clothing and food are gestures that have assisted many indigent poor, in contemplation, one can recognised that the SDA has been forerunners in poverty alleviation, many years before contemporary societies began to address poverty alleviation as a development issue. This is an issue that our Government is proud to be associated with.

In a world where there is unequal progress in eliminating poverty and different forms of disparity the Seventh Day Adventist must also be commended for their efforts in binding people, without prejudice, to religion, regardless of sex, age, ethnicity, or social strata. Its programming has catered to the spiritual as well as to the social well being of people throughout this society. Adults as well as the youth have benefited. Church programmes such as the pathfinders, and Bible teaching sessions are tangible ways in which the local church has manifested its interest in contributing to youth development in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The programmes for youth has specifically created avenues for young people to find meaningful alternatives for self-expression, people generally are empowered. They are inspired to have healthy lifestyles and pure hearts, ingredients for longevity. This church seeks to better humanity through education. It is a part of a body that operates one of the largest educational systems in the world. The local church here in St. Vincent operates a secondary, and two primary institutions on the mainland, and a Secondary School in Bequia, its distribution of literature, and its Sabbath Schools have also contributed to the growth of Advent message as well as development to the society. The Ministry of Social Development, Co-operatives, Gender, the Family and Ecclesiastical Affairs recognises the contribution of the SDA ministry. We are aware of the knowledge, experiences and the survival will that you have shared with our people, for these we are eternally grateful.

On the 26th January, 2002, there is going to be a national rally and I wish Pastor Dermoth Baptiste and the members of his church very well. To the Superintendents, Pastors, Elders and Laity, this Honourable House says press on to the higher calling. Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I now wish to join the Honourable Prime Minister and the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs in offering congratulations to the Seventh Day Adventist Church on their hundredth anniversary for operations here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Mr. Speaker, a few months ago I had the opportunity to attend the service in Union Island, a Seventh Day Adventist service, and I must say, that I noted a difference in the pattern of worship. I noticed Mr. Speaker, a certain rigor with which the Word of God was taught and read, and a certain willingness, Mr. Speaker, to spend the entire day, the entire day, in worshiping Almighty God. And I could not help Mr. Speaker, in comparing that with some of the complaints I hear not only in my church, but other churches, when a service even lasts for two hours, and it really struck me at the time, Mr. Speaker, because I noted that they moved from the Service with the children, then the children joined the rest of the congregation. Then another service started, and so forth, and when I listened to the announcements, I realise that most of those persons would be spending most of that day, in their church.

Mr. Speaker, service to Almighty God is obviously the role of every church but I want to stress like the Minister, the role that Seventh Day Adventists play in other activities in our country, in particular the role that they play in education. They are to be commended for their efforts. There is less evidence of them seeking governmental support with their activities. There is a certain degree of independence in their approach to matters, and this really Mr. Speaker, should be commended.

Like the Prime Minister, I took note of the fact of the letter I received from Pastor Dermoth Baptiste some days, I took note of the fact that a person could come here at that time, and within a matter of two or three months acquire land and build a church. I thought that a fantastic achievement, when I read that letter, and perhaps it is further evidence, of the rigor and commitment which one associates with the Seventh Day Adventists. And I sincerely congratulate them, Mr. Speaker, and I wish them well as they continue to contribute, not only to the spiritual development of our nation, but to the economic and social development also. They are a very important part of our society, and I think their contribution to our society, Mr. Speaker, goes far beyond their numbers.

To all of the pastors of that church, and to all of the members of that church, I extend heartiest congratulations.

Mr. Speaker, I also wish at this time to congratulate all those persons who received honours in the New Year. I am not familiar with the contributions of all of them, but certainly in the case of Cims Martin and Joel Huggins, I have a pretty a good grasp of the contribution that they have made and I wish to join in offering them congratulations on the receipt of their honours.

I noted that the Prime Minister in his presentation, made some references to other persons who have received similar honours, and who on the basis, I wouldn't want to say ideological persuasion, I think he was implying, despite all the protestation to the contrary, I think he was implying that they should not have been accepting those honours. What I wish to say, Mr. Speaker, is that I have not accepted any. [Interjection] Mr. Speaker, the question just asked by the Prime Minister gives credence to my interpretation of his presentation. But seriously Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate those persons who have received that honour. And I must say I look forward to the day, when we can discuss, whether it be in select committee or any other areas, Mr. Speaker, when we can discuss the way forward as far as National Honours are concerned. I am much obliged to you Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, I rise to join those who have spoken before me; the Honourable Prime Minister and Honourable Leader of the Opposition, and the Honourable Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs; who have offered profound and sincere congratulations to the Seventh Day Adventists as well as to those members who have now received awards from Her Majesty the Queen for the year 2002, New Year's Honour list. I think that their contributions and recognition are justly deserved and I certainly wish them well, in the future.

I want, Mr. Speaker, to add to that congratulations on the strategic decision by another important institution here commonly known as the BUNPAN to spread their wings, if I may use that word, and to open an office in Kingstown in the city centre to further enhance or attract their services, to the very wide cross section of Vincentians. That organisation over the years has made the most important contribution to lives of very many working people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and I think their presence in Kingstown would go a long way to ensuring the success of the future for that organisation.

Mr. Speaker, I want, if it is permitted, to acknowledge within recent times the substantial effort the Prime Minister made to support the Youlou Pan Movement in bringing to the shores of St. Vincent and the Grenadines that very famous steel orchestra with Co-Desperados, because I think that through his generosity and personal intervention (we will not dispute his pan playing days.) Mr. Speaker, that Vincentian artistes in general are well served and I saw him enjoying himself, in a restricted manner at least one of those and I believe it might go on a little further in the Market Square, at least so I have been told. But seriously, Mr. Speaker, I think the coming to St. Vincent of the Desperados has been something, which personally I feel very proud of, you know, the pan movement feels a depth of gratitude to the Government for doing this.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know if this is in order, but I suspect you would permit me, I can't help from this side recognizing the fact, we have meeting today, our first meeting for the year, and we are without the former Clerk of the House, who we did in fact meet over the festive season to say our goodbyes, our farewells and thank you, et cetera, et cetera; but on this side I just want to reiterate that all of us in the House are deeply indebted to the substantial contribution and to recognise whether it is an Acting to be confirmed or otherwise capacity, the young lady sitting

in the Chair this morning and to wish her well for the duration of substantial duty she must perform.

I am to understand Mr. Speaker that we will deal with obituaries later? Or could I just quickly then acknowledge the passing of Marlene Arthur who was in fact a stalwart sports administrator and player and representative of the highest order of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and I think that I speak for both sides of the House in recognizing her very substantial contribution and to extend our condolences to the bereaved and hurt family and to hope that with the passage of time that they may heal and heal in the way that only those persons who experience such sadness know it. I am much obliged Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MICHAEL BROWNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to join you in expressing to this House, Members and indeed to the nation, because the nation is listening, a very happy, productive 2002, we know it would have its challenges but in the spirit of the Government's performance in the year 2001, this Government we believe that our people would rise to the challenges of the year 2002. I wish also in the vein of the last speaker, Senator Leacock to take note of the new look Parliament of sorts with the absence of the stalwart Clerk, Mrs. Theresa Adams and we did in fact have a very warm and wonderful send off for her last month, and to acknowledge the presence of, in an acting capacity, Miss Herbert and to wish her well in that role, for the upcoming period.

I too would like to join, although be it a little belatedly in paying tribute to Marlene Arthur, or at least to recognize her contributions for the records of the Parliament, I did in fact, pay tribute to her at the closing of the recent under 16 Caribbean Netball Tournament and spend some time tracing her history and her contribution. But I would like for the purposes of this Parliament to add today.

I rise essentially to give congratulations to a number of persons who received certificates and awards at the 90th and reunion dinner of the Girl's High School. Mr. Speaker, as you know last year 2001, represented the 90th of the Girl's High School, a record in education which is not matched by any other educational institution in the country, they had a wonderful series of activities during the year, they had a commemorative service at the Kingstown Anglican Church, followed by a march through Kingstown with lights and candles and so on, very, very moving activity, ending up with a rally at the Girl's High School, where they had speeches and performances. They also had other activities, a career showcase, a production of a magazine, and the activities culminated on the 29th of December, that's Saturday at the Sunset Shores with this dinner. I did in fact, pay tribute to the Girl's High School and their flagship role in relation to education and indeed national development during my budget address a few weeks ago. And at this point I wish to read into the records and have the nation acknowledge the awardees who were presented with Certificate of Appreciation, 90th Anniversary Awards and Special 90th Anniversary Awards. Under the Certificate of Appreciation you had Ms. Ingrid Class, for Ancillary services to the school, for promoting the Girl's High School in the Diaspora, Mrs. Silvia De Freitas who acted as the MC for the night and did a fantastic job. Ms. Genie

Ollivierre who was the longest serving PTA president and whose contribution was quite fully acknowledged at the dinner on that night. Mr. Patrick Prescott, whose contribution to music. Mrs. Patricia Trimmingham for her contribution to the tuck shop and Mr. David "Darkie" Williams for his contribution to Drama. The 90th Anniversary Awards went as follows, for contribution to Agriculture and Industry, Miss. Erica Mc Intosh, to Art, Culture and Entertainment, Mrs. Jan Horne, OBE, for Community Services and services to the Girl's High School Mrs. Nelcia Robinson, who actually took a plane up from Trinidad and came in during the ceremony. Dr. Joyce Tony who is based in the US wasn't present but had somebody receive on her behalf. For Co-operate services, Mrs. Camille Criton, for contribution to education Mrs. Annel Thomas, and Mrs. Jennet France. Contribution to medicine, science and technology Dr. Rosalind Ambrose. Contribution to design, engineering, religion and journalism and architecture Mrs. Norma Grant. Contribution to politics, law and diplomacy, Honourable Rene Baptiste. Contribution to sports, Mrs. Lynette Glasgow, the current Director of Sports and physical education in our Ministry. Contribution to tourism Mrs. Jannet Woods. Special 90th Anniversary Awards, went to Miss Lisa De Nobrigo for earning 10 passes with ones at one sitting at CXC. Miss Miesha Bynoe who got 4 straight A's last year 2001, and prior to that ones at CXC, and those A's were in the sciences. Miss Joy Browne for her contribution towards Education and Nation building. Mr. Speaker, I had the honour to be present and to give out those certificates and awards and I felt especially honoured to be among such esteemed persons and to be able to share in the acknowledgement and recognition of their contribution. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the sitting held on the Monday 3rd December 2001 and Tuesday 4th December, 2001 copies of which had been circulated previously, were taken as read and were confirmed.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: I second the motion, Mr. Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

STATEMENTS

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like to make two very brief statements, or rather brief statements on two subjects. The first relates to the matter of visa requirements for Vincentians traveling to the British Virgin Islands. I want first of all to state that there are no visa requirements for Vincentians traveling to the British Virgin Islands. About four months ago, Mr. Speaker, I was informed through friends in the Government of the British Virgin Islands that there was consideration to have visa requirements for Vincentians and Jamaicans and they were adding those to the list of Guyanese. I was disturbed about it, because as you know, in the British Virgin Islands, you probably have

if you take the percentage of Vincentians to domestic population in the British Virgin Islands you probably have the highest percentage of any country in world. In so far as the Vincentians are concerned. I had done a calculation once, when I heard there were, I think 1200, or 1100 in the British Virgin Islands, that with the population with the United States, you would have required 23 million Vincentians to be in the United States to have a similar percentage. So you have a large number of Vincentians there. Most of whom, in fact, the vast majority, the overwhelming majority are hardworking, law abiding people, some of them indeed are Belongers, a category in the immigration laws of the British Virgin Islands.

I spoke to the Chief Minister Mr. Ralph O’Niel, whom I know well and told him that I was concerned about this matter. He said that it had come up for discussion and there was a consensus, that this should be put in place because there is a small handful of Vincentians who are taking drugs into the British Virgin Islands. He agreed with me upon my own representations that they will not proceed with the matter, because he agreed with me that there is an overwhelming majority of Vincentians who are law abiding, and those who go there spend the few weeks, if they are going on holidays and they come back. It was therefore, a bit of a surprise to me, I must say frankly when at the end of last year the beginning of this year, that I heard that this matter had come into being. Immediately I addressed the matter and as you know the question of visas for Vincentians has been put on hold indefinitely.

I spoke yesterday to the Chief Minister, Mr. O’Niel because I intended to make a statement on this to the House today, so I would find out what is the latest and he assured me that there will be no requirement and the matter is on hold indefinitely. I told him however, and we both agree on this, that I am very concerned about Vincentians who are going up there with drugs, or who are there who are involving themselves with drugs. Though, the persons who are mainly involved with drugs, in the BVI are persons from the BVI and more especially from the US Virgin Islands, I indicated to him that we should share information and that I would speak to the Minister of National Security, so information could be passed to the Commissioner of Police, that a list of those who are involved in illegal drugs and other criminal activities of a particular kind, should be sent to the British Virgin Islands and they should also send a list to us. In fact when the debate ensues later today on the question of the immigration Restriction Amendment Bill I will speak of the discussion which I had yesterday with Prime Minister Anthony of St. Lucia and Charles of Dominica about the same issue of sharing information, some of it is done already but we have to carry it at a much higher level. And it must be qualitatively better information, and faster, swifter that currently is the case. Because we cannot allow a handful of criminals and drug traffickers to spoil it in the BVI or anywhere else for the vast majority of law abiding Vincentians. In fact, the Chief Minister of the BVI told me with some pride that he was going to a ceremony sometime later this week, today or tomorrow, to induct a number of Vincentians as Belongers, to the British Virgin Islands.

I also want to send a note of warning to persons in St. Vincent and the Grenadines who are going up to traffic in drugs, that if you are going to the BVI, or anywhere at all but very much so to the BVI, because of the threatened problem that you can expect to be searched more at the

airport, hitherto here in St. Vincent, and that your baggage even with out your knowledge maybe subject to certain searches because they go to the back and you don't know what happens at the back. So if you think you are going up there with drugs to the BVI remember the eyes are on you, and the Customs of the BVI also are going to search your luggage, if you are coming from St. Vincent, with a fine teeth comb. And persons who don't even take drugs, but if they are known drug men and women in St. Vincent, you are likely to be excluded from entering the BVI because we will send the names from here to the BVI so that when your name comes up they will simply tell you sorry, you have to go on the plane and back to St. Vincent, because we cannot allow a handful of people to spoil it for the vast majority of law abiding folk in St. Vincent and the Grenadines who want to migrate and make an honest dollar. So I said let me speak on this forthrightly. Law-abiding people will know that they can go to the BVI without a visa. I will have further discussions on these matters with the Chief Minister in Anguilla when I attend the OECS Heads of Government meeting on the 30th and 31st of this month.

I want to say that the Chief Minister of the British Virgin Islands has asked me to convey and I do so publicly, to the police force here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines for their excellent collaborative work in apprehending two persons, one a Vincentian and one from the British Virgin Islands who had broken out of prison in the British Virgin Islands went off to St. Thomas and chartered a plane and came here, that's how they do it now you know. And so this is not a time for mischief making by anybody, this is a time for all of us who are law abiding to hold hands together on these issues and confront the vagabonds and the fugitives, everybody and that is why we changed the law, to deal with fugitives, to strengthen it because we met a ramshackle legal architecture. And we will strengthen that further, so I said, let me speak on that very forthrightly, Mr. Speaker, so that the law abiding people, in St. Vincent and the Grenadines who are going into the BVI would know that they do not need a visa, contrary to what some mischief makers maybe saying.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I also want to touch briefly on what is known annually as the minibus issue. Every December, January, for the last several years, when you are having inspections of vehicles and as we know those vehicles which are three years old, they have to be inspected, two years old. And naturally, the police will not inspect a vehicle if it doesn't conform with regulations, and the motor vehicle regulations say that you can't have any writing on the windscreen, the front or the back of your vehicle, that's what the regulations say.

Now, when the police attempted to take them off you have a number of persons who say that the police are doing something which is wrong. Of course if you listen to the airwaves you know the vast majority of Vincentians are supporting the police, because it is an issue that touches upon, safety. You can't have 12 inches of writing on your front, and some of them Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members have another something at the bottom and in order to be able to see, they have to put back their seats, and have it reclined so that they can peep through the little space in the middle, those are what we are dealing with. When a manufacturer makes a vehicle with a windscreen it is engineeringly designed so that you will have the maximum visibility.

And any bar to that visibility is something, apart from the issue of the law, is something which we all must be concerned about. Because, Mr. Mounsey, the former Senior Magistrate used to say, a motor vehicle is a more dangerous instrument than a firearm. Because it is readily available to everybody. And the statistics show that you have more people getting injured, and maimed and killed in motor vehicle accidents than actually get shot. So statistically, he is correct in the statement that he is making.

So I want to say to the general public that the Government supports the police in enforcing the regulations in that regard.

As regards the tint for the vehicles, we cannot remove around the side of the vehicle. We are not talking about the visibility around the side of the vehicle with the tint, because there are no regulations for that. We would have to discuss those regulations along with other things very shortly, and we do them as we do in this Government openly, democratically, have them broadcast live. We have been advised, the Government that is, that a 20% tint for those who want tint is not unacceptable, because if you have an air condition vehicle, you have a little tint on it, it keeps less strain on the air conditioned system, in the tropics where you have the sun all year round, but these dark vehicles is just not on the cards, and I am suggesting that we would have to address those things for public service vehicles and for private vehicles. We need to know who is going past in the vehicles, particularly the number of crimes taking place late at night. And some of those who are saying leave the tint, of course we can't trouble the tint because we don't have the legal framework, as I have been advised, but we can address the issue of the names in front of the vehicles.

The regulations give the Commissioner as the licensing authority the power to say where you must put your name, and he has said that you must put your name on the metal, below the windscreen and I think that is fair, and a lot of vehicles have it on there and a lot have taken off the names and put it down there. The Commissioner of Police has also I understand suggested that he will permit on the front of the vehicle a six inch tint, at the top of the windscreen, it would be a kind of sun visor and particularly if you are traveling west when the sun is going down or you travelling east when the sun is rising that could help you, it is a safety measure. So the Commissioner of Police and the Minister of Transport, and the Minister of National Security they are looking at the issue sensibly and sympathetically. There are some people who want to make a big political song and dance out of it. The last two, three years, the police tried to do it, they didn't get any support from the then Government, because it was a temporizing Government, cautious, always deeply concerned about everything and not doing anything. But this Government is lined up behind the police and say yes, we support you in removing the names, and removing barriers to visibility and I don't think anybody would disagree with that.

You may have a handful of mini bus operators who would want to keep them, I am urging them, don't pick a fight on this, you are running a business, you are not running a revolutionary institution or an anarchy. You are not an anarchist, because you are driving a vehicle you have been somehow given some power, no. It is a business. And this Government and this Prime

Minister we value the contribution of the minibuses and we want them to work with us and work with the police. The minibus operators they have a lot of legitimate concerns, some of these concerns for example relate to the roads. We need to address those together. Some have to do with transport systems, what kinds can we institute, and what assistance and help can be given to the minibus industry. All those things we want to talk about, but the general public also wants to talk about the excessive noise from the vehicles. They want to talk about the lack of discipline on the roads, by a tiny minority of minibus drivers, because the vast majority of the minibus drivers they treat it as a business. So that a person, a minibus driver wouldn't be cussing and swearing and behaving badly, dressing in a short pants, one of those things and a vest. It is a public service vehicle you are driving, be presentable and we can certainly institute training with the Minibus Association on a range of issue, because I want to see the minibus operators run the best possible service to St. Vincent and the Grenadines and where they can make more money.

I want to show you how sometimes some persons can be unreasonable. You know we in the ULP when we were in opposition we clamoured of the minibus operators to get duty free concessions, those who want to transport school children. Regulations were devised, they were to assigned routes. They got 75% duty-free concessions, fourteen of them. You know it is only a few of them taking school children. Well you cannot take the 75% concession and don't abide by the regulations, because what you would have done, you would have done something unlawful, it would have been a fraud you would have perpetuated on the Government. And the previous government didn't have any monitoring system in place and we are trying to put a monitoring system in place for those fourteen vehicles. And we are prepared to give more of them concessions but they have to abide by the regulations. And we have a special committee set up to address this question between the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Education trying to sort out this problem.

I just want to say to the minibus operators who took duty free concessions and are not taking school children, the law gives the Minister of Finance the power through the Comptroller of Customs, I could have the Comptroller of Customs go and say to those minibuses pay the duty, I do not want to do that, I am not a man who believes in wheeling the big stick, I believe in talking reasonable with people and with solving problems, because what is the objective, the objective is getting the school children to school and we have to have them be reasonable, once you get the concession to abide by the agreement.

So I want to say to the Honourable Members and by way of the radio broadcast, to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and to the minibus operators in particular, this Government is not just sympathetic but we are wholly supportive of the minibus operators, but there are certain things that some minibus operators want to do, we cannot go along with it, and one of the things we are not going along with, is with you leaving the name on the front of the vehicle. Some of them as I said have them 12 inches, Mr. Speaker, and you have one or two mischief-makers on the radio, albeit a tiny minority and representing an even smaller minority in the country, trying to champion their cause. You have to get past those things, and I am inviting the minibus

operators for us to work together to improve the service to the public and I will tell you something, if we work together, they will make more money, and they will provide a better service and at the end of the day, that is what all of us want.

So, I think let me just clarify the position to show that we are very much with the minibus operators but not on the issue of keeping the name on the windscreen of your vehicle. I am obliged Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: Mr. Speaker, during the past three to four years the Caribbean region suffered an increasing loss of its nursing personnel to the so called greener pastures of North America and the UK. This problem attained crisis proportion in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, around 1998. The then administration, when questioned regarding what was being done to address the problem, firstly denied that there was one, and as the crisis deepened, they claimed it was beyond their control and simply ignored or failed to do anything about it. On assuming Government in April 2001, this was one of the earliest problems the Ministry of Health had to confront in our new administration, we did so in an organized manner, as any organized administration will do. We discussed the situation, we looked at various options, it was decided that we tackle the problem in the short, medium and long-term manner. The nursing fraternity was at the helm of these discussions and decisions, it was decided that recruitment of nurses from overseas was necessary to solve the short-term problem. Cuba was cited as among the most appropriate in terms of the availability of nurses and other logistics of satisfying the urgent need. Our administration initiated arrangement and finalized them during an official visit to Cuba by a Government delegation in September of the year 2001. Today I am pleased to announce that a contingent of 23 Cuban medical personnel arrived here in late December of 2001 consisting of 20 nurses and 3 specialist doctors. They are already on the job and are settling fairly well. It is important to note that we are the fourth of fifth English speaking Caribbean nations to have recruited Cuban nurses. They are already serving well in Jamaica, Antigua, Grenada and Guyana. We anticipated that there may have been some possible problems with the language and after discussions with officials in the Ministry of Education between Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health and the Environment we devised a programme, an English course to help our Cuban brothers and sisters to adjust to the language speedily so that they can better serve our people.

It is interesting to note that St. Vincent and the Grenadines is the first country to have done that in the Caribbean, because on discussion with my colleague Ministers they cited that as one of the problems, and we anticipated the problem and have put into place something to deal with it. I wish to thank the Ministry of Education and especially those staff members who have gone beyond the call of duty to help in whatever way they can to help in our nations development and I want cite Mr. Carlton 'CP' Hall, and Mrs. Louta Rose who have done a great job in helping us along this way.

It is unfortunate that some misinformed, mal-educated, and unmannerly persons who publicly announce that they represent the views of the NDP opposition should make negative and

frivolous statements concerning the presence of Cuban medical personnel here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. We all know that during the administration of the NDP that Cuban medical personnel have been recruited and supported here and we in the Opposition supported that move. However, the NDP failed to do anything about the nursing crisis. I want to remind us that our administration does not believe in being deeply concerned by being stuck in inertia, because this is a formula for failure. We are concerned and when we are concerned intervention and that leads to success. I think that we must all thank the Cuban people for coming to our assistance in our time of need and try to assist them as much as possible to make their stay here a pleasant one, after all they continue to demonstrate their love and good will towards us, a Caribbean people of which too they share a common history. Many of our professionals and senior civil servants today in St. Vincent and the Grenadines including yours truly, is a proud recipient of the benevolence of the Cuban people. This is therefore no time for petty negative politics, and I think the leadership of the NDP should apologize to our friends from Cuba, and guide the disruptive utterances of their mouthpieces.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to advise the public on another health issue; that is there is an upsurge of Dengue in the Caribbean region. St. Vincent and the Grenadines has all the ingredients for Dengue. Dengue is endemic to St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the Caribbean, by that I mean it is here always. Every year there are cases of Dengue fever. We in the Ministry of Health and the Environment do not have any evidence as far as information that there is an epidemic. We have had reported cases which are at the level of the normal levels that we are accustomed to and in fact we believe that we have been spared an upsurge, or we hope we have, due to the preempted action of the improving on the waste management and the cleaning of St. Vincent and the Grenadines under this administration. However, all citizens need to do their part to avoid such an outbreak since this is possible. No government wants or brings a disease on their shores and therefore attempts to politicize the occurrence of a case or few cases of Dengue as an epidemic or to blame it on government is totally mischievous and we must desist from such activities. It is irresponsible. We hope that all of us will do our part, like looking at our vases in our homes, keeping our yards clean, debushing our surroundings, check empty containers that may contain water that can breed the *Aedes Egypti* mosquito. The mosquitoes do not know the difference between ULP and NDP when they start to sting. They are not political and therefore we must not politicize what is happening. We hope that we will all practice and encourage leadership among our citizens by doing, stating, and advising what is truthful and beneficial to our nation's development, and in so doing, we must discourage ill will, misconceptions and misinformation. I thank you and I am obliged.

QUESTIONS FOR ORAL ANSWERS

1. *The Honourable Arnhim Eustace (Leader of the Opposition) asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Planning and Development:*

In light of the frequent statements made by the ULP while in Opposition, condemning the Duty Free Concession for the purchase of cars by Parliamentarians, and the indication by the then Leader of the Opposition that no Member of the ULP Government would accept it or apply for it. Can the Honourable Minister please now state which Members have availed themselves of this Duty Free Concession.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the question itself contains certain untruths which will emerge from the answers that I will give.

The Unity Labour Party when in opposition made it plain that it was unconscionable for the NDP Ministers to receive duty free concessions on vehicles – 75%; when school children were standing by the side because they cannot pay for vehicles to take them to school. And we made the point in the opposition that before any of us accepts any duty free concession, you must first give that concession to minibus operators who are transporting school children. That point was made up and down this country, by me in this House, on the platform, on radio and on television. I also said that it was unconscionable for a Minister of Government in the NDP to get a 75% duty free concession, take a travel allowance of \$1000 a month and then park up their duty free vehicle and then use Government vehicles to take their children to school. The expression I used, (I remember it quite well), to take their girlfriend up to Sugar Hill in Chester Cottage by the disco or to take their family to church on Sunday or on Saturdays, as some of them did. I made that point, that it was unconscionable for them so to do. This Government has stamped out Ministers driving any Government vehicle with anything not having to do with Government business, and I have stated it, that any Minister in this Government who takes a Government vehicle and drives it, not connected with his duties or that in his Ministry, don't ask me to give an explanation to the public, I would demand that he or she gives an explanation to the public. And if you have any of those, you tell me, and I would ask them to give an explanation in the House. We are not playing the fool with that.

Mr. Speaker, the same thing applies to the abuse of vehicles by public servants. The very morning when a crash occurred with a G – vehicle, and I saw it in the newspaper. I called for a report immediately. It turned out that that vehicle was put in “G” because the Call Centre Company was not yet incorporated and it had to go in DEVCO's name in a “G”. I have given instructions for those vehicles to come out of “G” and put on “P” for

the Call Centre Company. But because it is a government owned company, I have also spoken to the Minister that those vehicles, they must not be abused. This Government is known for its probity in these matters. And Mr. Speaker, two Members of the Unity Labour Party applied for duty free concession for vehicles whilst they were in Opposition, and they got them after 1998 when the minibus operators got the duty free concessions. And I want to indicate the reason why they were shamed into giving the duty free concession. I bought a Pajero for \$115,000, and they expected me to apply for duty free concession. I paid the \$115,000. I could have saved forty something thousand dollars because you didn't give as yet the duty free concessions on the minibus after I paid my duty. The Minister for National Security at the same time bought a new pick up. He could have applied for it as a farmer but he didn't. He could have applied for it as a parliamentarian, but he didn't. He said he was not taking it. It was the same Minister of National Security and the Honourable Prime Minister here today, who shamed the NDP because you thought that we would not have backed up what we said, because we had made the statement that we would not apply for it until you gave the minibus drivers duty free concessions.

I am very glad when these questions are asked Mr. Speaker so that the people could be reminded about the truth. And I will provide the names of all the persons who have received duty free concessions. Before I do so Mr. Speaker, I would like the Leader of the Opposition to ask me about the duty free concession that the NDP gave to itself to build Democrat House – its headquarters. The public doesn't know about that. Duty free concession on the tiles, on the ceiling, on the fluorescent lamps, on emulsion paints, on oil paints, on fabricated steel works, on the cortega main board, the main beam, the cross Ts, the wall molding, the doors, the windows. Ask me about that.

You see the point is this, because I am a “together now” man sometimes I want to put things together and don't want to cause undue partisanship because I have a strategic view for the country. But the Leader of the Opposition is led by Eduardo Lynch – a convicted felon who ask these sort of inane questions. Well, I am not following a convicted felon. I am telling you that plain and straight. Who want to follow a convicted felon can do that. The following are the persons, since this was instituted in 1996 by the NDP Government. I must say here that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition never got one as a parliamentarian. I think he got one as a public servant. I have no problem with that. It is his entitlement. I have to be fair to everybody. If I may just be forgiven by not calling, “Honourable” in front – just the names. Yvonne Francis-Gibson, March 27th 1996 – she began with a Hyundai Galupa 2000ccg. I don't need to call the type of vehicles. Louis Jones, March 1996; Sir James Mitchell, May 1996; Alfred Bynoe, June 1996; Carlyle Dougan, July 1996; Stewart Nanton, October 1996; Monty Roberts, October 1996; Jeremiah Scott, October 1996; Stephanie Browne, February 1997; John Horne, May 1997; Alpian Allen, April 1998; Nolwyn McDowall, August 1998; Louis Straker – the first person from the ULP, 27th July 1999, more than three years after it was instituted, because late in 1998 you instituted the concession for the minibus operators.

Glenford Stewart, September 1999; St. Clair Thomas January 19th, 2000. He resigned on the 20th January. The day before he resigned as a parliamentarian he got the concession. O. A. Boyea, June 2000; Vincent Beache, June 2000; Sir James Mitchell, he got another one in December 2000; Monty Roberts, he got another one in December 2000; Conrad Sayers May 2001; Girlyn Miguel 2001; Clayton Burgin June 2001; Edwin Snagg June 2001; Selmon Walters June 2001; Hendrick Alexander August 2001; Michael Browne October 2001. The name Ralph Gonsalves does not appear there because I bought a new Pajero just before you put the condition which we were asking. In due course, if the good Lord gives me long life and I am here, I no doubt will get one 75% duty-free. But those are the unadulterated facts. I am glad that the public is hearing all this on radio.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the Prime Minister has indicated which Members of the ULP have received the concession.

2. *The Honourable Arnhim Eustace (Leader of the Opposition) asked the Honourable Minister of National Security:*

In light of the fact that Mr. Thierry Nano, fugitive Offshore Banker was allowed to leave the State of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, can the Honourable Minister please indicate whether Mr. Nano has since been arrested and extradited to the United States.

HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, there was no question of Mr. Thierry Nano being allowed to leave the State. As a citizen of St. Vincent and the Grenadines he was entitled to the privileges as any other Vincentian. Citizenship was granted to Mr. Nano under the N.D.P Administration at the time when he financed, not only the N.D.P. Administration, but also individual members of the N.D.P including Ministers of Government. Let us not forget that Parnel Campbell as Attorney General, who lied to the nation in this Honourable House was forced to resign as Attorney General because of his corrupt transactions with Mr. Nano and his Offshore Bank.

This matter was thoroughly discussed and investigated. A legal issue arose because Mr. Thierry Nano is a citizen of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and to repeat, citizenship granted not by this U.L.P. Government, by past N.D.P. Government.

In the case of a citizen, an arrest would be made pursuant to the Fugitive Offenders Act, Chapter 126 of the Laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, which was brought into law on the 27th December 1989 by the N.D.P. Government.

In the previous law dealing with fugitive offenders (which has now been repealed and replaced), and it was under this Act that a citizen of this country would be arrested on a warrant issued from another country, and the process of extradition initiated. Therefore, it

must be one pursuant to the Fugitive Offenders Act, but in the first schedule of the Fugitive Offenders Act, which relates to the offences for which you could extradite a citizen of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, money laundering was not an extraditable offence. The U.S.A wanted Mr. Nano, a citizen of this country arrested and extradited for money laundering, but under the 1989 Fugitive Offenders Act which the N.D.P instituted, money laundering was not an offence for which you could begin extradition proceedings or for which a person could be arrested.

Under the new Proceeds of Crime and Money Laundering (Prevention) Act, 2001 (No. 39 of 2001), Section 65 states:-

“An offence under this Act, the Drug Trafficking Offences Act, and the Proceeds of Crime Act will for the purposes of the Fugitive Offenders Act be an extraditable offence, and this provision will apply whether or not there is any extradition treaty with the requesting State.”

As you can see this Act was designed to address the problems of drug trafficking, money laundering, and profit from all other criminal offences or activities.

Section 65 of this new Act plugged the loophole in the then Fugitive Offenders Act, so that Mr. Nano or any other person can now be arrested for the crime of money laundering.

Mr. Nano, we are told, is also a citizen of France and as far as we know he is now residing in that country, yet the French Authorities have not arrested him for extradited to the United States of America.

I must further state, that the U.S.A. Authorities are very pleased, in fact very elated at the mass of information received from their searches of the Nano properties, which they were able to effect, because this U.L.P. Administration issued through the proper channels a Search Warrant so to do.

3. *The Honourable Arnhim Eustace (Leader of the Opposition) asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Planning and Development:*

In light of the recent budget presentation which was described by the Prime Minister as the “Poor People’s Budget”, would the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Planning and Development please state whether he would now be prepared to remove from the list of items which had increased consumption tax rates, items such as, onions, sardines, sausages, biscuits, margarine, used tires, shampoo etc. which are used weekly by the poor.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I am indeed very pleased that Honourable Leader of the Opposition is giving further support to the designation by me of our budget as the "Poor People's Budget. And that the Common External Tariff (Amendment) Resolution of 2001, which was gazetted on the 27th December 2001, increased consumption duties in excess of two hundred and fifty items. As stated in the budget Mr. Speaker, these increases all told would bring seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars additionally, estimated revenue, through Customs, which some would be put specifically to assist the rural poor; the rural workers and farmers who work in agriculture in the agricultural diversification fund. That is where this money would be put.

Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time that Consumption Taxes have been increased in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Indeed, it is the smallest rate of increase ever, on such a limited range of goods since independence. In 1984 the most whopping consumption tax increases ever took place under the NDP administration providing in close to twenty million dollars.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that it has been brought to my attention that at least one supermarket has increased the price on condensed milk. A supermarket which allegedly financed the NDP administration in the last Elections. And that supermarket owners, operators and some staff members, when people go there to buy condensed milk, they tell them it is increased because the ULP Government put on the consumption taxes. I want to say Mr. Speaker, that there is no increase in consumption taxes on any milk products in the new increases, which have been suggested. And I have advised the Minister of Consumer Affairs, the Deputy Prime Minister, to instruct the relevant Officers to go into the supermarkets and to provide a report to see if any unscrupulous supermarket operators are raising prices, blaming them on the increase in consumption duties when either no such increases had been put on those items, or that the miniscule increases do not warrant the hefty increases which they are putting on the particular items for which there have been increases.

Specifically, Mr. Speaker, it would be of interest for the country to know that the consumption tax increases on onions, (and I am dealing with the items asked by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition; onions, sardines, sausages, margarine, biscuits) the increase is only 5%, and I want to put this out in cents to you, Honourable Members, and I want the public (and I am glad these questions are asked.) The increase in consumption tax on one pound of onions imported to St. Vincent and the Grenadines is 2.8 cents, not even 3 cents a pound. So when you go to the supermarket and they put on 20 cents per pound for the onions is because the supermarkets them ripping you off, it is not because Ralph put it on. In the case of sardines, the increase is nineteen cents per pound or just under 5 cents per quarter pound tin increase. So when you go to buy your sardines and they are putting it up twenty cents, tell them that you hear I say that it is less than 5 cents increase. Sausages 14 ½ cents increase per pound, less than 1 cent an ounce increase for sausage. Margarine 10 cents a pound increase, so that when you go to the little shop and you have the margarine put out in ounces, it is not even coming up to 1 cent increase for 1 ounce of margarine. Biscuits. The five-ounce pack is 3 cents increase (I am glad you ask these questions because I am hearing all kinds of talk on the radio and all sorts of irresponsible

demagoguery). Used tires per unit. The increase per unit per tire is \$3.17 on a tire which is costing \$317.35. You see, Mr. Speaker, one of the things also with the tires there were some anomalies which we had to adjust. When they mentioned the two hundred and something items – Mr. Speaker, I will tell you what items you know, because they are in categories and you have to leave the categories. There is an increase on pigeon, turtle, dog, cat, monkey, parrot and other birds. You are complaining about those? When they say 260 items they make people believe that when they go to the supermarket is everything. How could anybody here, we want to grow onions here, and we can grow onions and did grow onions, complain – not even three cents per pound increase more. The people of Rose Hall will have a chance now to plant some more onions, because the onions coming from Trinidad or from America, the same thing with the carrots and the lettuce and the raddish, beets, cucumbers. Mr. Speaker, some of these items; mushrooms, shuffles, dates, figs, ugly fruit, ortinique, melon.

I am glad that they raised the question, because as I told the people, and they can rely on my word, I personally went through thousands and thousands of items. It took me, two Customs Officers and the Director General/Finance and Planning from 9:00 o'clock one Saturday morning until nearly 11:00 o'clock in the night to select these two hundred and something out of the thousands, so that it would not bear down on poor people, and that the increases are miniscule. But the supermarket operators, some of them taking advantage when they hear that there is an increase. They want to increase it on almost every single thing, including milk, and there is no increase on the milk. The snow cone vendors out there, I met one, they increase the price for snow cone. I enquired and they said they had to pay \$1.00 more for the condense milk. Condense milk has no increase at all. That is how they are wicked. And the NDP on their talking show, and the Leader of the Opposition are given credence and creating the environment for the people who financed them in the Elections to gouge out people eye to increase the prices in the supermarkets. I will not stand for it. You will hear more from me on this question on another time. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Before I take question number 4, I have been requested by Senator Leacock for some accommodation in relation to his question due to some urgent pressing matters that he has to deal with. So we will go to questions 13, 14 and 15.

4. Dr. The Honourable Godwin Friday (Northern Grenadines) asked the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs to please state:

- (a) Whether he had investigated the sexual harassment complaint made by a female officer against another senior official at our New York UN Mission and if so, what steps have been taken to address the problem.*

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Mr. Speaker, I too, I am very happy that the Opposition has put forward this question so that I can go into certain details relative to the conduct of personnel at our Missions abroad. Mr. Speaker, this Government can boast of its exemplary acts in terms

of defending the dignity of women, and the allegations here are against a female employee at our Mission in New York. But we have been very careful to make sure as a Labour Government that we promote the dignity and the respect of all workers, whether in the public sector or the private sector. As a matter of fact, we have one of the best records when it comes to women. As you can see Mr. Speaker, for the first time, we have appointed a female Ambassador to the United Nations. For the first time, we have appointed a female Attorney General, and we are over 30% female on this side of the House compared to 0% on the Opposition side. Not only do we want to promote respect and dignity to all workers, including women, but we expect the highest standard from those who work in our Missions abroad. They must reflect the decency of our country and our people and our Government, and we would not tolerate anything less than the highest standard from those who represent us in our Missions abroad. We do not want to have the name of St. Vincent and the Grenadines sullied as happened under the NDP administration when there was bacchanal at our Embassy in Washington, where the wife of an Ambassador went down there and there were chairs flying all over, that Police had to be called in, and it caused a disgrace to the name of St. Vincent and the Grenadines at our Embassy in Washington. We do not want that to be repeated. We don't want, as happened in the case with Ambassador Kingsley Layne where a Minister stood up here and said that he owed the Government \$98,000 and then the Government changed it around and said that the Government owed Kingsley Layne money. All of our affairs must be conducted in transparency, and it must be done decently and in order. And that is why Mr. Speaker, we are asking our Missions abroad to let their personnel observe the laws of the host country. And I have in my hand here, a request from the Department of Finance, New York City in which they are requesting the equivalent of \$110,000 EC which is \$US40,700.00. The letter is addressed to Dennie during the period of 1997-2001; US\$40,775.00 equivalent of EC\$110,000 that they are owing the city for traffic violations. Now this was never brought out. I heard the Leader of the Opposition arguing about three cents and a penny on a pound of onions. And here we have \$110,000 that the Leader of the Opposition should have known about for traffic violations under the NDP administration, and not a word was said about it. And this is poor people's money, and if you are going to argue in terms of poor people's money, if you are going to argue in terms of poor people's with three cents on onions, why don't you talk about poor people's taxes up to \$110,000 that the City of New York is making a demand for. Not a word from the Opposition about that.

Mr. Speaker, there are certain allegations made and an investigation was made by the Ambassador who herself is a female and a lawyer. And Mr. Speaker, the answer to the question is. Mrs. Heather Okerry was formerly employed as Secretary/Accountant at the United Nations Mission in New York. Mrs. Okerry's job performance was found by her superiors to be extremely poor and on the 21st November 2001, a letter was delivered to her, pointing out the areas of concern and warned that unless there was significant improvement in her performance, her job was in jeopardy. On the 26th of November 2001, Mrs. Okerry delivered a letter to the Ambassador dated the 16th of November, which is ten days later. In that letter Mrs. Okerry complained of sexual harassment by the Deputy Permanent Representative. When questioned as to why the letter had taken ten days to reach the Ambassador, Mrs. Okerry made no response.

The complains made by Mrs. Okerry were investigated and the conclusion was that the allegations were false and made up in an attempt, not only to embarrass the Mission and the Government, but also to make it difficult for any action to be taken against her for her incompetent job performance. In the mean time, Mrs. Okerry's performance went from bad to worse. She was sullen and abusive to her superiors, and refused to carry out her duties. She also frequently absented herself from work. On the 16th December 2001, a decision was taken to dismiss Mrs. Okerry from her position. She was advised of this by letter on the 10th of December. So you can see Mr. Speaker, I, from the investigation that went on, this was just an attempt to get back at the country and her superiors at the Mission because of her reprimand for her job performance.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, supplementary.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: A point of order. If you are asking a member's question, it is only the Member can ask the supplementary. Of course if the Honourable Member wishes to answer it, I just raised it as a point of order.

5. *Dr. The Honourable Godwin Friday (Northern Grenadines) asked the Honourable Minister of National Security the following: -*

Given that housing accommodations exist upstairs the Revenue Building in Bequia and a new Coastguard base was established in Union Island, whether the Government planned to place Coastguard Officers in Bequia and Union Island and if so, when.

HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE: Mr. Speaker, I really don't know what space in the revenue Office upstairs was the relevance for Coastguard Officers being put there. I could answer the question simply by saying, yes, or no. But Mr. Speaker, it does not make sense putting Coastguard Officers unless you have Coastguard boats, but as soon as the new Coastguard base in Union Island is ready for occupancy a Coastguard presence will be established in Union Island. The advantage and efficacy of a permanent Coastguard presence in Bequia, because of the close proximity to Mainland, St. Vincent is under consideration at this moment. And until it is determined whether it will be efficacious and cost effective, and would assist in the reduction of crime, then the status quo for Bequia would remain and the Coastguard will operate from St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

6. *Dr. The Honourable Godwin Friday (Northern Grenadines) asked the Honourable Minister of Telecommunications, Science and Technology, in light of the deteriorating state of affairs at the Call Centre Programme:*

(a) *To confirm the exact number of employees who are full-time employees and their rates of pay;*

- (b) *Indicate why was it necessary for the Government to have 100% share holding in the company that controls the Call Centre operations;*
- (c) *Indicate how many contracts have been lost because of the poor performance of the Call Centre.*

HONOURABLE DR. JERROL THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, presently there are 203 persons permanently employed at the Call Centre. These can be divided into telemarketing staff (TSR's) and the persons employed in varying degrees of management, administration and operations.

The Telemarketing staff is made of 70 TSRs on days and 70 TSRs on nights, bringing a subtotal of 140 TSRs. In the Management/Administrative/Operational Staff, there is one General Manager, one Operational Manager, one I.T. Manager, 1 Shift Manager, one Quality Assurance Manager, one Quality Assurance Co-ordinator, one Client Service Manager, five Project Managers, ten Coaches, ten Supervisors, four persons in the Information Technology Team, six Data Cleaners, four persons in the list Management Team, four persons as Human Resource Management Personnel and another three Trainers for Telemarketing and the various contracts. Another ten persons are employed as Maintenance and Security staff, which includes: 5 Security contracted, 1 driver, 1 in house cleaner, 3 contracted cleaners. This is a subtotal of 63 and a total of 203 persons employed daily. 195 are permanent staff with employment contracts.

The salary for contracted Telemarketers is made up of a base salary of \$819 per month plus an incentive commission based on the number of their sales per day. Those telemarketers who sell very well can make upwards of \$1,600 per month. Those that do not make a single sale will still receive \$819 per month.

The Telemarketer's wages are calculated on an hourly basis and paid fortnightly. Sales commissions are paid about three or four weeks later, once the sales have been fully verified, calculated and certified. For the month of December, this was the first operational month and commissions are still being assessed so the telemarketers will receive their December commissions this month in January.

The salaries of the management and the administrative staff range from \$1,050 to \$4,600. Various categories like coaches and supervisors are also given an incentive commission.

The Call Centre actually has potential staffing of 391 persons. The total telemarketing seats are 144 seats. This means 144 telemarketing persons employed in the day shift and 144 persons on evening shift for a total telemarketing core staff of 288. An additional 40 telemarketers will be on part-time standby in case of sickness, holidays or absence. The Management, Administrative, Operational and Maintenance staff total 63 persons bringing a projected total staff of 391 persons.

Mr. Speaker, in August 2001, sixteen persons were selected for training in Grenada as management staff. The management and operational staff have steadily grown. In September 2001 over 1800 persons were interviewed and screened for Call Centre employment at the Methodist Church Hall. 1,256 had scores over 65% and from September to November 411 persons received basic Telemarketing training at Ottley Hall. This was done in four (4) batches of 100 to 110 persons. Once each batch was trained at Ottley Hall they were moved to Arnos Vale for more intense operational training for two weeks. Those persons who performed well went through a third level of training for the various programs under contract with the Call Centre. While being trained, trainees received a stipend. In order to assess the performance of each telemarketer under full, live operational conditions where they are actually dialing the United States, batches of individuals were brought in for 3-5 days and their response to training and performance level was assessed, then another set would be brought in and their performance assessed. This process was a recommendation of our consultants who felt the inexperienced TSR's would gain confidence and allow the trainers to give maximum attention to coaching and quality issues. The Telemarketers were paid for the hours that they worked, and each new batch of advanced trainees being assessed would also be paid just for the hours they worked. Those who performed to an adequate standard were given contracts, and kept as core permanent staff with a contracted salary. Clearly all 411 persons could not be employed at the same, all at once. This process while it has allowed a steady building of staff since the opening of the Call Centre six weeks ago, it created concern, as the total wages for working three to five days was lower than that once a person becomes a contracted employee on a monthly basis.

203 persons are currently employed. If someone did not perform well and was not given an early contract they will undergo retraining, retraining and further retraining in order to receive another opportunity.

Mr. Speaker back to the beginning of December there were 63 contracted persons. In mid December the Arnos Vale Call Centre only had 156 contracted persons employed. Presently, it has grown to 203 and we expect that by January 20th there would be 260 persons employed. Between February 1st and 15th we would have achieved nearly 90% capacity of approximately 391 persons employed just 2 ½ months after official opening.

The rate of taking on employees would have been accelerated if we did not have several technical, and personnel problems.

Teething problems ranged from:

The satellite dish arrived two weeks late due to delays from Amerijet. 9/11 affected arrival of equipment and sales in the last couple of weeks at the Call Centre.

We had a few electrical problems causing the modem to blow out and a new one having to be flown in.

After the computers, dialers and satellite dish was set up we experienced major problems with quality, static, hissing, crossing of lines, dropped calls and many other quality problems. Any time we rapidly increased staff, the quality problems would get worse. Our technical team, the new General Manager and a number of consultants worked tirelessly and I am pleased to say that the quality of the lines have improved significantly.

All these quality problems existed; the Call Centre could not take on the full level of employees and function at full capacity as anticipated. We are now ready to purchase more (Broadband) or lines from the satellite, which will allow us to go to full capacity.

This will be done over the next three weeks and completed by January 31st.

The quality problem did not result in the loss of any contracts. As a matter of fact the sales have been climbing steadily as the hands on experience has increased. Some Telemarketers making up to 8 sales per shift. We have built this Call Centre from scratch. No one presently employed below the general management trainers had any experience in the Call Center Industry. The previous government placed very little emphasis on advanced IT training, the area of our greatest need.

Contracts exist: ASAIL – BABC Bay Area Business Council
ACAP Advantage Capital
CAHNERS is a magazine company.

We did not have a contract with CAHNERS. They underwent testing in early December and will be returning to St. Vincent within the next few weeks to set up full service. Teltex, a new private Call Centre has leased a number of seats for a few months until they have established their own Call Centre at Ottley Hall some time in March. They are paying us to use the Call Centre's computers and telemarketers at Arnos Vale. Teltex has been helping ISSVG in its operation and we are well on our way to developing a full-fledged policy for investments in the informatics sector. Two other private Call Centres being developed here in St. Vincent are well on track.

Mr. Speaker, we have done several assessments of Cable & Wireless versus Satellite and consistently we found Cable and Wireless's cost would have been at a disadvantage in comparison to the satellite solution. There was a significant deposit of \$200,000 required by Cable and Wireless. They had a higher per minute rate of 7 cents verses 3 cents via the satellite.

Higher start up equipment costs \$200.000 US for compression equipment verses \$120,000 US for total startup of the satellite.

More significantly, there was a longer time for delivery of service with Cable and Wireless, which conflicted with our implementation schedule.

A Call Center must spend less than \$US4.00 per hour to be competitive. Cable and Wireless was \$US7.00 per hour. In Grenada the monthly telephone bill was over \$680,000 through Cable and Wireless. When payments were not made for three months the bill exceeded 2 million dollars. And so Call Centre Grenada ran into some trouble.

We have always been open to business with Cable and Wireless but we found them expensive, inflexible and at times uncooperative during initial negotiations. We have now found them more open to lower costs and discussions over the last 4-6 weeks have now provided the possibilities of an alternative back-up service and redundancy whereby the Call Centre can use both the satellite or and Cable and Wireless.

Mr. Speaker, the Call Centre SVG is now renamed ISSVG and is 100% owned by the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines through the Development Corporation (DEVCO).

Shortly after the change in Government the past Manager of DEVCO expressed serious concerns about the nature of the agreement that the Leader of the Opposition had signed. There had been no due diligence assessment of who and what was Call Centre Grenada.

1.4 million dollars US was to be given to the investors to set up. This was to be paid back every six months for three years and after three years the assets sold to the investors at the Call Centre for \$1.00.

We soon learnt that the original investors fell out. The Irish made serious accusations that the original investors were corrupt and took kickbacks.

The original investors themselves found that the Irish had tricked them and registered the new company they had formed without adding their names. Tricking them into thinking that they were part of the company they had formed without adding their names. Tricking them into thinking that they were part of the company when their names were not part of the partnership.

Mr. Speaker, this smelled too much like Ottley Hall.

We did further investigations and found that the investors were planning to cream off significant profit, with underhand and side deals. We were overwhelmed with the greed of these individuals and their intent on taking us to the cleaners. It was our determination that had we continued with the agreement as signed by the Leader of the Opposition or continued dealing with these parties, we would have had another Ottley Hall and the Call Centre closed and our 1.4 million gone.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say to the Member for the Northern Grenadines, in the interest of the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, we could not continue any agreements and all parties rendered previous agreements null and void.

Mr. Speaker facing the decision as to if we should abandon Call Centres all together or forge ahead on our own we decided to forge ahead owning 100% of the operation.

We knew we had set backs. We also knew we had the basic information. We knew the Telemarketers had the capacity to make sales. We knew we could put a management team together and contracted various consultants and in December a new highly experienced General Manager was employed.

Our intention is to steer the Call Centre to profitability and then divest by either selling shares to Vincentians or to any suitable investor.

Mr. Speaker, all evidence showed that other Call Centres had had fine-tuning and teething problems for the first 30 to 60 days, and then there were smoother operations. Once each Telemarketer achieves 2 sales a day, profitability is assured. I am convinced that the entry of three other privately owned Call Centres, two at Ottley hall, one at Campden park and the planned expansion of the Arnos Vale Call Centre to Georgetown, will bring a larger pool of expertise on the ground. It will require further training of employees for these Call Centres.

Mr. Speaker, we believe in the Vincentian spirit and will place faith in the ability and potential of our young people. We will continue to attract bonafide, clean and appropriate investors so restoring investor confidence and rebuilding St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

7. *The Honourable Terrence Ollivierre (Southern Grenadines) asked the Honourable Minister of Culture to please state whether the cancellation for the first time ever of the annual Community Carol Singing sponsored by the St. Vincent Music Association for the past fifty (50) years on the Sunday immediately preceding Christmas was caused by;*

- (a) *The refusal by Government or a Government Department to erect lighting as is customary at the National Commercial Bank, Halifax Street cul-de-sac or the Old Post Office Corner, as it was known.*
- (b) *The decision by the ULP to host a competing event on the same night featuring a visiting overseas artiste; one Joseph Niles of Barbados which was attended by the Honourable Minister and her Cabinet Colleagues.*

HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE: Mr. Speaker, first of all let me state that it is the first time that I am informed, for the first time, the annual Community Carol Singing sponsored by the St. Vincent Music Association was cancelled. Of course, I don't recall seeing the Honourable Member there to have had the occasion to attend from age 5, and the history of the event would

indicate that it has changed somewhat in its format from earlier years. And I have had the good fortune and privilege for close to a decade of being the Master of Ceremonies and the leader of the singing in the annual community caroling by the music association, mainly because Mr. Speaker, I do have an association with the Royal School of Music, having obtained Certificates in formal training in music. And that was before I became Minister of Culture. I have also been associated with the Music Association in doing many other things. And I wish to state categorically that there was no refusal by Government or any Government Department to erect lighting at the National Commercial Bank or the old Post Office Corner.

I received my invitation from the St. Vincent Music Association asking me if I would undertake for yet another year the responsibility of leading the singing and Master of Ceremonies because from time whenever we were organizing this event, they would ask me for ideas on the content of the programme, and to help them to co-ordinate it. I received it after the Cabinet took the decision to hold the Concert on the 23rd of December at the Central Market Square in Kingstown and to invite the well known – not “one Joseph Niles.” I thought that was highly disrespectful. Mr. Niles was a well respected Caribbean Artiste and internationally. (It comes with my upbringing Mr. Speaker, to be respectful.) And we took that decision to have a Concert, not the Unity Labour Party, if it was the Unity Labour Party, Kingstown would sink. When the Unity Labour Party is going to have an event the Street from Grenville to Halifax would be in pure red. But we thought we would bring some Christmas cheer to the people in the spirit of the enlarged National Nine Mornings Committee, and Joseph Niles, being a favourite artiste of the Caribbean, and so many people love his music, that we thought would invite him to come again. And we didn’t just bring Joseph Niles, we came with artistes from the North of the country, from Sandy Bay, the Roberts Trio. We went down into Central Leeward for the Blessed; a band led by the respected Reverent Clarke’s Son, young people performing for the first time and so on, on national stage because that is the agenda of the Ministry of Culture and the Minister of Culture; to bring the people from far and wide and all corners to perform at national events. We went to New Grounds for the Anointed and bringing other gospel people together. Our idea Mr. Speaker, is not to thwart the respected St. Vincent Music Association but to add to what the St. Vincent Music Association had been doing. When I got the invitation, I sought to speak with the President, but I spoke with the Treasurer, and I subsequently spoke with the Secretary. They informed me that they were going to hold a meeting because I suggested a certain reformatting to them, and then they called back and indicated that perhaps they can still hold the event, if I can come earlier and start the Christmas Gospel Concert an hour later, but the logistics of that did not seem possible. I subsequently learnt by a message left at my home, they had difficulty with lighting, so that could not be. So I sought to find out what was the difficulty and I was never informed of the nature of the difficulty. And I respect the veterans in the Music Association not to put them through a grilling, criminal investigation or interrogation, and I respected what they told me. It is the intention of the Ministry of Culture to continue to expose the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to high quality music, including that from the Royal School of Music and persons associated with the Music Association. That is why we are taking the decision and acted upon it, and not postpone it indefinitely and repair the Peace Memorial Hall. And that is why there

would be a 750 seat theatre in the National Library at Murray's Road. And that is why I have begun seeking the assistance of friendly Governments towards building a Philharmonic Orchestra for St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, I am obliged.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

HONOURABLE TERRENCE OLLIVIERRE: Mr. Speaker, since the Honourable Minister is so involved with the Music Association, weren't you aware that when Cabinet was making its decision that the Community Carolling was held on the Sunday before Christmas.

HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE: Mr. Speaker, I know perhaps sometimes people have told me my voice is quite powerful. He did not listen to my reply. I answered already.

8. The Honourable Terrence Ollivierre (Southern Grenadines) asked the Honourable Minister of Culture to please state:

- (a) The net income or loss incurred by the Carnival Development Committee in the 2001 Carnival;*
- (b) Whether the Government will ensure that the Performers and Organizers who are owed money for participation in 2001 Carnival are paid promptly.*

HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before I entered this House, the Honourable Vincent Beache gave me a copy of the rules. And I think somewhere in the rules it says, you should not repeat questions, especially if the answers are already in the Hansards. We will have to have sessions with Members of Parliament to get them acquainted with the rules.

Question (a) was already answered by me in this Honourable House, but I should go over it once again. The Financial Comptroller of the Carnival Development Committee, Mr. Lennox Timm advises me, and I repeat, even though the audit is almost completed. The Carnival Development Committee result of operations has a deficit of \$3,916 for 2001. And I will tell you why they have that deficit Mr. Speaker. When the Carnival Development Committee took Office it met debts running back to 1994. And I will patiently recite them and put them into the record of this Honourable House. Preston Charles - Jouvart 1994, \$500.00; and they were paid by the 2001 Committee. Professional Secretarial Services, \$9000; National Broadcasting Corporation \$51, 534; National String-band for music 1994 \$200.00; Young Island Resorts for Miss Carival 1994 \$3,254.37; Ishmar Browne, Junior Carnival 1994, \$150.00; Suzelle Stapleton Junior Carnival 1994, \$125.00; DIPCON Engineering 1993, \$19,000; Reliance Press 1993, \$720; Bottlers Limited \$1,250.00; National Insurance Scheme 1995, \$132.51; Rogers Photo Studio, 1995 \$1,500; Joel Williams 1995 \$500; Monique Stanley, \$199.00 for snacks. Jeffrey

Balcombe for video recording \$300; Avis Yorke for video tape \$324; Avis Yorke for video tape – Mr. Speaker, I don't want to embarrass people you know. Because there is a reason, we are obliged in this Honourable House Mr. Speaker to give truthful answers, and to give full answers. Of course disciplines have to do with the question of what is the truth and what is fulsome. Some of us learn that early in life, and some of us don't learn it at all. After all, it says, "Honour thy father and thy mother". Now, I will go on Mr. Speaker, Toney Dasilva for photos, \$180. So the total from 1994 in a certain category is \$96,451.32. 1998, \$3,145.90; 1999, \$15,378.82. And for 2000 \$113,083.21.

Now Mr. Speaker we paid a grand total of \$228,059.15. A lot of bills we met there Mr. Speaker, and the Carnival Development Committee sought to pay those bills and so they are showing a deficit. I know that they had sent in to get the balance of the funds due to them Mr. Speaker.

(b) The Carnival Development Committee does not owe any performer or organizer of Carnival 2001 any money. All sums owing to performers and organizers were paid July 2001. Payment to performers and organizers is a matter of policy adopted by the Carnival Development Committee. The policy is (a): All performers contracted by the CDC are paid not later than one week after the performance is complete. As regards organizers of carnival, the distinction has to be made as to who are organizers of carnival. That is why we have a CDC Bill coming to this House that was circulated in July of last year, and has been given to the stakeholders of the carnival – for input before it comes onto the Order Paper. The Carnival Development Committee is the main organizer of Carnival. Rural so called CDCs and organizing groups and other bodies also organized Carnival activities and access the Carnival Development Committee for support and assistance. No payment has been made to any member of the CDC for the Carnival 2001. The rural CDCs so called Autonomous Bodies, and it gives support to them by making cash contribution. To qualify for the contribution Mr. Speaker, each group must submit to the CDC, the name of the organisation, the executive members, their programme and a budget. And to show how they expected to finance these and appropriate contributions awarded, and the answer is already in the Hansard, in this record in this House, Mr. Speaker, of how these payments were made, and in some cases they were five times what they used to be. We have paid the agreed sum to the rural groups, before the events, and re-emphasised, I am advised by the comptroller of the Carnival Development Committee that the Carnival Development Committee, does not owe a single cent to any performer or organizer for Carnival 2001.

HONOURABLE TERRENCE OLLIVIERRE: Just to inform the Honourable Minister that when the question was asked first, she said she did not have the information as yet.

(c) The Honourable Terrence Ollivierre (Southern Grenadines) asked the Honourable Minister of Education, Youth and Sports to please state whether or not all the schools repaired under the ULP school repair programme conducted during the August vacation (2001), have been fully completed.

HONOURABLE MICHAEL BROWNE: Mr. Speaker, there are two versions of this question; one I received through the Ministry and this one which I saw for the first time on Monday with the Order Paper. The original version of the question which I received and which I addressed read:

“The Honourable Terrence Ollivierre (Southern Grenadines) to ask the Honourable Minister of Education, Youth and Sports to please state Whether or not all the schools repaired under the ULP infamous...”

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I think that question was changed.

HONOURABLE MICHAEL BROWNE: Yes, but I think the public should know what type of question was submitted because the repair programme of the Government and the improvement of Education are considered an infamy, and considered to be in the vein of notoriety, like you talk about the infamous drug barons. That is the kind of programme we had, an infamous programme. And I think the public should know that.

Mr. Speaker, it should be noted that in the 160 years of the education system of this country, that the issue of maintenance of schools has been a recurring theme in our education history. From the inception of the system of education, this has been an issue, how do you organize school repairs, how do you maintain school buildings. For example Mr. Speaker, if we were to look back for about 60 years, in one of the reports by Sir Frank Stockdale, Comptroller of the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund. He had that to say in 1941.

“In School accommodation large deficiencies were reported. In 1941 32 of 36 schools were overcrowded according to the St. Vincent Regulation Standard of 8 sq. ft per child enrolled. The enrolment of 10,000, 791 being considerably short of the total number of children of school age.

Of the existing buildings moreover, few are in satisfactory condition as can be considered adequate for school premises.”

In other words this has been a recurring theme historically.

The conditions of schools, notwithstanding this historical fact Mr. Speaker, deteriorated, massively and considerably under the 17-year reign of the New Democratic Party. Indeed, they demonstrated the highest level of administrative incompetence in relation to the school maintenance in this country. That is why, every term, Mr. Speaker, you had some kind of a

demonstration some protestation under the NDP, whether it is the beginning of the school year or a subsequent school term.

Mr. Speaker, I put it in historical perspective because it is the first time in the educational history of this country, that you have a situation where the schools are in such a condition that you don't even have a murmur or a ripple at the beginning of a school term. You may not believe it Mr. Speaker, but schools re-opened last Monday. It has been so quiet; so smooth Mr. Speaker, that you won't believe school has re-opened, given the history of the NDP. In a similar vein, the term opened in September. Notwithstanding the high-pressured programme we had, and we didn't have those kinds of protestations that characterised the reign of the New Democratic Party.

Mr. Speaker, this question was submitted before. And again at the time when it was submitted we redirected it, and it was fulsomely answered by the Minister of Transport, Works and Housing.

I wish to direct the Honourable Member to pages 40-471 of St. Vincent and the Grenadines 2002 Estimates. Under Capital Estimates; Technical Assistance 2002, it indicates that \$100,000 is allocated for the completion of the School Repairs Programme under the heading, "Labour Intensive, Emergency School Repair Project." That question has again been wrongly directed. And in any event Mr. Speaker, we do not have, as he put it: "A ULP School Programme." There is a Government School Repair Programme. Thank you.

10. *The Honourable Gerard K. Shallow (Opposition Senator) asked the Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries to please state:*

- a. *When would critical inputs (blue diothene and other inputs) be made available to banana farmers so that they can maintain and improve the quality of bananas to be exported;*
- b. *Is there an intention to change the days selected for harvesting bananas to Fridays and Saturdays? If in the affirmative, what considerations will be given to citizens those of whom worship on those days.*

HONOURABLE SELMON WALTERS: Mr. Speaker, there is a shortage of some inputs used in the banana industry at the moment, but this is not the first time that the Banana Growers Association is experiencing this problem. In fact, Mr. Speaker, shortages of inputs were experienced in the following years: 1996, 1998 and in September-October 2000 when the BGA suffered its most severe shortage of some 16 inputs.

Mr. Speaker we were left a bad hand by the NDP in terms of the indebtedness of the Banana Growers' Association to the tune of some \$30m. It doesn't take a genius Mr. Speaker, to see that this indebtedness will affect the services rendered to banana farmers in a negative way.

Mr. Speaker, the list of inputs which is not available at the moment reads as follows: Regent 5, Calaxin, ordinary diothene, trays, truck securing straps, scoops, twine, plain cluster bags, sigma, treated diothene, finger length measurement, cutlass, gramocil and calcium. On the other hand Mr. Speaker, the following inputs are available: NPK Fertilizer, Furadan (25kg), Rugby, Benlate, Diothene (401b), Fair Trade Bags, M&S Bags (Small), Glue, Imazalil, Salter Scales, Forks, Water Boots, Spray Cans (CP3 & CP15), Aprons and Gloves, Oval Catridges, Knives (long and short), Tubs, Gramoxone, Reglone (gallon & Litre), Urea, Vydate, Tilt, Vectra, Diothene (331b), M & S Bags (Medium), Tesco Bags, Alum, Vydate Guns, Chatillon Scales, Ladders (8ft, 10ft, 12ft), Files (6" and 10"), Mini Pro and Grow Sprayer, Respiratory Face Piece, Packing Board, Agral, Tarpaulins (21x33,15x29,12x15), Talent and Touchdown.

Mr. Speaker, this Government will never allow the Banana Industry to be starved of inputs. However, there may be times when shortages of certain inputs due to circumstances over which the Banana Growers' Association and the Government have no control. Notwithstanding, Mr. Speaker, the shortage in the inputs not now available is due to a shortfall in the Association's' finances. When this problem was brought to our attention, the Government made \$73,000 available to the Banana Growers' Association.

As a result, Mr. Speaker, treated diothene will be landed here today. The other inputs, Mr. Speaker will be here in three weeks time.

Mr. Speaker, this Government will not operate like those who say they prefer to loose the general elections rather than refinance the banana industry. Banana growers support this ULP Government, banana is our lifeblood and banana is top priority with this administration.

(b) Mr. Speaker, the suggestion to change the banana harvesting days to the week came from WIBDECO. It is supposed to be a cost cutting measure, as alliances would be formed with other shipping lines operating out of Europe. However, Mr. Speaker, such change will have negative social implications for the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. For example, Mr. Speaker, this Government respects fully the religious practices of our people. Banana harvesting on Friday and Saturday will affect the worshipping practices of Seventh Day Adventist. Harvesting on Sundays will affect the other churches whose worshipping day is Sunday. So, Mr. Speaker, the change of harvesting days to weekend is unacceptable to this Government.

11. *The Honourable Gerard K. Shallow (Opposition Senator) asked the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries to please state:*

a. whether or not air conditioning units and other sophisticated technical equipment have been introduced at the Owia Arrowroot Factory;

- b. *If in the affirmative, what procurement process was used? Who was the eventual supplier? And what is the estimated cost of the equipment and the installation.*

HONOURABLE SELMON WALTERS: Mr. Speaker, I was just saying to the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs that the Honourable Senator Shallow did not ask any question this time.

Mr. Speaker, no air-conditioning unit were placed at the Owia Arrowroot Factory. I don't know if the convicted felon told him so, but there was none. However Mr. Speaker, in order to improve the efficiency of the drying of the starch and to improve the overall quality, the Board of Directors instructed the General Manager and the Chairman of the Board to source 12 Roof Turbines or extractor fans to be placed on the roof of the Owia Factory starch drying houses. Those are not air-conditioning fans Mr. Speaker.

The 12 Roof Turbines were sourced through a Trinidad Company CASA/Marketing and Construction Ltd. at a cost of \$18,000 (EC). This fee included installation cost and 1-year guarantee. The monies were paid \$5,000 mobilization and \$13,000 on completion of the job.

Mr. Speaker, it was a direct purchase by the Board because the monies there expended were within the range to be directly expended by the Board that manages the industry.

12. *The Honourable Gerard K. Shallow (Opposition Senator) asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Planning and Development: given the statements made by the Government to the effect that the Government will be taking over all the debt (\$32 million dollars) of the Bananas Growers' Association, and since no provision was made in the Estimates for 2002 to take over all the debt, when does the Government plan to take over such debt.*

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I would wish the Honourable Senator Shallow to have cleared this question with the former Leader of the Opposition. The debt is 32.48 million dollars, and it is made up guaranteed and non-guaranteed debt. The debt, which is guaranteed, obviously, you don't have to make any provision for it until the guarantee is triggered by a default. I mean it is so elementary that you know that we have to be answering these abc questions in the House. And I know the Leader of the Opposition had said yes, so that obviously are asked without even the Leader of the Opposition seeing what they are doing, which shows you something about the disorganization of the Opposition. But that is their problem, not mine. Long may they remain disorganized.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, of the debt 32.48 million dollars, and indeed I should point out that 30million dollars was inherited and we have had additional monies incurred since then, through severance, and because of the restructuring of the industry, and also we have had to provide additional working capital to the association. So you now have bank overdraft of 10.632 million dollars – bank loan from the National Commercial Bank of 7.8 million dollars

and a CDB loan of 2.178 million dollars. All these are guaranteed by the Government making it 20.6 million dollars. I should say Mr. Speaker, that I was informed that WIBDECO last week should have been sending \$900,000 or thereabout which would have gone to the overdraft facility to bring it below the ten million dollar figure. The loan which is non-guaranteed consists of monies owing to local and overseas suppliers, 4.46 million dollars. And what we do Mr. Speaker, is that we seek to provide assistance to the Association in a number of ways, either through the overdraft facility or to see if we can help them to collect some of their debts. Like for instance, as just outlined just now by the Minister of Agriculture, money was paid by the Association for example, Mr. Speaker, to I think is Bog River the supplier, for the diothene, but they kept the money and did not send the diothene because the Association had owed them for something else. So that they needed an additional \$73,000, so what they did, they sent that diothene along the way and say look, it would not be released until we get the \$73,000. It came to my attention and I authorized the \$73,000. WIBDECO/FYFFES loan: 1.7 million dollars. This is also non-guaranteed. The Banana Trust Fund Loan is at 5.29 million dollars. That is a revolving fund, and some farmers are paying back their loans and some farmers are not. And that is an issue which is being addressed by the current Board, and the outstanding payments for severance pay is \$320,000 making the non-guaranteed monies 11.8 million dollars. I want to use this opportunity Mr. Speaker, again to urge farmers who owe monies to the Banana Growers' Association to the tune of about 14 ½ million dollars that they pay up their loans. I know that some of those loans, for instance, the very old loans, some of them may have to be written off. But newer monies, for instance, like those in the Banana Trust Fund Loan; you have to pay those monies and other kinds of monies.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say this too. There is a rip off being used with the cartons which is causing increase in debt. It is going on from the days of the New Democratic Party. They did not want to deal with the issue because what happened, people will get the cartons, sometimes they have two or three different cards and they would not sell the bananas for the deductions to take place for the cartons, either on that particular card or at all. What they will do, they will take their bananas and sell them to either Barbados or Trinidad in WIBDECO cartons. So they will get the inputs free because they are not paying their debts. They would get the cartons free. Well, the industry cannot continue like that, we have to commercialise it, and when we take these steps we have the demagogue following the convicted felon saying you don't want to help the banana farmers.

We have just approved extending the overdraft facility at the National Commercial Bank – the Government, to give an additional two million dollars guarantee and carry it to ten million dollars. And we are assisting the association, and will continue to assist them. But we have to introduce commercial principles into the Association so that bananas is a business. It is not a suck me well hole. You cannot expect to get all the inputs free and the money you get when you sell your banana you put it in your trousers pocket. That is totally unacceptable, and I would not allow it to happen. We have a committee headed by the Director General of Finance and Planning, addressing the issue of the banana debts here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the Director General in fact heads the Committee for the Windward Islands discussing the

banana debt. And I could indicate to the House and Senator Shallow that we have identified in monies that is available from the European Union, about ten million dollars which has been theoretically allocated to certain areas but which nothing had been done, different items, to try to see if we can get those monies to come to the Association to help to reduce the debt. So that is a way we are going to try. But every time I try to talk to the European Union, they say to me, "Prime Minister, what about the Banana Trust Fund Loan? We want that money to be collected." Because they supplied it, so that steps are going to be taken against those persons who had loans from the Banana Trust Fund, and who are not paying. And you know some of them took the money and got out of bananas or send their girlfriend America or put on addition on their house. We cannot allow these things to happen. All these things happened under the NDP, and you leave the bad hand for me to play, and the mess for me to clean up, and this Government. And we are trying our best. And what I want to ask Senator Shallow is that in Marriaqua when you are on the roadside you speak about these things honestly and don't play demagogue about 'oh, this Government ain't doing anything to help the banana farmers.' I want you to see the steps which we have been taking. I am obliged Mr. Speaker.

13. *The Honourable Major St. Clair Leacock (Opposition Senator) asked the Minister of Finance, Labour, Planning and Development to please state:*

(a) *When would the various categories of workers (Watchmen, Hospital Attendants and others) whose services have been terminated by the ULP Administration, be paid their severance pay.*

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, again, I am very glad for this question. Very few persons have had their services terminated by the ULP administration. And for those persons whose services have been terminated including those who have had their services terminated for cause, the ULP administration is paying them their severance pay. This includes watchmen who never watch, this includes watchmen who hire Tom or Ephraim to watch for them and give them half the money. Those also we are paying them their severance pay which is not always something done by members of the Employers Federation which the Honourable Senator Leacock at one time headed. We have to be a model employer. I am not making a criticism of employers that if anybody is dismissed for cause under the Protection of Employment Act, they must pay their severance. But we are doing that in the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, in this ULP Government. And several persons have already received their severance pay. And we are speeding up the administrative process to make sure that they would be paid their severance pay. What is very interesting Mr. Speaker, to the best of my knowledge as Minister of Labour, no person who has had their employment terminated has made themselves or have put themselves in a position that they have availed themselves to the procedure in the Protection of Employment Act to settle the dispute. That is to say, to go to a Hearing Officer, to go to the Labour Commissioner or Hearing Officer. The reason for that Mr. Speaker, is that anybody who has been terminated, he or she has been told that they would get their severance. And that is what this Government is doing. Indeed, we have paid

severance, Mr. Speaker, to persons who were entitled to severance pay. For example, nearly one thousand workers who had not been paid their severance for 17 years which the Government was legally bound to do and did not do. We pass a special Act for those who are entitled and who are not dead, for them to get their money easily; and they have received their monies over the Christmas period. We have done that Mr. Speaker. And Mr. Speaker, there are a few hundred more, maybe three hundred, maybe four hundred more of those workers who are entitled to severance, who were not identified in the first round because many of them did not believe us that we were going to pay the severance after seventeen years. And now that they see that we actually did what we said we would do, they are now coming forward. In fact, so many coming forward that many of them are not entitled to severance because they were dismissed prior to 1980, and it is only if you are dismissed 1980 or after on those estates that you would have been entitled to severance pay. But it takes a particular kind of political party, not to pay poor agriculture workers- (it would turn out nearly fifteen hundred of them, their severance pay for seventeen years) to ask about this Government not paying severance pay when this Government is the one who paid those their severance pay. It takes a particular kind of political party to ask a question like that. And Mr. Speaker, the Protection of Employment Act is there and we are following the Protection of Employment Act to pay the severance. And Mr. Speaker, I want to re-emphasise in the cases, and those cases are practically every single case; they had their services lawfully terminated. We are still paying their severance, and we will continue to do so. And I want to assure Senator Leacock that this is a Labour Government seeing about workers, and we don't need any guidance on that subject from a previous administration or a previous party, which refused to pay the severance.

I want to say this Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, I received a Memorandum from the Ministry of Social Development concerning the severance of Senator Shallow's mother, and we will be paying that. She was dismissed by her son's Party years ago and never got the severance pay. I am obliged.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Minister of Labour, will a three-months time frame be a reasonable time for expectation? If not, could you be a little bit more definitive please.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I have answered that all the workers (and there are nor many of them), who have had their employment severed and severed for a cause. Many of them have received their severance pay, and they will continue to receive their severance pay. I don't want to say Mr. Speaker, one month or two months. Money is there and is available. Because if I say three months and some people who are supposed to actually do the payments, and because I say three months here, they hold them up and six months down the road, the people still ain't get their severance pay, and I

organize for those sets who suppose to organize to put forward the money, ain't put it forward, ain't do the paper work, and I set about fire those, then you will also bawl. I want to tell you that they would be swiftly paid as indeed those who have been terminated have been receiving their severance, many of them.

14. *The Honourable Major St. Clair Leacock (Opposition Senator) asked the Minister of Finance, Labour, Planning and Development; in view of the mergers being forged between major international, regional and other commercial banks in the OECS, will the Government advise of the progress (if any) of plans to merge the NCBs: –*
- (a) *With (Indigenous banks) of the OECS, to achieve the requisite capital adequacy and other ratios that would make them truly competitive and sustainable financial institutions independent of Government's monopoly support;*
- (b) *In light of the developments indicated above and the importance of the NCB in the financial sector in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (being the largest commercial bank) would the Government explain why it is taking so long to appoint a manager for the Bank and indicate whether the Government is aware that this delay is causing a serious erosion of client confidence.*

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, again I am very pleased with this question. In fact, I am wondering whether the questions asked are not planted by Members of the governing Party, I am wondering if there is not a mole somewhere in the NDP who is from the Government to say you must ask us these questions.

Mr. Speaker, there has been some discussions in some quarters regarding the need for some form of merger of the indigenous Banks of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States. However, these discussions have not yet gotten beyond the concept stage, and there is no concrete plan for any such merger. Indeed Mr. Speaker, the latest impetus, and it was a last minute impetus, came from some indigenous banks in the OECS when they heard about the proposed merger between Barclays and CIBC West Indies Limited. Well, they thought first that it was a buy out, and they wanted to get an opportunity to be involved, but it was not a buy out, it was an issue of a merger. And I have had discussions with many of the leaders of the indigenous banks, and also with the Governor of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank. So that there has been discussions, but there has been no concrete plan put forward by any of these or even by the Central Bank itself to encourage the merger.

The Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines however, we agree in principle with the (Indigenous banks) coming together to strengthen their portfolios. But what we have done, even though there is no plan yet for that, we have set about here already to institute measures to prepare the National Commercial Bank in St. Vincent and the Grenadines for such an eventuality. And this includes the reorganization of the National Commercial banks corporate structure to include a holding company and a number of subsidiaries. The new structure will be

implemented during this year. So you would have a wholly owned holding company; you will have a National Commercial Bank as a subsidiary bank owned by this wholly owned State company. You will have a property company; you may even have an offshore entity. You can have different subsidiaries and that corporate restructuring is currently on the way, and some of it has been formalized in legal form, but the actual implementation has not taken place, and we intend to do some of that this year, to put ourselves, if that eventuality comes; but also to put ourselves better in our own domestic situation, so I am very glad that you asked that so that you can see as you yourself would like to say, that it looks as though in re-organizing the structures we are maximizing the synergies.

The delay in appointing a General Manager Mr. Speaker, is something which I am very concerned about, that the Opposition has been involved in attacking this. And they are seeking by their own words, they are hoping that there would be a sort of self-fulfilling prophesy that somehow the bank is doing not o.k. and I will give the statistics just now because the Leader of the Opposition criticized the Acting General Manager in his budget speech, and now you again with an implied critique. And Mr. Speaker, we have to understand that we had a Chairman of the Bank, Michael Hamlett who unfortunately died in August. Shortly before he died, the Acting Manager came on because the predecessor General Manager was held over, and his contract came to an end. He stayed on a short while beyond his contract, and then the Acting Manager came on, whom I understand acted once during the time of the NDP administration. And we did not appoint a new Chairman of the Bank until about a month or so ago. And I always want to have the Chairman of these institutions involved in the process of selecting the individuals. So that is one reason in terms of the delay. But fundamentally, the reason is because of the ongoing efforts at re-organising the bank and restructuring it. But the delay I must say Mr. Speaker, and this is the main point to this answer. The delay has not led to any erosion of client confidence in the bank. On the contrary, there has been a steady growth in private sector business of the bank over the last five months since the Acting Manager has been in charge. And I will give you the figures. That is why I am glad you asked the question. July 1st, loans outstanding – public sector, 71.4 million dollars; private sector, 219.17 million dollars. December 2001. Loans outstanding – public sector, 61.15, a change of –14.4%. Private sector – December 2001, 228.43 million, a percentage change for loans outstanding for the private sector of 4.2%. So in fact the loans outstanding for the public sector have decreased over the past five months by 14%, and those for the private sector have increased by 4.2% despite September 11th. Deposits held - The public sector, July 157.8 million dollars; December 1st 2001, 179.8 million dollars, a change of 14%. Deposits. Deposits held with the private sector in July, 143.75 million; by December 1st 2001 159.79 million, an increase of 11.1 %. So you notice that is far from your premise, you are getting your information from Lynch. I expect the Leader of the Opposition, who is not a very strong individual, to follow Lynch, but not you as a Major in the Cadet Corps.

Mr. Speaker, additionally, there are a number of new banking products which are being devised and you will hear the announcements about those new banking products.

The foreign exchange position Mr. Speaker. I want to give the money sterling, US dollars, Canadian, other currencies, but I want to give it in the EC equivalent. July 31st 218, 473 dollars sterling; December 31st 343,342.00 - United States dollars, I am talking about the foreign exchange position – EC equivalent. July 1st, it was in the negative position of 13.7 million dollars, by December the 1st 14.165 million dollars. Canadian dollars. July 14,696.00; December 1st 615,212.00. Other currencies 760,498.00 in July last year. December 31st 900, 917.00. In July because of the heavy negative position with the US dollars 12.8 million negative, 16 million in December for the foreign exchange position overall. So, I am sure that you would agree with me that far from the Acting Manager having a bad effect, what it shows is that the bank is proceeding to show signs of health. Not that there are no difficulties because all of the financial institutions for one reason or the other could have difficulties, but they are in an improved position. And there are other data which I have available here Mr. Speaker, but I think I have spoken enough on the subject to illustrate what is the position. So I am obliged.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, households don't permit me to comment on the non-comparative nature of the statistics which previous years, but I thank the Minister nevertheless. In view of the restructuring identified for the Bank and the growth status of the bank, would the Honourable Minister Finance indicate to what extent the Patriots Act, now passed by the US Congress for consideration by the local banking sector may impact negatively on the Bank.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, first, it is a different question but I will answer it.

Mr. Speaker, we have received an analysis of the USA Patriots Act, and both in respect of the commercial banking sector and the offshore finance sector, we are looking to see what changes we have to put in place so that we would not suffer adversely. The USA Patriots Act is not itself a bludgeon but if you don't do certain things which are required, you can well find that you could suffer adverse consequences. That is now currently being analysed. And I am hopeful that Senator Leacock in his own professional capacity, at some time, having himself presumably gone beyond knowing more than just the name of the Act, will do the analysis and assist us and perhaps adding towards the debate in an informed manner. Thank you very much.

15. *The Honourable Major St. Clair Leacock (Opposition Senator) asked the Honourable Minister of National Security:*

In view of the Government's admission in the 2002 Corporate Plans of the Budget, page 35, that there is an increase in crime throughout the country, has the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines actively considered separating the Fire Service from the Royal St. Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force so that the Police Force could better concentrate on the core responsibility of the

maintenance of law and order, while the Fire Service develops greater competence in fire, natural disaster mitigation activities such as hurricanes, floods and volcanic eruptions.

HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE: Mr. Speaker, there is no admission in the Corporate Plans 2002 that there is an increase in crime. I have the statistics here. I am sure that the Honourable Member understands what it is. And I have a copy of the Corporate Plans here. The Corporate Plan deals with the S.W.O.T Analysis which is, “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats”. And under page 36 dealing with the Ministry of National Security, what it states here under “threats”, amongst other things, is that “Increase in crime” throughout the country could pose a threat towards the development. That is what is said. It did not say there is a threat or that there is an increase in crime because I would give you a few of the figures Mr. Speaker. I will give you the full figures, there are some areas we had decrease. But for instance, in 2000 burglary was 1789 cases and in 2001 it was 1918, but theft Mr. Speaker, in 2000 was 2437, but in 2001 2290. So whilst burglary increased, theft decreased. But overall in 2000 there were 9,249 cases of criminal activities in comparison to 8,954 cases in 2001, so in effect there was a decrease overall in crime.

But Mr. Speaker, it must be remembered that the U.L.P in opposition tabled a motion on 28th August 1997 as follows: And let me read it so that the public can understand when we speak about crime what the Opposition was doing and how we were pushing. And the motion read:

“Be it resolved that this Honourable House urge the Government of Saint Vincent and the policing of crime, sentencing and treatment of criminal offenders among other things and to make appropriate recommendations for corrective action.”

Mr. Speaker, the motion fell in 1997 because it was never brought up, but it was so important that the Opposition brought it back, the Honourable Prime Minister now, who was the Leader of the Opposition then, brought it back and in March 1998 when private members bill take priority. But as you would know Mr. Speaker at 5:00 p.m. private members bill take priority. But you would know Mr. Speaker at 5:00 o'clock private members bill ends. And so at 5:00 p.m. in March 1998 when the Speaker announced that private members bill came to an end we wanted a resolution to this motion and the Honourable Leader of the Opposition then, asked for a half of an hour of extra time so that there could have been a resolution to the motion. The Honourable Speaker agreed citing Standing Order No. 80 which is the “Suspension of Standing Order.”

The Honourable Member who moved the motion, moved under S.O. 25:5 for the suspension of that order so that it can go on. The Speaker put the question and in the collection of voices the ayes had it but the Honourable Prime Minister James Mitchell did not want this to go on, so he asked for a division which he was entitled to do. Mr. Speaker, you realise that all the Government members who had voted for an extension of time then voted nay with two abstentions, the Honourable Glenford Stewart and Jeremiah Scott.

In any case Mr. Speaker, this Government has allocated the sum of \$100,000.00 in 2002 Budget to deal with the restructuring of the Police Force. The Fire Brigade and other sections of the Police Force will be reviewed accordingly during this exercise.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I think this is an appropriate time to take the luncheon period. And I think the country ought to note the fulsome manner in which we answer questions. We take this matter of question and answer more seriously because Mr. Speaker, this is an exercise in democracy and in accountability and transparency. It is important that the people know what is happening. And we are very obliged to the Members of the Opposition for asking these questions and facilitate so favourably the Government's response. Maybe it will suit them better that they don't ask any questions at all. I would want that. I would not want them to ask more and more questions.

Mr. Speaker, may I seek your leave to move the motion for the suspension of the House for the luncheon adjournment until 3:30.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: I beg to second the motion.

Question put and agreed to.
House adjourned for lunch: 1:50 P.M.
House resumed at 3:35 P.M.

MOTION

DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move under Standing Order 12(5) that the proceedings of this day sitting be exempted from the provisions of the Standing Order hours of sitting.

Question put and agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THE NATIONAL PARKS BILL 2002

HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the introduction and first reading of a Bill for an Act to make provisions for a National Park and the Establishment of an Authority for National Parks and to make further provisions for the preservation, protection, management and development of natural, physical, ecological resources and the historical and cultural heritage of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and for matters incidental thereto.

The objects of this Bill Mr. Speaker, this Bill seeks to establish a National Parks Act in order to protect, preserve, manage and develop the ecological natural and marine resources and to protect and promote national heritage.

*Question put and agreed to.
Bill read a first time.*

THE ORDER OF NATIONAL HEROES BILL 2002

HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the introduction on the first reading of the Bill for an Act to provide for the conferment of the honour of National Hero and incidental and connected matters.

The objects of this Bill are:

1. The Bill seeks to provide for the conferment of the honour of National Hero upon deceased persons who are eligible and for matters relating thereto including inter alia. The constitution of the Order of National Hero, the functions of the chancellor of the order and the duties of the secretary of the order.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Seconded the motion.

*Question put and agreed to.
Bill read a first time.*

HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that a Bill for an Act to provide for the conferment of the honour of National Hero and incidental and connected matters be read a second time.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Seconded the motion.

*Question put and agreed to.
Bill read a second time.*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Is there any debate on the Bill?

HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE: Mr. Speaker, I think the intention is that we would debate on this Bill and take it on to Select Committee so it can be open for further comment from persons outside of this Honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, when the Unity Labour Party began to campaign in earnest many years ago; from as far back as about 95 we joined the national debate on the conferment of certain honours and awards and one these Mr. Speaker was the question of the conferring of the honour of National

Hero. But even before the Unity Labour Party became a political organization, for many, many years, the National Youth Council as far back in the early 80's, then under the leadership of Mr. Lennox Bowman, began the process of public awareness of the fact that the young people were looking for heroes, Vincentian Heroes, National Heroes. Because throughout the Caribbean particularly in Jamaica, the debate was hot on National Heroes in Jamaica. And the National Youth Council year after year and the General Meetings in the youth programmes making this call for National Heroes that we should declare certain individuals National Heroes. Then they were joined by other NGO's, youth groups, clubs, organisations, associations throughout the country echoing the call for the declaration of worthy persons as National Heroes. The Unity Labour took this even greater step of sensitization and began their programme of public awareness and began talking and acting. And for 2 consecutive years on the 14th of March they held National Rallies and particularly the one that moved me was the last one when we had six of Chatoyer descendants and others bearing torches coming down bay street in the dark and coming on the platform of the Unity Labour Party and as the name of each National Heroes' was called, they came from Sion Hill, the torch was brought to the platform and in a moment of silence. The address of the Prime Minister was most touching because it gave credence to his strong belief and conviction that the time had come for us in the Caribbean to begin to look at ourselves as a separate and distinct civilization, something which is now catching on in the O.E.C.S about our own civilization because we are our peoples brought from many lands and placed in another place, but we were brought for economic benefit pure and simply unlike some other civilizations that are thousands of years before and are able to celebrate their own heroes and the different dynasties. Our history bears very little record of the heroes in the years B.C. When you turn to discovery channel or history channel, you can read and listen to and even buy the videotapes about the pharaohs and the history of the pharaohs, but where is our history? And so many people have this feeling in this country that the time must be right for the generations to come in this millennium to have heroes and persons of stature to look up to.

It is commonly known that there are 6 individuals, there may be more, there may be less, but their names have always been linked with the honour of National Hero. Joseph Chatoyer, George Mc Intosh, Ebenezer Theodore Joshua, Elma Francois, Captain Hugh Mulzac, and Robert Milton Cato. The news papers in the last few years are replete with articles, suggestions and letters of persons discussing, should National Heroes be persons who are all dead or should they be alive? Should the conferment of the Honour be given to someone who is alive? This Administration upon taking office realized that we have to cross out a path for our people to follow and to create institutions for our generations to come to mark when we took office, to mark a renewal and a rebirth in our history. We determine that the time had come not just to debate it in this Honourable House, but to put the machinery and the process in full gear and today Mr. Speaker that Bill is before this Honourable House.

The Bill seeks to set up the Order of National Hero and that sets out in provisions in clause 3 the Order of National Hero being constituted and where members and every person being a member. In clause 4, who should be the chancellor of the Order?

Mr. Speaker. When we were preparing and going through the exercise of doing this draft legislation, I saw a precedent from Jamaica and Barbados, well Barbados being nearer I got their information first and the Barbados Act follows the scheme where the honour maybe conferred upon someone who is dead or someone who is alive and I was presented with this rather last book Mr. Speaker marked “for love of country the National Heroes of Barbados” and this book is published incidentally by the publishing department of the National Cultural Foundation. Mr. Speaker I wish to state that the National Cultural Foundation, the board has been appointed, members of the board of the foundation; and we’ve had 2 meetings so far, and I’ve indicated to them the policy direction of the Government particularly in respect of their publishing and one of the first works that we expect to see perhaps in another year or so would be a full document similar to this, about our National Heroes. It is the intendment of the Government Mr. Speaker to look very carefully at the Constitution for this by way of Regulations. The honour fell to me to move this to bring this Bill to the House and to have it debated and passed and to well support it. We have hours of sitting down and determining it, as a Government, how we will set out the scheme, what we will follow if we go that way, bearing in mind all the articles and so that we have seen. I have the grandeur process Mr. Speaker, of establishing a planning committee to look at how we would celebrate when we declare these National Heroes and it is my intention to draw upon the skills of the local history teachers association, the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines historical Marti logical society, the national trust, the national cultural foundation, the national youth council and a number of similar organisations and NGO’s to us, to formulate how are we going to bring these heroes to life. We have began the researching at the Ministerial level to look at Chatoyer and we still having difficulty to get pictures, but the wonderful thing about bringing things to life Mr. Speaker is that the Alliance Francais in November early December had an exhibition of the translation of the diaries of a soldier, a French soldier who was stationed in Saint Vincent at the time Chatoyer was alive and in those diaries and on the pages written in the handwriting of the soldier in the seven hundredths, one can get a profile of Joseph Chatoyer. An independent man, full of fervor for uremia wondering about the promises made to him by the French people and the British people and why the promises were not being fulfilled and the French Commandant said that Chatoyer is much smarter in summary, is much smarter than they give him credit for and that he was a wise military commander, that is as much from those few pages that were translate you can get.

So Mr. Speaker we do have sources where we can now, as a nation, craft out and write our history in our own words and we now have the capacity to do the research and to go into the libraries in the University in France to go to the museums in France and collect those documents and have them translated. The Documentation Centre played a great role in getting those documents for us and I would like to encourage our historians to begin to write for the benefit of the peoples of this country. Not only about Joseph Chatoyer but about George Mc Intosh of course, I wish to congratulate the Leader of Government business in this House, the Honourable Prime Minister for taking time, in spite being a lawyer and a lecturer, he found time to write about the trial of George Mc Intosh and I wish the dramatist is a desire perhaps the

dream of mine, that a dramatist could at some time when Peace Memorial Hall has been restored bring to life and dramatize that trial of George Mc Intosh.

I wish Mr. Speaker that more people had the opportunity to come to this very building, because downstairs there are several old news papers from which you can read the story of George Mc Intosh and his Leadership in the working men's association. The trade unionist he was, the humble man that he was and the machinations in his trial, the things that went on behind the scenes. I had the good fortune to sit and read that in doing research in the Registry. Because sometimes you butt up on certain things by pure accident and so is good to enrich your knowledge by reading them. Ebenezer Joshua is closer to many people of the last generation and this generation. I remember him Mr. Speaker as some one in the market square where I wish we had the honour and pleasure to put a plaque because he commanded the market square on Wednesday nights. I can remember him singing and his praise and when he ended and sometimes he will have a meeting with just 2 or 3 people. I remember when he was just Chief Minister in this country, he also had some roots in the Trade Union Movements, in Trinidad and Grenada and came to Saint Vincent and brought that back with him. He was also a teacher.

Mr. Speaker, Elma Francois I knew little about until I got an almanac from CLICO about 3 years ago and I saw a biography written and a painting about Elma Francois and I felt so proud that a nation such like Trinidad and Tobago where we heard those words spoken by Eric Williams '1 from 10 leave 0' and the pride of being a Trinidadian in the years after the failure of the federation. A nation such like Trinidad, a multi ethnic nation found time and a conglomerate such as CLICO thought it proper fit and just to name her as an outstanding Caribbean woman for fighting for social justice. We in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines must find time for our own heroes too and I think reading about her and her sojourn in Trinidad and what she did, the work she accomplished in working with poor people, under privilege people in educating herself, that Trinidad and Tobago honour this woman, we too must give of this honour Mr. Speaker,

Captain Hugh Mulzac I read about in more recent times and I have a plan some where in the back of my head, if I am permitted, even though dialogue and consultation will be done in relation to, do we create a part for National Heroes or do we put statues in different places to honour them or plaques? About Captain Hugh Mulzac what he really stood for as my friend use to say, but can no longer say since March the 28th about the marginalized people of the Grenadines. Fully integrated that this in making Captain Hugh Mulzac a National Hero, that you would be more than fully integrated. Recognized by the country Saint Vincent and the Grenadines his homeland. Imagine what it must have been for him a black man to reach and rise to such a rank and stature. In the United States, in the navy, to be captain of a vessel he must have been extraordinary in talent, in skill, in diplomacy, in learning, in knowledge, in interpersonal relationships, in politics, his politics must have been correct. These dates 1763, Joseph Chatoyer, George Mc Intosh 1897-1944 and then 1908-1991 for Ebenezer Joshua as George Mc Intosh died in the 60's I believe, Milton Cato 1915- 1997, Elma Francois 1897-1944 and Hugh Mulzac 1886-1971. Children must learn it the way they learn other dates about

Christopher Columbus. They must remember these dates the way every American child I'm sure remember September 11 and the 1944 war and the Korean war and the Vietnam war, we must burn these dates into our consciousness.

Mr. Speaker we ask ourselves, are there others? The debate is now full and truly open in a national forum for every citizen from every walk of life to ensure that their voices heard, if they have suggestions, one sheet of paper will do to put down those suggestions, Organisations are invited to do the same. Let us get your views, let us see your words, let us get on to the radio stations and do something useful with our time in educating the public. I am hoping that the local history teachers association would take up the challenge of helping with the research and bringing this information to the public and bringing it into their classrooms. I am hoping as well Mr. Speaker that in putting together the profile, already we have an invitation from a young historian to write the profiles for the National Heroes. We are closing no doors, we are leaving all doors open to come and bring your information to the Ministry of Culture or to the Prime Minister's Office. There is one historian that I remember and one archeologist, Dr. Earl Kirby and Mr. C. I. Martin who has done some work all about the black caribs, that I am hoping the history teachers would bring their works to the forefront in educating this young population of ours. I'm sincerely hoping that Mr. Cecil Ryan, Chairman of the National Trust will be able to organize some weekly publications in the newspapers about these individuals. We want Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and those in the Diaspora to be fully aware to have the information and all the children to have the information.

Mr. Speaker, I have also taken the opportunity to ask the Minister of Telecommunications, Science, Technology and Industry if he would be able to obtain a stamp issue for the National Heroes and he assures me they are still working on it. It may or may not be ready for March 14th but as long as it's ready in the year 2002 when we will declare and celebrate National Heroes day as a public holiday on March the 14th. I even came upon the idea and discuss it with a few other persons about a coin issue because I remembered few years ago, the cricket association had sort and minted a few coins of some of our cricket greats. They were silver coins I think going for about \$100, \$200 in a box and that would be a good idea perhaps if there are other persons there to look at the idea of having a special coin issue with the profiles of these heroes, so that we would have little treasures, small national treasures to remember our National Heroes.

Mr. Speaker, the scheme of the Bill before you goes on about the secretary who will maintain the records of the Order and the Regulations would have to say what records it would be, that's why I am inviting the history teachers and the researchers to write as much as possible so that there would be documentation on the establishment of the Order of National Hero. The National Heroes Advisory Committee is to be appointed by the Governor General and the Committee is supposed to have the following functions as outlined in clause 7.

The Committee shall receive and consider nominations of persons upon whom may be conferred the Order of National Heroes established by this Act.

The Committee shall carry out investigations in order to determine persons upon whom the honour established by this Act may be conferred and the Committee shall consider such nominations in camera and the Committee shall carry out such duties as the Governor General may from time to time assign to the Committee. And the Committee may in the performance of its functions, consult with such other persons or bodies as it thinks necessary and all findings of the Committee shall be submitted to Cabinet for consideration. The expenses to the Committee to be met from the consolidated fund, that the Governor General may, by order under the seal of the Order, because the order is going to have seal and certificate, and the power conferred in the Governor General should be exercised by him, on the advice of the Prime Minister, and an appointment to the Order should take effects from the date of the affixing of the seal upon the instruments specified. So there will be need to create a seal, there will be need to create a certificate for the Order. Some people might say, do dead people gets certificate? Yes they do, dead or alive, because you can create like other Parliaments all over the world, you create Orders and you can create tastefully, quiet constitutionally certificates for persons awarding them posthumously. Who are the persons eligible under the scheme? I have been speaking about those who in the public domain we have all considered worthy. The draftsman has included here that a person who was born in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines or who was at the time of his death a citizen of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines or entitled to be a citizen of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and who satisfies the criteria set out in the schedule. What are the criteria?

In determining the eligibility of a person referred to in this section the Committee shall have regard to whether that person has given outstanding service to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and his contribution has altered positively the course of history of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, whether that person has given service to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines which has been exemplified by visionary and pioneer leadership, extraordinary achievement and the attainment of the highest excellence which has be round to the honour of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Oh! A person who through his heroic exploits and sacrifice contributed to the improvement of the economic, social or political conditions of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Vincentians generally and a clear statement that the Order should not be conferred on anyone who is alive. However, this is up for debate, it is the wish of many persons and that is why we have put it there because it reflects the opinion of a certain majority because one never knows what can happen perhaps if you did confer the honour of National Hero which is the Order of this independent country that something may happen with a person who is alive, something that is not in the stream of positivity.

The Committee who is to advice shall comprise of 9 members appointed by the Governor General as follows:

2 persons nominated by the Governor General, 3 persons nominated by the Prime Minister, 1 person nominated by the Leader of the Opposition and 3 persons nominated from the local Non-

Governmental organisations selected by the Governor General in consultation with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, it's a very short Bill and I would not take up the full time allotted except to say that I would like to feel the way that the Right Honourable Owen Arthur when he expressed this on Barbados's National Heroes Day, Tuesday April the 20th 1998 and these are his words and somehow it struck a similar cord in the ham of my heart, our National accomplishments and I quote, 'were not conferred on us by acts of nature, these have been achieved only by the most heroic struggle of generation upon generation of Barbadian Patriots determine to create a just and good society in this Island, it took many years and the efforts of many people to get us to the place where we are today, so in acknowledging our National Heroes, we are therefore especially recognizing the extraordinary efforts of those who give hope and inspiration to their contemporaries and have set the standards of excellence for future generations to emulate, sacrifices, dedication, undaunted courage, selfless service, visionary leadership, determination and excellence in their personal and professional conduct, other qualities that over and over evidence themselves in the public lives of those who we have asked to be our heroes, in some cases they have set examples by which not only Barbadians but indeed the world might live and they bore the highest honours with the utmost humility.' I sincerely hope that when we have done doing our duty in this Honourable House Mr. Speaker and listening to the people of this country, listening to the echoes of their hearts and listening to the words that pour forth from within that comes from their spirit that we too can feel like the Right Honourable Owen Arthur. He continues Mr. Speaker in a very real sense however; "it is now left for us to honour our heroes not through the building of memorials but through living lives that exemplify the values for which they stood. We need to build for ourselves and the inheritance of children a society that is a fountain of justice, liberty and opportunity. We lay base for advancement and progress, where there is no deprivation, no poverty, no neglect nor denial, no prejudice nor discrimination where the marginalized and the dispossessed are given rich and unshakeable stake in every centre of our economic life". He declared on that day Mr. Speaker, "this day is not about the past, it is about the future, this day is not about the past it is about the future".

Mr. Speaker, this day, this year if we all live to see that day what a joy I think we would feel. We should arrange for the church bells to ring and for the sirens to blow because we have began to write our own history with our own pens in our own fashion and with our own passion.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the debate is now and truly open and I asked you to go into the by-ways and hi-ways and talk with the children, with the organisations within those which you have influence to tell them that this is truly our time to write our history.

Mr. Speaker, I now take my seat and invite other members for support for this Bill.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Any further debate on the Bill, Honourable Leader of the Opposition?

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to join the debate on this Bill for an Act to provide for the conferment of the honour of National Hero and incidental and connecting matters. Mr. Speaker, as has been indicated by the Honourable Minister there has been considerable debate over the years on this matter in our country and we have had various views expressed over that period of time. I don't believe Mr. Speaker that anyone in this House is opposed to the establishment or the conferring of the honour of National Hero, but Mr. Speaker, it is going to be very important that this exercise that we now seek to complete through select committee and through consultation with various bodies and citizens of this country this exercise must be seen to be as free as possible from partisan politics. If this is not so Mr. Speaker we will find ourselves embroiled in even more discussion every time the National Hero is to be so identified and honoured.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a matter that we should take lightly. When one looks at the Bill you will see that very serious consideration is being given to the criteria for eligibility and I wish Mr. Speaker to refer again to these criteria. The first one Mr. Speaker and the second schedule

- a. requires the committee in considering a person to ensure or to determine whether that person has outstanding service to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and his, I assume here, his means her, and his contribution has altered positively the course of history of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines that Mr. Speaker, is absolutely clear.
- b. has given service to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines which has been exemplified by visionary and pioneering leadership, extraordinary achievement and the attainment of the highest excellence which has redounded to the honour of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Or
- c. has through his heroic exploits and sacrifice contributed to the improvement of the economic, social or political conditions of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Vincentians generally.

Mr. Speaker these are high standards as they ought to be, because this honour would not be conferred lightly and I don't suppose Mr. Speaker it will be conferred very often because to meet these criteria one's has to be really exceptional and the impact of one service would have to change the course of history of our country. Therefore Mr. Speaker, I have no difficulty with the eligibility, criteria that had been set out.

Mr. Speaker a number of persons, all of them deceased had been named from time to time as eligible for consideration and I agree Mr. Speaker that before anyone is conferred in this honour, that there should be the widest possible consultation. The Honourable Minister named a number of persons I think 5 or 6 of them in her presentation and give some indication of the kind of contribution that they have made and I think that she accepts that there will be further work to be done in this regard. But Mr. Speaker if we were at this point in time for example, Mr. Speaker, we were to be in time for March the 14th choosing a committee, choosing and the

Governor General appointing, or agreeing to confer an honour of National Hero to my mind based on all that you have heard in all the various debates, I think at this point in time Chatoyer would be that person. I think Mr. Speaker we would find in our community, in our country that there would be little disagreement nationally, if such an honour were conferred on Chatoyer as the first National Hero. I think the consideration Mr. Speaker, at this particular point in time of any other deceased Vincentian as a National Hero would be subject to a great deal more debate, would tend to be more controversial and hence the need for allowing time for the canvassing of public opinion.

Mr. Speaker I am a bit puzzled as to why we did not have present to this House at this time, and I assume there is some reasons for this, although it's not yet clear to me why a separate Bill for the Order of National Hero and not a more omnibus Bill which will cover other National Honours. It would seem to me Mr. Speaker that it would be just as efficient and if not more so to deal with all of the honours that our country may wish to bestow and therefore I am somewhat at a loss to understand why a separate Bill at this time. I thought on reading the Bill that this might be so because some consideration has been given to try and get something done in time for March the 14th in terms of the conferring of such an Act. In that sense I will probably understand it, but right now Mr. Speaker it is not clear to me why we do not have an omnibus Bill.

Mr. Speaker I am fully aware that this exercise has gone on for some time and it is something that I had my own concerns about and I think you would recall that last year I took the decision to declare March 14th as National Heroes Day and that was the reflection, my concern and the comments and representations brought to me after I became Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. So Mr. Speaker I have no difficulty with regard to this particular piece of legislation in that sense.

Mr. Speaker, I have looked at the Constitution of the Advisory Committee and I recognized Mr. Speaker that we will have an opportunity during the Select Committee and consideration coming from other sources in our society. We will have an opportunity to examine all of these clauses. Mr. Speaker in that context I have a concern. We have 2 persons nominated by the Governor General obvious in his own discretion, 3 persons by the Prime Minister, 1 person by the Leader of the Opposition and 3 persons nominated from the local Non-Governmental organisations selected by the Governor General in consultation with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. Earlier in this presentation Mr. Speaker, and I want to stress it again, because during course of the Select Committee I would wish us to examine this particular committee very closely so that there can be no question in the minds of our people that we have made this thing free from partisan politics as is possible, because I believe this is very, very fundamental to the general acceptance of the Order and general satisfaction on the part of our citizens and I believe this was important that we examine that schedule in that regard.

Mr. Speaker again when we get to the Select Committee we would want to examine section 10; eligibility for appointment to the Order and especially Mr. Speaker, B(II) because (b) says a

person who was at the time of his death a citizen of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines or entitled to be a citizen of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, does this refer Mr. Speaker to someone who maybe was born in Saint Vincent and lived elsewhere and made a contribution as for Elma Francois or does it refer to any person anywhere who may have made outstanding contribution to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The concept of a National and National Hero Mr. Speaker to my mind would suggest that the person was a citizen or somebody who was born here and has gone elsewhere. I am not clear how widely they intend to extend b(II) in this regard because I would suggest Mr. Speaker if it is going to be any one from anywhere who has made such a contribution that that would in fact be too wide an interpretation and I would wish during the select committee Mr. Speaker that we give this matter some further consideration.

Mr. Speaker, I also have a problem, and perhaps those who are linguists can correct me, but the designation 'right excellent', these are some of the things we would have to look at Mr. Speaker and also Mr. Speaker I am not sure that the short title should be the Order of National Heroes Act and not Order of National Hero Act, but this is something that we can look at in the Committee.

Mr. Speaker I recognize that it is important for citizens of this country particularly our young people to have heroes that they can look up to, but Mr. Speaker this Bill brings to us a further responsibility and I don't necessarily means to this Parliament specifically or to members of this Parliament and I think the Minister was indirectly referring to this in her own presentation. For this to be meaningful Mr. Speaker, our young people will have to have a different perception of the history of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines than they now have, which brings us to the question Mr. Speaker of the type of history and literature that they will be exposed to and have been exposed to and for this to be very meaningful to them Mr. Speaker, it will mean that at a very young age apart from the work done by Dr. Kirby and Sims Martin and other people who have made that type of presentation, we going to find that the Order can be hollow to those minds. It will not have the same impact or it will not have the impact that is desired if some attention is not paid by those who are equipped to provide a meaningful historical document which allows our people to identify with the work of those whom we seek to honour and I have a grave concern about that Mr. Speaker. We have in our midst people who are historians, we have had the Ebenezer Duncan work, but surely the focus of that work, the symbols and the heroes of that type of work are not the heroes that we are proposing to honour and therefore it is going to be very important that in the not too distant future that efforts be made by those who are so equipped to provide us with a better background, a more focus background, a better interpretation of our history. It is future recalled as a youngster going to school reading Ebenezer Duncan, Chatoyer to me was an enemy and that is what I am talking about.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: I said when I was going to school, but what I am saying is that works of that type imported as they may be the focus, was not right, in the sense that it did not allow our people to sense of achievement by our own nationals. You know, all of us knew about Drake and Hawkins and all these people, we could write examinations at G.C.E and H.S.C and all the different examinations they had and do well in those subject. People got ones

in their examinations dealing with Drake and Hawkins and so forth and the laying down of cape for someone to walk over. And we looked at these things, but those things were not really in many instances applicable to us. It presented us with a version of history that was incorrect and a version that's surely cannot be the basis for the conferment of any our National Honours. So I want, like others, to encourage those, Mr. Speaker who are equipped to present a better picture, a truer picture of the performance of our own Nationals. I want to urge them to get down to that task and I am sure that no one will be grudge any effort that is made to finance any such research.

Mr. Speaker I am aware that a number of countries in the region have National Honours. Some have recently revised them and others are in the process of doing so, but I believe that the process that we have now set out to accomplish before final approval of this legislation would allow us to benefit from the experience of other countries in our region and outside of our region who/which have made changes as time past. In the circumstances Mr. Speaker I wish to indicate subject to some explanation as to why we are not going the full way in terms of National Honours. I wish to support the measure before this House and to indicate that we on this side of the House will participate vigorously in the work of the Select Committee of this Parliament when it meets to discuss this particular piece of legislation, much oblige to you Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, we on this side of the House are very grateful for the support indicated to this measure by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Indeed, Nationally a consensus has grown up over the years about the necessity and desirability of establishing an Order of National Hero and I think the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines will commend this Government to Parliament a Bill which finally would put this consensus into legislative form [applause].

Mr. Speaker I know that the support that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition has given has been articulated as subject to a satisfactory explanation and an indication about what is happening to other national awards. I don't take him literally in that sense, I take it that he has offered support but it is not a conditional support or subject. I think that that phraseology was, as we often sometimes when we speak, not speak as precisely as we would normally write or if we have a prepared text in front of us, because the gist of his presentation was support but his query demands certainly an explanation because others may be asking.

Mr. Speaker we are seeking consciously, conceptually to separate the debate on the Bill, on the Order for National Hero and other awards, because there is a consensus in this country about the Order of a National Hero. The nature of the other awards there is not as yet such a consensus though that there is consensus about National Awards, but not the type of National Awards. So I think it is wise to proceed on a matter upon which there is a clear consensus, but we will be bringing shortly a separate Bill on National Awards. Indeed, there is draft Bill on National

Awards and that will be a separate discussion. So I want to assure the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and other Honourable Members of the House and the general public that there would be a separate Bill on that question. That indeed we thought that it would have been more cumbersome, more controversial to have put all together, to have married them together because there was a discussion on precisely the point which the Honourable Leader of the Opposition has raised and there is in our view, there is also a consensus in the country for us to be doing it in this manner. But it is a legitimate question that he has raised and I think it is right and proper that it be answered.

Mr. Speaker, there is in the Bill one or two areas which will have to be tidied up at the Select Committee. Like for example, there is a Committee which is established under clause 6, A National Heroes Advisory Committee shall be appointed by the Governor General. But there is one omission in the Bill, and that is just a drafting lacuna that there has to be some entity to which that Committee must submit its report or recommendations. And it would appear that that would have to be either to the Cabinet or to the Prime Minister. In as much as the power conferred on the Governor General under subsection 1, that is, to confer the honour of National Hero shall be exercise by him on the advice of the Prime Minister, and it is implied there but it has to be spelt out clearly that the report has to go to the person who is in fact advising the Governor General and that's just as I said a lacuna by the draft's person.

Now, Mr. Speaker it is important for us to grasp the history of this measure and it's historic and existential meaning to our civilization. The historical flow of this measure is one, which emerged out of very small interest groups, non-governmental organisations over 30, 40 years ago, towards, to terminal stages of Constitutional Colonialism. A number of persons, particularly young people many of whom are now in this legislature were rightly raising the question as to how should we interpret the past and what is the connection between that past, our present condition and our future. Danny Williams had expressed it magnificently in a poem, 'we are the cenotaphs' and in the last stanza he addresses this evolution of history in the memorable words, 'we are all time, only the future is ours to desecrate, the present is the past and the past our father's mischief.' And the Leader of the Opposition and before him the Minister of Culture certainly identified elements, which called for our own redefinition as a people. Indeed this issue of definition and redefinition is as old as the birds, because many of us when we were much younger, we would have read Louis Carols, Alice in Wonderland and is a very interesting discussion between humpty dumpty and Alice. And Alice was remonstrating with humpty dumpty about the use of a particular word and meanings of words which really relate and connect to the meaning of history and in this remonstrating and the dialogue when Alice was getting the better of humpty dumpty, he simply declared words to the effect that he really don't understand Alice. Words mean what I define them to mean because I possess the power of definitions and history by and large is written by the history of the victors. The history of the vanquished is hardly ever written and it is only as you come of age as independent peoples and as a civilization that you embrace fully the Cartesian notion that I am because that I think I am. And this sense of thinking as to who you have become, thinking about yourself in an existential relationship with others around you, and forces, which are abroad in the land. And

it relates to all sorts of things, not just the issue of the history as is written in a chronological form, but it is about rituals and burials and customs at your wedding and you're on the block. They are things which are not even easily definable, but they form part of you existential being consciousness, which distinguish you from other people. Not making you better than them, nor worse than them but to define in a totality who you are. And this is what this exercise is about in its broadest context.

And Mr. Speaker, the history from the earliest days of persons advocating the idea of a National Hero, the Order of a National Hero and for National Heroes to be named is one which took on tremendous momentum out of the 1970's into the 80's and 90's even when official down looked askance on the notion. Well, we at the dawn of the 21st century, as a free people and with a Government in power, which has come from the bowels of the people and those who have been marginalized, have become ascendant. Mr. Speaker not become ascendant in the sense of Caesar, but those who are now ascendant are really a manger people. A manger people who had become ascendant but become ascendant not as Caesar's but who remember the manger and the three wise men who followed the star in Bethlehem.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill which appears to be very simple and very straight forward, 5 pages, 4 pages indeed is pregnant with meaning about ourselves. We know that it has been said in other context that man shall not live by bread alone and in the Christian theology there is the word of God, but here in the earthly city in addition to responding to the word of God we have to connect also, I am not saying equally, but also with the spirit our people as they have evolved and they themselves (the people) are the children of God, who occupy a particular seascape and landscape, who have come from different lands and continents and who have been brought together at a particular moment in history and in time at a particular place to celebrate ourselves as a Caribbean people and with a distinctive Vincentian component in that civilization.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard here elaborated by the preceding speakers the kinds of persons whom we will have as National Heroes or Heroees because there are.., when the word 'Hero' is used here it means also 'a Heroee' that person must have given outstanding service to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and his contribution must have altered positively the course of history in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines or given such service to our country by visionary and pioneering leadership, extraordinary achievement and attainment of the highest excellence which has redound to the honour of our country and such a person through his/her heroic exploits and sacrifice contributed to the improvement of the economic, social or political conditions of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Not just routine unheroic improvement, not just ordinary sacrifice but a sacrifice of heroic proportions.

Mr. Speaker looking at our history there have been the following individuals who could be considered candidates, I am not saying that would be alleviated to the status of National Hero, there is of course first and foremost the incomparable Joseph Chatoyer, the Chief of the 'Calinargo' people. On any of these criteria he is a National Hero and I believe and I agree with the Leader of the Opposition about his elevation, there can be no question by any right thinking

person. Indeed it may well be that given the short period of time between now and the 14th of March that perhaps we should begin first by establishing the order of National Hero with one person Joseph Chatoyer and then we can give consideration as we proceed and as we evolve to other persons. Now Joseph Chatoyer was a freedom fighter of extraordinary proportions. It is stated in the history books written by the Europeans that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was conquered in 1762 and that in 1763 by the Treaty of Paris it became the lawful sovereign owner of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Of course European contact with Saint Vincent and the Grenadines predated 1762 but we are speaking here now at the pointing time when Chatoyer enters the picture. When the British quote and quote conquered Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, when their conquest was legitimated, legitimated in quotation marks by the Treaty of Paris, that was a legitimation by European powers. No body asked Chatoyer anything, no body asked the Calinargo people, no body asked the Caribs anything and they are not so concerned with what happens in Paris, they know they own their land. Is my land, it is my earth, you cannot come and shake me from it and they fought a phenomenal gorilla battle against the British and sometimes used the French as their alliance until of course by superior arms they were defeated and we know many of the persons were deported. Many were of course killed, there was genocide, murder, wiped out; but large numbers were put onto boats and taken down to Honduras. Some of them in Belize, what is now Belize, some in what is Honduras, remarkable. The history books tell us that at the deportation, Chatoyer's children, I am not talking about his blood, the calinargo people many of them jumped off Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members from cliffs kill themselves, they would rather die than be separated from their homeland. Now, that is a sacrifice, which is, those of us today in our comfort, in all our sophisticated computer education and training we do not understand the depth of a belonging to land. But it is the peculiarity of our own history, that the language which we now speak to celebrate Chatoyer, is the language of the colonizers. That is not a critique of our language, indeed it is a good thing that we have our language, but we have come by it through much pain and suffering and sacrifice and finally triumph and that is why it is the same context of the march of history. The triumphs and the joys and the defeats and the failures and the come into being that can appreciate why a child of Chatoyer, Pat Frazer would accept the honour being member of the British Emperor. So we have come to where we are through a historical process with a bundle of contradictions, a host of accidents and a parallelogram of forces which some of us do not yet quite fathom their real meaning. And then Mr. Speaker, there are other persons who may be given considerations by the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines as National Hero. We have them, George Augustus Mc Intosh who is undoubtedly the father of the social democratic revolution in Saint Vincent, organizer of a mass movement, the figure of leadership behind the anti-colonial uprising in 1935 and who moved the motion for universal adult suffrage right in this chamber which we now sit, that's another man of enormous, he has made enormous sacrifices. Remember he was jailed, charge with treason felony and was acquitted at the end of the preliminary inquiry; there was no case to answer. And then, there is a man born in the 1880's in the Southern Grenadines in Union Island Hugh Mulzac 17 years old he went to see the first black man ever to have passed this mariners test to be given a master's licence. Fought racism in the United States and kept the flag of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines flying high, was an associate of Marcus Messiah Garvey, National Hero of Jamaica

and in fact was one of the captains of one of Marcus Garvey's ships on the black star line. There is Elma Francois another child of Chatoyer born in Overland, migrated to Sion Hill, a single mother went to Trinidad, a domestic became a Leader in the Women's Movement in the Negro Movement as it use to be said at the time down there and of women to such an extent that Trinidad and Tobago has declared her a National Heroee.

Mr. Speaker, you have the two modern titans, or the two titans of modern Politics and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the working class emancipator, Ebenezer Theodore Joshua who politically contributed to the breaking of the back of the plantation system in this country, established trade unionism, just like you had Mohammad Ali, Joe Fraser, you had Ebenezer Theodore Joshua and Robert Milton Cato, the father of Independence. I know that because the history is so recent, particularly in the case of Joshua and Cato that there are many old wounds still not yet healed, but there is no doubt in my mind, that both of them sometime or the other when the history is fully distilled would be accorded the honour of National Hero, none whatsoever. As indeed I think that George Augustus Mc Intosh is there in line in the case of Mulzac and in the case of Francois it may be claim that they didn't really contribute directly within the geographical boundaries of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and therefore ought not properly to be considered for the Order of National Hero, but those are matters for the public to debate. But we as Leaders have to broaden the net and Mr. Speaker, I agree with both the Minister of Culture and the Leader of the Opposition. We have to have a history not only of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines through the prism of our own eyes as a free people at the dawn of the 21st Century, but we have to have individuals studies of these distinguished persons and others. We have asked the historian, Mr. Scott who is at the University of the West Indies in Barbados to prepare for us as we approached the month of March particular sketches of each of these distinguished Vincentian personalities, from Chatoyer right down and I have been advised that the Minister of Culture has been in touch with him. I do not know if the consultancy arrangement has been concluded. I myself had spoken to him, but there is material, which is there to be put together. For example a Vincentian, Bernard Marshall wrote his doctoral thesis, which is available at the University of the West Indies on the history of the period between 1763 to the emancipation of slavery. He covered the so-called Carib wars find pieces. There is the work of Rhoda Reddock on Elma Francois. I have also written on Mc Intosh, on Joshua those are things available already. Dr. Kenneth John has written a history of the colonial society from the late 19th century right up to about 1970 where there is a fair amount of history. My own work on the Labour Movement from the 1930's other historians is Dr. Fraser and his several monographs and so on and so forth, Mr. Scott himself so there is a body of material there to be put together for us to have a meaningful history and I am appealing to the historians not to await the time when they can write a magnum opus because everybody who is writing a history book want to write a great work. We need to have a work of a quality but it does not have to be the final and definitive work because that does not exist.

Mr. Speaker I have just concluded reading the biography of Winston Churchill by Roy Jenkins and Jenkins has a very interesting prospective on Churchill similar in some respect to the defining work of Martin Gilbert's but Martin Gilbert volumes on Churchill are there, but

Jenkins in one volume albeit a hefty tomb brings another prospective to this great man and so it will be so if anyone is egotistical to think that he or she is going to write the final magnum opus on the history of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, he or she is profoundly mistaken. Give us something, which is of quality and others, will improve upon or give different prospective so that it add to the general understanding of our past and who we are and where we are going.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You have ten minutes.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I'm obliged Mr. Speaker. So the Order of the National Hero emerges from this context and to present himself or herself as a model and as an inspiration to our people that someone of excellence and heroic endeavour and heroic sacrifice has made contributions which have altered the course of history in our country or who have such immense contributions that when you look at them, you say, 'ha' that is a person of the quality to be considered for a National Hero and then of course you have to finally as a people determine which one or which ones ought to be given that status and in the final analysis it is distilled through the formal authority of Government to His Excellency the Governor General and who will then finally confer the Honour.

Mr. Speaker, we have put inside here in this Bill that only someone who is dead are to be awarded the Order of National Hero. Barbados has persons who are alive and persons who are dead. For instance, Garfield Sobers is a National Hero, in Jamaica that is the case, but what is interesting in Jamaica they awarded the status of National Hero to only one person who is alive Sir Alexander Bustamante but they did so when he was almost 90 years of age where he couldn't be driving a vehicle and getting into trouble with somebody on the road or getting drunk one night or interfering with a man's wife or trespassing upon the property, they don't want someone who has been a National Hero, who you declared to be a National Hero to be dragged to the court by Senator Shallow because he trespass on his boundary or who driving a car runs into the back of the Honourable Speaker's vehicle, no! We want somebody who is safely dead because it is not an honour for the person, it is for the country that is the difference between the status of National Hero and other Awards. A living person who has been given, who has achieve distinction you can give him an Award but not the status of National Hero and we for our part I give the commitment that this matter will not be embroiled in any way at all with partisan politics. Indeed the very structure of the committee suggest the broad based nature of this body, the Advisory Committee on National Heroes consisting of nine persons, two persons nominated by the Governor General in his own discretion, the Governor General can select whom ever he or she wishes, three persons nominated by the Prime Minister but appointed by the Governor General, one person by the Leader of the Opposition as reflecting representative democracy and three persons again from the local non-governmental organisations selected by the Governor General, he will naturally have to talk to them and also consult with the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister, so there is no force, no element which has a majority, none whatsoever. It's finally balanced to cover all the elements within the society.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that this Bill will come out of the Select Committee with much of it intact, but some of it will no doubt change, and we are encouraging persons to send in from now to whoever is the Chairman of the Select Committee which we name here, or to the Clerk of the House to be submitted to the Select Committee, any memorandum, and if you want to appear before the Committee you will be given an audience before that Committee on this Bill. We intend Mr. Speaker to have this Bill published in the news papers so that citizens can read it, reflect it and let us fashion it in a wholesome way as this Government is noted for, its transparency and its openness. They have nothing to hide; we want to see the best happen for the country. We will not, Mr. Speaker, do and I don't want to introduce politics into this, of partisan politics but we have to speak frankly about certain matters. You know even before you have a National Awards Bill, imagine this, even before you a Bill for Awards brought to this House by the N.D.P Administration, they ordered about 300 hundred thousand well over that must be close to half a million dollars worth of insignia, I don't know whether they..., well, I guess in general categorization we can call them insignia. I don't know who designed these, the things came back, they are at the Governor General's House as I have stated before, to use the language on the street, 'the thing them turn' they have been sent back between His Excellency and the Cabinet Secretary they have them sent back to see if they clean them. But what is an offence to the public and to democracy, to openness and transparency is that even before you bring a Bill to Parliament about National Awards you already produce insignia, Ha.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Three minutes.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Just reflect on that I know that the Leader of the Opposition is deeply concerned about a National Awards Bill but they did not introduce a National Awards Bill but they produce insignia for National Awards. Watch a hell of a thing eh.

Mr. Speaker I know that on these matters the Leader of the Opposition tends to have amnesia but without being partisan political it is my duty to remind the people of this country about the lack of transparency of the N.D.P Administration and the openness of this Government and the willingness of this Government to subject ourselves to the scrutiny and on ongoing basis of the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines who are our masters.

Mr. Speaker, I urged that the second reading of this Bill be concluded in a way which is supportive of the Bill and we will proceed with a Select Committee I have no doubt that other members may wish to speak on this Bill. But remember that this is not just some simple symbolic matter, this is a profound issue connected to nation hood. This is an issue of seminal importance to the existential beings and the soul of our people and let it never be forgotten by the people of this country that it took a patriotic Government, one which is finally attuned to the sensibilities and the history of our people to marshall their ideas and the thoughts and their feelings and their spirit and put it in legislative form, Finally, after 2 or 3 decades of discussion about the Order of the National Hero we are hearing it, the debate commencing from this Parliament and in true democratic spirit which would have pleased all of our democratic

forebears even though they didn't know and would not have comprehended the technology that it is being done live on radio courtesy the U.L.P Government. That is the way we are moving as a people and that is why we will succeed in our endeavours. No partisan politics Mr. Speaker, just truth, just the facts and to do justice, but if it may be a balm to the Leader of the Opposition I have been taught that true justice is possible only with forgiveness and I forgive the N.D.P for many of the terrible things they have done and in relation to the disturbing of the people's National psyche. But even though I forgive, the wrongs must be righted and you cannot forget, you must have the collective memory to guide you for the future. Thank you very much Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Senator Leacock.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to this Bill, which we on this side of the House consider to be very timely and which I would like to say from the very outset we lend our support. Mr. Speaker, I take notice of the contribution of the last presentation from the Honourable Prime Minister that in all that we say and do with respect to this Bill that we try as best we can to be non partisan and to be truthful and I believe that if he had his way, he may also remind us that none of us have a monopoly on honesty and truthfulness.

Speaking for myself Mr. Speaker, I consider this Bill and the debate on this Bill a timely as the first debate for the year 2002 because after a mere 3 months or so of experience in this Honourable House Mr. Speaker, it is my own recognition that those of us who have the privilege and honour to serve the good people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines must at all times do that which is within our powers to maintain the honour, the respect, the glory, the dignity that this House commands and expects of us Mr. Speaker because in my short history in the House I have had my own concerns and reservations whether we have been able at all times to live up to that most noble of ideals of an Honourable House and perhaps the opportunity discuss a National Heroes Bill does allow for some introspection, does allows us to reflect and to chart new courses and I hope in many respects that the debate that takes place today and that would follow in the Select Committee would further serve to guide us in this regard. Permit me Mr. Speaker to make a few preliminary comments and observations on the presentation of the Honourable Minister of Tourism and Culture and in as agreeable a manner as possible observe areas in which there may be some fundamental disagreement indeed maybe clarification. We on this Honourable side of the House Mr. Speaker certainly do not subscribe to the fact that discussion and recognition of the importance of National debate goes back nearly to the 1980's from the period of Mr. Lennox Bowman and his valuable contribution to the National Youth Council. Neither do we assume or our unduly influence by any theatrics that may have been performed at any given time in bringing National Heroes to our consciousness. We are quite convinced Mr. Speaker that those who have walked the Halls of Parliament throughout the Caribbean way back in the 60's and even before, but those who have champ in independence for their respective Caribbean countries, must have had it within their understanding that change to independence would be cosmetic if only there was change by way of designation of

functionaries and officers but nothing had been done fundamentally to the psyche, to the thinking of the people of the Caribbean region and so that they have a major responsibility to replace the historic boundary marks that the Leader of the Opposition earlier alluded to. So Mr. Speaker, the question of National Heroes to repeat myself is a most profound issue and we can ask ourselves nominally what does this really mean to us as a people and we Mr. Speaker on this side of the House in answering our own interrogation conclude in very much the same fashion as the Act has attempted to define it. That National Heroes signal to us the need for a new moral order and that there is a material benefit which redounds to all of us, all our sons and daughters of the soil in the recognition that in all of us that there is a great deal of good and that we must take time out to pay homage and recognize and respect the several contributions that are made throughout the length and breadth of our several Caribbean countries and in our case today Mr. Speaker, I speak of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker for this reason let me say, speaking for myself, and I believe that there are some support for me here by my own colleagues that we do not conclude that there is any consensus whatsoever of any list of 1,2,3,4,5 or 6 members who are deserving of the Award of National Heroes. As my Leader said, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, we do not believe that there will be much debate or contention with respect to Chatoyer and we are not dismissing that some of the names mentioned are most deserving of consideration. I note with interest Mr. Speaker, the contribution of the Prime Minister in this regard and his references to the late distinguished performance, Ebenezer Joshua and Robert Milton Cato for whom we on this side also have very deep respect. I trust in the process Mr. Speaker, that it may not become necessary for the Prime Minister himself to ask for forgiveness for some of the fairly harsh words that he has had to say in the past in his own writings because he has not been known to be the most kind person to the late Honourable Milton Cato and repentance would be accepted. I note Mr. Speaker that the Honourable Minister of Culture spoke reverently about the contributions of Mr. Mulzac and Mr. Mc Intosh and I note with interest that this country in recognizing their historic and significant contribution named two of the coast guard vessels of their honour. I think I am correct to say that it is the New Democratic Party that recognized the contribution of Mr. Mulzac and named the second larger of the coast guard vessels, 'the Hugh Mulzac'. Whether this is in fact recognition of their militancy, discipline or order is neither here nor there. Sufficient to say that even before we address the question of National Heroes those of us on this side of the House in the New Democratic Party we have long since recognized the sterling contributions of Mr. Mulzac and of Mr. Mc Intosh. And I would suspect too Mr. Speaker that we would have no quarrels if through the due process that we are attempting to establish they are eventually elevated to the noble positions of National Heroes, sufficient to say however Mr. Speaker that the issue has never eluded our attention.

Mr. Speaker we in this House in addressing the question of National Heroes are at the one time fortunate that we do not have to reinvent the wheel, in that there is precedent and great historical antecedent to guide us, but we are also Mr. Speaker privileged in that we can take advantage of history and fashion for ourselves an Order that is befitting the time and truly captures in a very national way those people who had for good reason always placed service

before self. So Mr. Speaker, as I believe the Prime Minister and he has his way of justifiable humour at times in reference to my contributions, I agree that the LOCKIAN philosophy, not Leacock, that there is much good in all of us not only finds favour but in this Honourable House we must lead by example Mr. Speaker; and as far as is possible, speak well of each other inside and outside of this House. And you will permit me Mr. Speaker, I am too often saddened by the extent to which personal character assassination by those who are least in a position to defend themselves becomes the pre-occupation of this House and as we speak about forgiveness I would not like to hear the Prime Minister ever again referring to anyone inside or out of this House by their convicted felon status, but that's fine Mr. Speaker. I have a brother who has been to prison more than once and twice and perhaps will go again Mr. Speaker and I have done my part to try to see what I can do to try to reform him, none of us in this House Mr. Speaker, none of us can guarantee the future with respect to our relatives, none of us Mr. Speaker. And there are still many of us in this House when the question of convicted felons was used, we shiver, but out of due respect Mr. Speaker I defer that discussion for where it ever becomes important. For now Mr. Speaker I make the appeal again do not Mr. Speaker, chastise our nationals and abuse the Parliament in that form and fashion.

Mr. Speaker,

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: You read the New Testament, you hear what Christ call some people when he forgive them?

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: there is indeed a wider way of service to be recognized, and it is interesting to note, that in making one's way, and this is not by design, to National Heroes status, one does not have to be cloaked in political garments, it comes from the heart, to repeat myself, "of service before self", the greatest quote of the greatest number "must be characteristic feature of that exercise". And for this reason Mr. Speaker, in proceeding to determine National Heroes to use the legal jargon we do not only require due diligence but I am tempted to say, we also owe a duty of care to several Vincentians, to closely and carefully and sanguinely examine their substantial performances over the years. You know we all have our choice and perhaps the individual who comes to my mind is too humble to even consider what we are talking about, but I have always been heavily influenced and persuaded by the humility of one Dr. Earl Kirby who has done so much for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, he is forgotten.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: As National Hero?

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: Perhaps not wanting an award of any kind, in his own manner, in fact I gather now, he is restricted, he is bed-ridden now and those of us in the House probably should visit him, if the information is correct, because I think he has paid more than his dues to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, more than his dues. But if I was to cite someone in living memory by whose example we can follow that is one that comes to mind. Not influenced by politics, not for monetary gains, not for public recognition but for the good of

country and for the betterment of man and so Mr. Speaker it may well be that when we are determining the criteria to be used there may well be a case to broaden that which is listed in the present draft before us. And I believe we all agree that it is not cast, no concrete.

Mr. Speaker the question of National Heroes and the discussion of the subject this evening brings to our attention the importance for all of us titled Honourable men and women to pay recognition to what I call a demonstration effect. How do we treat our own? Deny neglect; ignore the contributions of a Sir James Mitchell? No Mr. Speaker. Treat our colleagues with derision, character assassination, pull down, destruction and hope 50 years hence that someone will rewrite the history and ignore all that we has done to destroy themselves? There is much Mr. Speaker that we have to do now, not tomorrow, now to signal to those who are listening to us, those who must be influence by us that we are prepared as Honourable men and women to walk the talk. I have heard said on the streets Mr. Speaker that if Chatoyer was alive today that his chance of becoming a National Hero may have been very, very slim in the culture of destruction that prevails many parts of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. There may be indeed the current issue to the view but I think we have a responsibility in this House to show that it will be a lie. This would mean to me Mr. Speaker and those of us in this Honourable House that begun the operators of naming National Heroes it is a responsibility of this House for all of us as Parliamentarians to do all that is within our powers in this country of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to create a culture of respect, a culture of love, a culture of care, compassion and understanding. This Mr. Speaker would mean that the mere passage of an Act does not allows us to rest on our laurels but that we must through the process of education...

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Praise us for bringing the Act na.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: I have already done so Mr. Prime Minister, Honourable Prime Minister, but...

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: You tongue so deep in your cheek you could hardly find it [laughter].

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: No, I'll do it one more time for you [laughter]. I made two comments, I said that those of you on that side Mr. Prime Minister are deserving of praise for bringing this Bill to the House in the same way that I am afraid that you may have to do some repentance along the way for some of the harsh things you have said about those who may be able to be considered. The face changes a little bit Mr. Prime Minister but we would proceed [laughter]. This brings me to the point Mr. Speaker, not to be distracted and advised by my senatorial friend Minister of Transport that it is not only in education that we must bring about change and give meaning to the concept and notion of a National Hero but we ought to Mr. Speaker through the budgetary provisions to give more fundamental support to the nurseries of National Heroes. I speak about the cubs, the scouts, the brownies, the guides, the part finders, the red cross, the cadets, Christian groups, national youth councils, all those young soldiers who are learning in their day to day activities of the benefits and value of voluntarism, of patriotism,

of national service, of putting country first, put money office and resources at their disposal so that they can do what they do best so that one day when the history is rewritten they too may be among our National Heroes.

Mr. Speaker the question of National Heroes, is therefore not one to be left solely for historiography, but is also very much a responsibility of contemporary scholars and us politicians who has major responsibilities for framing public policy. And I do agree Mr. Speaker with the Honourable Prime Minister that at one time we are speaking historically and at the same time existentially, but I believe he too would agree with me that even when we are being historical and existential we must all times be temporal, spiritual and spatial firmly planted on the ground, firmly committed to our beloved Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, where as our anthem says, our faith will see us through. I say that Mr. Speaker because in all that I do and say in this House and outside of this House I am always fascinated by the fact that our today is our yesterday's tomorrow and tomorrow's past and so as the historians in a trial lexical manner may explain to us it would be foolish and unforgiving of us not to be aware that at all times in whatever we are saying and or doing in this Honourable House we are creating history by the actions of today, we don't have to postpone it for tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition raised whether we had not in a sense, and these are my words not his, politically skewed the Committee that would select our National Heroes. The Prime Minister gave assurance that there is a good balance; I think that that is work in progress for the Select Committee. A situation in which I think that there two members named by the Governor General in his own right, three by the Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister has also an influencing role in other members, have the potential, I do not say that he would do it, because as I speak, because I believe that in these matters the Prime Minister enjoys some integrity and means well for the office holding of National Hero, that we do not have a Committee that seem to be politically biased so that those people who are eventually recognized must carry the scars of whatever political party may have influenced their elevation to this highest of honour and office in our beloved Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. There are other little things Mr. Speaker I believe that we will have to tidy up. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition supported by the Prime Minister, Honourable clarified whether the terminology should be Right Excellent of Excellency or Excellence and so forth and that has been clarified or may also have to got to say whether there would be designatory letters like Order of National Hero, (ONH) is that going to be necessary? I suspect that we may have to do something as in some countries you speak about OM when people are recognized. Some people by virtue of their recognition carry permanently the title Honourable and so on and so forth when they write their name. There are little, I wouldn't called them cosmetic things, because they do give some meaning to those people who must reflect on what we have done, but as I have said, is for working progress for those of us who will be in this Honourable House to discuss further the National Heroes Act. I also believe Mr. Speaker, and I am in agreement with the Prime Minister and I am looking from my copy of the Act that is eluding me at the moment where I had my marginal notes written, I believe that as we go through it, that we will see that there is in a number places, areas in which we can clean up, generally speaking to make the Act

fully reflective and capturing the high ideals which we have set for ourselves. In summary Mr. Speaker I am glad that I had been in the Parliament at the time when this piece of legislation could be brought before us for our consideration and Mr. Speaker I hope the listening audience could appreciate my smile as the Prime Minister continues to be as Provo-active as he is known to be that whatever happens that those on that side of the House record that this New Democratic Party did in fact bring to this Honourable House a Bill for National Awards, we in fact did present this Bill in 2000 it lapsed into 2001 and because of Elections it never went forward it died a natural death, but we did in fact intend to proceed in this direction but you have the benefit and the foresight of delivering and we have no quarrels with you on that side of the House....,

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: we are always delivering and we will always deliver.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: and we will in fact give our best support to this National Heroes Act Bill. That said Mr. Speaker, I take my seat with the assurance that if I am requested to be on this Select Committee and indeed, I will like to be

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I'll talk to the Leader and see if he will put you on

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: I would ensure that we do justice to this most important piece of legislation. With that Mr. Speaker, I thank you once more, be careful, I thank you for your forbearance and look forward to a smooth passage through this House when we have done the requisite homework to advance this Bill. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Any further debate on the Bill? Honourable Minister of State in the Ministry of Agriculture.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give support to this Bill, a Bill for an Act to provide for the conferment, of the Honour of National Hero and the incidentals, which are connected thereto. Mr. Speaker, I think this Bill has come at a most appropriate time. It would appear to me Mr. Speaker that throughout this country our history seems not to be anything and really Mr. Speaker that it comes at a time when our people can reflect on what has happened well over 5 hundred years ago.

Mr. Speaker, our history I recalled when I went to school and as identified by the Leader of the Opposition, our history was more or less based on the English Version. We were taught of the John Hawkins, the Toussaint L'Ouverture, the Christopher Columbus's and the likes, but very little was taught of our own people, very little was taught of the people like Chatoyer, Hugh Mulzac, Elma Francois, George Mc Intosh and the likes. But Mr. Speaker, it is important that our country understand where we are, where we came from and where we must go. Our history helps us to determine our future destiny, therefore Mr. Speaker, the Bill that is before us

wanting to recognize a National Hero, wanting to recognize persons who would have made tremendous contributions to this country we therefore have to consider who is a National Hero? What does a National Hero mean to us?

Mr. Speaker, it is my firm believes that in consideration for the position of a National Hero, I would like to give a few considerations. I would like to believe Mr. Speaker that a National Hero should be a native of this country, it is important, very important that as has been identified in the Bill that our Hero must be a native and although I have my own personal weakness Mr. Speaker, I believe that in the consideration of a National Hero, that a National Hero should be one of an ethnic race. We have known of the history of the Carib people, the Calinargo race and Mr. Speaker, where I stand here because of my own practical experiences that I know if Joseph Chatoyer was alive today and hearing his name to be a National Hero, he would have been a proud man unlike what I heard from the Senator a while ago. Joseph Chatoyer as we all know it, was born of Carib descendant and up to quite recently Mr. Speaker, the word Carib in this country was always seeming to be a derogatory name.

Mr. Speaker, many a times one considers a social stigma to be attached to that race and I am sure Mr. Speaker, if Joseph Chatoyer was alive today and to be hearing his name to be a National Hero of this country I am sure Mr. Speaker, Joseph Chatoyer would have been a proud man.

Mr. Speaker we know too well of the Calinargo, the Garifuna people particularly the Garifuna people how they ended up in Belize. Mr. Speaker the Prime Minister, in his address, who is quite a knowledgeable person in history, was quite outstanding and I know I cannot step in his shoes when it comes to history, but identity plays quite an important role in identifying a hero of this land.

Mr. Speaker I recalled in the early 60's as a young lad, it was my custom to take lunch for my great grandmother on a Sunday and I remember one Sunday doing my usual duty there came a car and it stopped close by and asked me where is the old carib lady living. I turned to the gentleman, I said I know nothing that you are talking about, I am talking about the very early 60's Mr. Speaker when I was a lad approximately 6 or so years and low and behold having traveled to my great grandmother, the then gentleman found me there, then is when I knew my grandmother was at that time only pure bred carib that was still living in Sandy Bay.

Mr. Speaker I then began at that time to get some history of the past and then is when I knew that my great grandmother was family through her grandfather relative to Joseph Chatoyer [applause]. Mr. Speaker I recalled even in the conversations many Carib language were being spoken but I was too young then to recall of the language. So therefore Mr. Speaker, because of my affiliation I have strong recommendation for Joseph Chatoyer as a National Hero and I am sure Mr. Speaker unlike the Senator Leacock I would have been very pleased Mr. Speaker, if Joseph Chatoyer could have been alive today. Mr. Speaker...,

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: Yes Mr. Speaker to elucidate on a matter of my speech which I have been miss quoted and misinterpreted by the Honourable Member for the second time Mr. Speaker with my references to Chatoyer where his is imputing or quote me in actuate.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Oh! I would think so yes, my own understanding I agree with you. I don't think you opposed to Chatoyer being a National Hero.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I didn't get that in your speech.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: In fact on the contrary to identify he is one person over there, which there is no debate. Thank you very much.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: I would not debate the position Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a hero is one that shows inspiration, a hero is one Mr. Speaker who in layman's term can be considered a Saviour, that is, that people look up to this individual. Mr. Speaker, a hero is one who demonstrate leadership and all of the persons whose names have been called Mr. Speaker including Joseph Chatoyer would have demonstrated all of these qualities and I am sure that the Committee in its deliberations Mr. Speaker would be looking at such considerations. But Mr. Speaker, the Bill is very explicit where it indicates a hero should be a dead person. We know that living persons can make mistakes and as a hero, you are not suppose to make mistakes Mr. Speaker because you would have demonstrated fine qualities.

Mr. Speaker I want to congratulate this Government to bring to this Parliament a Bill of this nature, which seeks to recognize someone, who has made great contributions to his country during his lifetime. This Government Mr. Speaker recognizes its people, it recognized people for their efforts, for the contributions. This Government however, condemned those who act wrongly, who appear falsely as the good old saying, like wolf in sheep's clothing. This Government condemns those who cheat on others particularly the future of those who are poor and helpless. This Government makes historic wrongs, right. This Government, we formulate policies that have meaning to its people and which our people can associate with and are willing to be part of. Mr. Speaker, this Bill I am proud to associate myself with from a historic background I am pleased to associate myself with it and would wish such Bill an easy passage Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, any further debate on the Bill, Honourable Minister for Tourism and Culture?

HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE: thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I am indeed most grateful for the debate of several Members of the House in support of this Bill. Just a few points I think I ought to make in wrapping up this debate Mr. Speaker. From

our position of policy I do not think in the term of office in which we are elected under the constitution we intend to very often confer this Order. The intendment in our deliberations before we came to this House is that we are leaving it open to the people as we have always done, crosses of dialogue and consultations, to say one sum or none of the persons mention to be made a National Hero this year or next year or whenever, but certainly, I think the people are of the view that we should not vacillate. That they wouldn't have to resort to protest to get a National Hero named as soon as possible because we would have acted in vain in bringing legislation to the House to simply leave it in the Statute Books to gather dust. But we must give, put sinew unto the bones of the legislations and let the sinew rise and bring a new spirit to the letter of the law.

Mr. Speaker you may recall and I think I may have recalled that the Honourable Prime Minister may have tabled his speech made on Independence day, where he discussed the issue of National Honours and he indicated in his Address that National Honours will come separately and that it will run or may run parallel to the Awards given by Her Majesty the Queen, or we may abolish our Her Majesty the Queen but then again we would leave it up to debate for the broad masses to give their views, which is a hall mark of the Administration [applause]. I have listened to the concerns expressed about the criteria for eligibility and what will happen. Let me see if I can get this correctly. The criteria for eligibility are in the Bill. It is the proposition that this Bill will go to a Select Committee, it is our proposition that the public would be given an opportunity that as strangers to this House and strangers to the Select Committee of the House would be given an opportunity to sit with the Select Committee, to look at those clauses as well and give their views. So I don't think that we should have undue fair or quake about the eligibility clause b(2).

In relation to the question of the political balance or imbalance of the Committee, if there were going to be any political balance it would be done the way it has been done in recent history. However, we have established [interruption] [inaudible] I trying to be kind, that the political balance, we have established a track record in 9 months of creating a definition for political balance. In the past where the constitutional regulations and statues made in this Honourable House required consultation with the Leader of the Opposition, there was a line and I have seen the letters, you are hereby consulted, full stop. That's a matter of history and it's a matter of fact. Our history and the facts are that we do indeed to consult. We even consult when you don't have to consult and we have inserted in these provisions, the draftsman, under our guidance, that there is going to be the political balance, the Governor General and the Prime Minister, we have set up the national economic and social development council, civil society is involved, civil society is involved in looking at Government policy and examining Government policy, in opposing Government policy openly and in the presence of the Prime Minister, you doesn't have to hear about it from somebody, so we have already set that track record and that's precedence in our governance and we think we have reason to be able to continue that with confidence. When I listened to the contribution of the Honourable Prime Minister and he mentioned that Chatoyer signifies heroic sacrifice I remembered that next week here in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the Garifuna Heritage Foundation, headed by a Garifuna would be

hosting the first regional conference on the Garifuna culture and retrieval; here in this country. It's a regional conference and we expect to have more than thirty persons with sponsorship on the UNESCO and Mr. Alwyn Bully, the UNESCO representative who is very closely connected with matters relating to culture will be here. We will be discussing the Garifuna culture. I cannot recall anytime before, in the history of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, that the Garifuna culture played any particular role or part in any debate or any matter arising out of the Government policy. It is a policy of this Government to pursue avenues for developing the retrieval of the Garifuna heritage, language, dance, culture, religion, social practices, rituals and in so doing I think I have already said Mr. Speaker that we are looking at the possibility of a National Monument on Balliceaux. And having said that, some tour operators have approached me with literature that they have received from writers, about the time when they shop there on Balliceaux, and that recently some fishermen have found 2 skeletons in a cave crouched over, like sitting in a crouching position to hide and there is more literature. It's referred too by the Garifuna and their history Balliceaux is a place of memory. So Mr. Speaker, the idea of having National Heroes is to help us to recapture our own history and put it in indelible terms in terms of which is a positive way at looking at the development of our own civilization. It is the intendment, as we say we are not just going to have National Heroes but you must be able to make a connection at a spiritual and a flesh and blood connection with the law, so that people can go and revisit how did the Garifuna live. Young people would be able in the next few years to visit a Youremei village in Orange Hill as we are proposing to continue the feasibility study and work in the Youremei village, which is to recapture the Garifuna culture here.

And Mr. Speaker when we spoke about persons who have made contribution I'll remember not only Mr. Lennox Bowman, and I believe in the scripture you know it say, honour to whom honour, tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and therefore I so render. I remember distinctly maybe because he is my neighbour where I come from in Kingstown Park and I don't forget people easily when I go up the stairs and therefore I remember him, I remember Curtis King, I remember Junior Bacchus making contributions and lobbying and lobbying but I didn't hear echoing cries, I didn't see reflected in any Government of the day that it is a policy to do something about the history and National Heroes, I remember them.

Mr. Speaker many of the other issues that were raised I'm sure will be raised in vigorous discussion at the Select Committee and I am looking forward to that debate, because I remember the last Select Committee in relation to public holidays, whether it should be on a Monday or whatever. I remember the reservations in this House, where the business people will have this and so unfortunately, no businessperson found it possible to attend the Select Committee Meeting or to raise by way in a letter, memo or telephone call anything relating to productivity and loss of productivity. So Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated we are open to wide debate and now Mr. Speaker I move that this Bill be taken to a Select Committee of Members of this Honourable House.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I suggest that we have a Select Committee of nine or six persons on the Government side plus the Attorney General and the 2 persons from the Opposition, seven on this side and two over there. The Prime Minister, the Minister of Tourism and Culture, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Telecommunications and Industry, the Minister of National Security and the Attorney General.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Me. Speaker on this side of the House, Senator Leacock and myself, Leader of the Opposition.

Motion put and agreed to.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I believe the hour is perhaps appropriate for suspension until 7:00 O'clock for members convenience. I so move.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Seconded the motion.

*suspension 6:30 p.m. (TEA)
Resumption 7:10 p.m.*

THE IMMIGRATION (RESTRICTION) (AMENDMENT) BILL 2002.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of National Security.

HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE: Mr. Speaker I beg to move the first reading of a Bill for an Act to Amend the Immigration (Restriction) Act Cap. 78. The Objects and Reasons of this Bill are as follows:

It is to legislate mechanisms enabling the free movement of OECS Nationals within the OECS by amending section 5 of the Immigration (Restriction) Act, Cap 78 to allow for entry into Saint Vincent and the Grenadines using an identity card to establish identity and nationality and amending section 18 of the Immigration (Restriction) Act, Cap 78 to allow for a citizen of a Member State of the OECS to enter and remain in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines without a permit except in certain circumstances.

*Question put and agreed to.
Bill read a first time.*

HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE: Mr. Speaker I beg to move the second reading of a Bill for an Act to amend the Immigration (Restriction) Act, Cap 78.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Seconded the motion.

*Question put and agreed to.
Bill read a second time.*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Is there any debate on the Bill?

HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE: Mr. Speaker, this is a very short Bill and as stated in objects and reasons, this comes about because of certain decisions that were taken by the organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (the OECS) to facilitate easier travel to members of the OECS. Now it was agreed, that last year, 2001 that measures would be put in place to bring this Bill to amend the legislation to make it effective from the 1st of January this year. Now our own Prime Minister here is Chairman of Prime-Ministerial Council that has been set up which includes other Prime Ministers, Dr. Kenny Anthony as Prime Minister of St. Lucia, The Honourable Pierre Charles Prime Minister of Dominica and Prime Minister Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister of St. Kitts. Fortunately we are told that Antigua has entered a reservation or some reservations towards this. In short, what the Bill seeks to do is to make it easier for our Nationals to travel from one OECS country to the other. It is well known that the Americans and the Canadians and the British they can come to Saint Vincent using a driver's permit or an I.D. Card as obtains now in the OECS regardless of whether you are a CARICOM citizen or an OECS citizen you have to use a passport as are embodied in Cap 78 of this Act. Therefore Mr. Speaker, section 5 of the Act which deals with passports states that our passport should be that it is furnished with a photograph and duly issued and if you have to travel to any of these OECS States you must have a passport. Let me quote for ease of reference. What it says in section 5(1) Mr. Speaker is that:

A person entering Saint Vincent and the Grenadines without a passport shall be deemed to be a prohibited immigrant unless and until he establishes his identity and nationality to the satisfaction of an immigration officer. Under the Act, the Governor General can appoint immigration officers, but what this is doing, it is stating that to exempt the OECS Nationals to..., although section 5 specifically states that you must have a passport to enter Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, otherwise you would be declared a prohibited immigrant. This Act now by the addition, the amendment to section 5 and we are amending section 5 by adding a sub-paragraph, you would notice that there are three sub-paragraphs in section 5, we are now adding a fourth paragraph, which very clear and simple that states that notwithstanding the provision of section 2, the one I read out in the parent Act of section 5 of the parent Act, any citizen of any Member of State of the organisation of the Eastern Caribbean States may establish his identity and nationality with an identity card in the form of:

a. A driver's licence or

b. National Identification Card. Both with a photograph and duly issued or renewed and which is valid for the period of his intended stay in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. So if you come

in through driver's licence and it's a three year licence and you only have like two years on it, then your stay in Saint Vincent would only be valid for the two years of your driver's licence. If you come in with your I.D Card and your I.D Card would expire in six years, then you would unlimited stay in Saint Vincent for those six years. Now Mr. Speaker, you would note that it is very clear here that if you are traveling on your I.D Card to Saint Vincent or your driver's licence your photographs must be on these documents, either of these documents, which ever you are using must have your photographs so that at least you can be identified. There are some driver's licence that do not carry your photograph and I am not sure about the I.D. Card but those driver's licence without a photograph would not be accepted because you would not be in a position to see whether the person who is saying he is John Jones is really John Jones. There is nothing to compare the actual physical appearance of the person to a photograph as is done in the passport and maybe the I.D. Card. It is a very simple amendment Mr. Speaker. Two sections are being amended, as I stated section 5 and section 18. And section 18 as well, is amended by the insertion of another sub-paragraph, sub-paragraph 4. And as it states that nothing contained in this section, a citizen of the Member States of the organisation of the Eastern Caribbean States shall be entitled to enter or remain in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines except where he is a prohibited immigrant under the Act or where his permit to enter and remain in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines had been revoked under section 21 of this Act. So once you are an OECS citizen you are entitled to come to Saint Vincent and vice versa and Saint Vincent being a member of the OECS and if you are Vincentian whether by birth, by descent, you are entitled to go to any other of the OECS countries and to remain there, as stated before, until the expiration of whether it's your driver's permit or your I.D. Card and this is fair because even in your passport if you travel with a passport you would also have an expiry date on that passport and when that is finished you either have to renew it so if you want to stay you would either have to get your I.D. Card renewed or your driver's permit renewed so that it becomes valid. Also Mr. Speaker, it is the OECS authority took the decision that we should strive towards an OECS passport as is done in the European Union where even though you are a citizen of Italy or Germany you can carry a European passport. In the case of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines if you are traveling with an OECS passport, you would know where you are from because each State although it's an OECS passport would have the country name stamped on that passport so that if you see somebody traveling on an OECS passport you would only have to look to see whether that person although he is an OECS citizen is traveling on a Vincentian passport and whether that person is a Vincentian or a St. Lucian.

Mr. Speaker I think this has been talked about a long time. We speak about hassle free travel, we speak about trying to move the CARICOM closer together, we have even had aborted effort in trying to get the OECS together not only economically but politically and we have even set up a body to look into this, a Constituent Assembly and we will have meetings in the four Windwards because in the inception, it was supposed to be all of the OECS but the Leewards had opted out and so it was only left to the four Windward Islands and we had meetings in Dominica, in Grenada, in St. Lucia, in Saint Vincent and this Constituent Assembly had even made recommendations towards the OECS countries, well the Windwards so far getting together. That came of nothing because of political dissension. I think from the inception that

it was not handled properly, the Opposition was not given the rightful role to play and in cases like this, especially where you do not a two thirds majority, and we stated that before, it was very difficult to get this finalized, because when the Opposition does not agree, you cannot get that two thirds majority or three quarters majority as is happens in certain cases. So this is a first step Mr. Speaker towards moving the OECS closer together. Unfortunately, we seem to be having some reservations. We are hopeful that common sense would prevail because in our humble opinion, in my opinion I can see that is either the Caribbean would either have to get together voluntarily or would be forced to get together and really common sense would dictate that with a population of some 5 million persons we have something like 13 or 14 different currencies, 13 or 14 different Heads of States and Ministers of Finance and Ministers of Security and so on and I think what we are doing is just duplicating a lot of things and spending money that we can ill afford. Most of us have our own diplomatic counsels and missions and embassies overseas which is costing a lot of money whilst if we go together we would have been able to effectively save money and not only effectively save money but to be more efficacious in what we are doing and that the peoples of the Caribbean would reap the benefits. So Mr. Speaker, I don't want to prolong this debate very much longer, it is a very simple matter but hope that this Bill will be accorded the respect that it is due and that we would get the Members of this House to support this measure.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Senator Snagg.

HONOURABLE EDWIN SNAGG: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to make my contribution in relation to this Bill to amend the Immigration (Restriction) Act, Cap. 78.

Mr. Speaker in looking this Bill only two pages Mr. Speaker, a very small Bill, one gets the impression that there would not be much need for lengthy debate and Mr. Speaker good things always come in small parcels. It appears Mr. Speaker to be a very simple legislation but Mr. Speaker it is a legislation that opens the door and it opens the door to unification of the OECS. It is a piece of legislation Mr. Speaker that comes to this House at a very significant period particularly Mr. Speaker as we having debated the Bill before on National Heroes it gives us a certain level of reflection that as a people that we are now prepared to think in terms of the unity that is necessary for us to survive in the small region to which we belong.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is vision that has been left over from the colonial era. It is not a new vision, the question of travel throughout the OECS using an I. D. Card or a driver's permit with a photograph attached seems to be very small and very simple, no big thing about that Mr. Speaker and the Honourable Minister of National Security indicated most of the legal aspects of this piece of legislation. But Mr. Speaker, we as a people in the Caribbean have come to terms with the fact that it is necessary for us to have a certain level of unification or else we will not be able to survive in this global scenario. Small islands Mr. Speaker, dot on the map while some people like to say a drop of rain in an ocean. We are like a drop in the sea and so it is important for us according to the calypsonian black Stalin and I like to quote sometimes from the calypsonian because he is normally a reflection or a mirror of what takes place in this

society. When he speaks in terms of Caribbean people being coming from the same place on the same ship, making the same trip, so whether one is from the OECS countries or further a field in the Caribbean we would have to come to the realization that we share but one common history.

Mr. Speaker there is always the indigenous who have not come from any place and you would have heard it mentioned here today in terms of the Garifuna people who are the originals. All well and good nothing is wrong with that Mr. Speaker. We have also those who have come from other lands, those who have come from mother Syria, mother China or mother India, those who have made the trip on the fatel razac some one hundred and fifty years ago, some have stayed in Trinidad, some in Guyana and inklings throughout other parts of the Caribbean, but Mr. Speaker it is diffusion of all these people that comes from all these lands that we now no longer speak of mother India or mother Africa or mother China, but we speak only about mother Caribbean, one Caribbean and one people. It is diffusion of our people and the Honourable Prime Minister likes to refer to it in terms of the Caribbean Civilization.

Mr. Speaker, as I say that this piece of legislation opens the door towards unification of the OECS and then we look further a field in terms of unification of the Caribbean. We know fully well the history; we know what has gone on before in terms of the federation that was formed sometime ago, years ago, in which there was that famous statement when the Jamaicans decided to pull out and then Dr. Erick Williams with his famous statement as 1 from 10 leave naught. Ironically Mr. Speaker it is our hope because we believe that the Leaders in the OECS who have made this brave attempt and I want to commend them highly, to make this bold step forward in this direction of OECS unity that they hold fast to that which is good because for political reasons the federation failed. You see the insularity that exists between Caribbean peoples is something that we ought to guard against and that we ought to make serious attempts to iron out. There is absolutely nothing wrong in the maintenance of your sovereignty. It is important that each and every man wherever he comes from, maintains and holds on to that which is indigenously his and to his sovereignty, but at the same time in order for the unity to be complete we must be able to transcend certain boundaries.

Mr. Speaker, historically some of us will know that with the defunct federation that the Trinidadian said, 'we ain't want no Bajan premier', that they didn't want Grantley Adams and then the Bajans in return said, 'that Port of Spain can't be no Capital for here.' Mr. Speaker, that is what we got to guard against [applause] and as I say, I commend the Leaders of the OECS in a very significant way for this brave step. This is a step Mr. Speaker that is similar to the step that Delamshan took when he said 'that there is a small step for man, but a giant step for mankind.' This is small Bill and a small piece of legislation, but it might indeed be a very giant step not only for the OECS but for the Caribbean in the near future [applause].

Mr. Speaker, we realized that there is need for this unity. The larger countries of the world who could afford to stand on their own economically, socially and otherwise they are forming themselves into unions and large unions at that. We are seeing what is happening now with the

Euro dollar, economically and otherwise, I am now hearing a new term that they are no longer talking about the European Union or whatever but they are now calling it Euro land. Twelve countries of Europe merging together and they are calling them Euro land. This is an indication of what is happening globally and internationally and Mr. Speaker there are those of us who have had this vision of easy movement throughout the Caribbean not only in the OECS, but I don't want to limit it here Mr. Speaker, but there are those who have had this vision and this vision has been one that has been there for many a year. There are those who have come from through the mill wheels of the period of the 1970's and those who have spoken about the identification of the Caribbean man not only in terms of his movement but in terms of his oneness because we are indeed a people that are merged not only by our origin but we are merged by our various ways of life Mr. Speaker. You would recognize that that the Caribbean man is one man in terms of his language, in terms of his culture, in terms of his food, in terms of his music, in terms of his flair if you look at the Caribbean man Mr. Speaker anywhere in North America you could recognize him. His work Mr. Speaker is one that is filled with rhythm that you could identify him from a distance and you could recognize that this a man that has come from a place where are vary, different, social and unique patterns and way of life, fully easily recognizable.

Mr. Speaker, one would come to the realization that even though the Indian community who came on the fatel razac and I said landed in Trinidad and in Guyana etc. and with inklings throughout the Caribbean. You could go anywhere now in the Caribbean now and get roti, anywhere in the Caribbean you could go now and buy a roti. If you look at the foods throughout the Caribbean there is very little difference anywhere, everybody might have some little indigenous dish that they may have, but you can go anywhere in the Caribbean and get peleau. You could go anywhere in the Caribbean and get oil down and it may sound very simple Mr. Speaker, but it shows the bond and the cultural unity that we as a people is anybody in the Caribbean who could sing a calypso. You don't have to come from no special place. There was a time when they were saying of course Trinidad is the land of calypso and steel band, but you hearing steel pan beating in every place in the Caribbean, every Caribbean man could beat a pan and every Caribbean man could sing a calypso and very Caribbean man could dance limbo and every Caribbean man could soca and every Caribbean man could put he hand behind his back when he hear a calypso and a little steel pan and he could ramajre.

Mr. Speaker, I hope I ain't gone off on too much of a tangent Mr. Speaker, but it is important for us to realize the uniqueness of this piece of legislation and the importance of the unity that is so necessary as I said for our survival is one that cannot be over emphasized. The West Indies Cricket Team as it is Mr. Speaker, a classic example of what could be attained with unity. Certainly at this time they are now a little bit under the weather but it doesn't take much for them to rise again, it wouldn't take much they have ruled the roots for 15 years and this was done Mr. Speaker because of the unity that took place with each man coming from different islands. Yes they rule the roots for 15 years, there is no question about that and when CLR James in writing on West Indian Cricket wrote his classic beyond the boundary, it carried with it a certain message Mr. Speaker. Is something that you had to understand this you know, you

had to learn Mr. Speaker that there are certain things that are inherent and born within certain individuals that you don't read this and you don't take it superficially as I like to say it must come from your bowels. And when he wrote this book beyond the boundary Mr. Speaker, he wasn't only talking about the 4's and the 6's he was speaking in terms that the colonized had mastered the colonizer and he had bettered him at what he had taught him.

Mr. Speaker a couple weeks ago just before Christmas, we are now in the process of opening a community library in the Grenadines and you know I must drift off on a tangent and say a little word or two about the Grenadines, I can't help about that, that is me nature so to do and also is a responsibility and an obligation and in so doing Mr. Speaker, I personally along with two young ladies from the national library walk through Kingstown to look for books that were written by Caribbean authors and particularly Vincentian authors. And there is a scarcity of such books in all our bookshops. It is lamentable, but it is true, there is a scarcity of such books, it was extremely difficult to get them and we could have only got some by Noah's Arcade at a fairly significant price for each of them.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that we recognize that our history, our culture and our literature are all important to us and to our development. And Mr. Speaker, I remember my early days at secondary school at the Diego Martin Secondary in the Diamond Vale Bolivar, the Honourable Attorney General go be able to identify what I am saying here. And when you went into the Literature class I was greeted with 'As you like it' and 'Macbeth' and literature teacher taught me that I want you to give me the correct diction when I spoke about Ariel or when I said that I said the machiavellian crown when it was lying in the dust and she want you to come with the correct Shakespearean and type of diction.

Mr. Speaker and then one day somebody decided to show me something Caribbean and said read this book from V.S. Naipaul or read from George Lamming or Michael Anthony. Mr. Speaker this piece of legislation goes much further than two pages you know, this piece of legislation Mr. Speaker is something that carries a very in-depth and valuable meaning.

Mr. Speaker and then you move from one stage to another and then somebody said one day I would lend you one of the books of the Martiniquan writers and so you move on to read from Franze warner and Aimé Cesaire and you come to the understanding that the Caribbean is a great place, a great people, a great civilization and one in which those of us who are here in this House, Honourable House, today must support this piece of legislation so that we could maintain the levels, not for ourselves but for those who are coming that they will be able to have a Caribbean identity.

Mr. Speaker I think that I may have said enough, as I say a short Bill but we always talk about OECS unity and CARICOM and sometimes these things are only heard at the Conference of the Heads of Government. We only talk the talk but according to David Rodder, we must walk the talk and we must rally round the West Indies. And there is a classic example here and I commend the Honourable Prime Minister for his vision in this regard and for his leadership in

this particular role and I personally consider that he is probably one of the last of the visionaries of a particular era [applause]. And there are those who would have spoken about this type of unity and who would have liked to see this legislation, but they had their time within the annals of power and they made no attempt to bring it to the front. Some have strayed from the ideology and the philosophy, some have gone off on a tangent for other reasons, but it is indeed a welcome thing that there are those who have stood firm in what they believe in.

Mr. Speaker, I want to wish this Bill a very easy time through this House. I know it is going to go through all its stages and I think that Honourable Members on this side and on the other side, that none would be so negative as to interfere with the safe and easy passage of such a most beautiful piece of legislation. Much-obliged Mr. Speaker [applause].

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable St. Claire Leacock, Senator.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to what the previous two speakers have described as a relatively short Bill. And I must say that I am just as much taken aback as much as I am pleased to see that in the presentation of the Senator Snagg that in my mind at least, he took some issues with his senior elder states man in this Parliament, Honourable Minister of National Security in that, at least he had the foresight to understand that the brevity of the Bill in terms of its number of pages that it occupy it is no reflection of the depth of the content and the implication that this Bill has and to the extent that I continue to enjoy both Senatorial relationship with those on the other side and the Senator is a favourite of mine. I must say that I particularly like his laid back style and equally effective I think we can be open on some of these things in the House. I would want to take the discussion where he left off, but permit me Mr. Speaker to discuss first of all a few crisp comments from the Honourable Minister of National Security. I understood the Honourable Member in presenting this Bill and let me put your hearts at ease, we on this House are going to support the Bill, let me put your hearts at ease. The truth is we don't oppose but we do enlighten and makes substantial contribution which we hope that you would take on board and I hope we do so tonight because there are fundamental things that I am going to say with respect to this Bill important as it is, that I will ask that some consideration be given to.

The Honourable Minister said that the Bill essentially facilitates easier travel to the region and he is correct, but I don't think in his reference and recognition of easier travel through the OECS region that he by any stretch of imagination, was alluding to travel for tourism purpose, rest or relaxation, vacation etc. I am sure that the Honourable Prime Minister when he speaks will confirm that the matters that have been attracting the attention of his colleagues is far more fundamental in the mission and long term in the purpose. I don't know what provisions was made in other quarters but I know that I can attest that I have gone into St. Lucia and into Grenada on several occasions using I. D. Card. In fact, I used the I.D that I had when I was the commandant of the Auxiliary Police Force at the time, and that was sufficient to take me through St. Lucia and Grenada whether it is the old Grenada declaration was in effect or whether there was some understanding in principle that is supported by law, is neither here nor

there but good faith certainly has been demonstrated in the past by those two countries. So I know speaking for those two countries they have not always insisted that we must have a passport and whether we reciprocated in Saint Vincent I can't speak factually. But we are not breaking new ground, we perhaps putting the legislative muscle to something that has previously been recognized and obtained in the region. I have taken notes of the declaration by the Honourable Minister of National Security that entrance to these parts could be time bound depending upon the time limits stated in the I.D. Card and one's driver's licence and you may have to look at that and see whether that is in fact what we want to achieve. But the common purpose that I got from his presentation and perhaps it is because that is his portfolio is that he wanted to satisfy himself that general immigration and security concerns were not compromised in the legislation. And that's quite important, I don't think we can be reckless in any kind of legislation that we will bring here, and if the security provision is one facet of it then all be it the case. I think however that the Senator Snagg was much closer, in my mind at least, and for most of us on this side of the House to the real purpose for this piece of legislation and I don't think we can separate the two pieces of Immigration legislation that are before us now they are really hand in gloves pieces of legislation. That is the fundamental reason for the immigration Act, Cap 78 is really to free up the ability to our people to move freely and I would say to work by and large in this Islands if they so desire. I obviously ignore the observation by the Honourable Minister of National Security of the contribution of the Constituent Assembly and its failed attempt and recognize that at the time the old labour of which I think probably just simply were not sufficiently visionary to be able to appreciate the long term strategic plan for the region and for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines that Sir James Mitchell has so well espoused in his now famous Tortola Declaration which I might refer to again if time permits. So all I can say with respect to the dismissal of the Constituent Assembly which certainly would have got us past where we are now is that the webs we weave do in fact come back to haunt us when we really want to deceive.

This Immigration Act, Cap 78 Mr. Speaker is more than getting us together voluntarily but he is right that if we don't, we'll be forced to. Perhaps we may even sink, we may even die together. So any attempt that our Government can lend to the process of bringing our people together for an end purpose or to be supported to the extent Mr. Speaker that we recognize the presence of the other important constituent parts that gives real meaning to this Immigration Bill and would speak to those issues in the course of this evening. But the one thing that the Honourable Minister Security was correct on was that any coming together of our people as facilitated by this particular piece of legislation would in fact bring about administrative efficiencies, I think those were his words. It would lead to being more efficacious and I am in agreement with him as well on that, but I disagree fundamentally, that it really a simple matter of a new Act for a new time.

Senator Snagg is therefore quite correct Mr. Speaker when in his words he identifies that the unity that we are speaking about that would be enhanced by this piece of legislation is for the survival of our several peoples. What however the Senator did not share with us Mr. Speaker is how? In typical Caribbean style he did have a good dance around the issues highlighting and

emphasizing the cultural benefits and I don't think there is any value in taking issue with him on that. But when he made the point that we in the Caribbean are a mere drop in the sea by virtue of our size, a certain degree of caution is important and I think it was Prime Minister Arthur, one of our brilliant sons of the region, and to me one who has given genuine direction to the Caribbean at this time, made the point that small as we are in size because of our fair degree of progress over the years, and places like Barbados looms very high in the human development index. We are yet a significant market for many of the first world, and no one in world order must ever misconstrue our smallness of size, to make or to believe that we are going to come to them cap in hand begging for our survival. We are a proud people who are quite satisfied that we can pull ourselves up by the boots strap if we are given fair means to do so for ourselves. However, as the Senator spoke, Senator Snagg that is Mr. Speaker, the historical fusion and cohesion of the mixed races of the region that the Prime Minister speaks about over and over again of this great ennoblement of civilization is important, but it is not, I contend Mr. Speaker, the *raison d'être* for the passage of this Bill seen in the way as presented, that we have got here by all sorts of accidents of history and of mixed races, strides, religion, language, culture, whatever you have, is historical reality. But we as a people have an obligation to develop ourselves beyond what the Prime Minister may recognize and call a punctuated equilibrium approach; that is, we move in leaps and bounds and by chance we get here and we may step up one more step up the ladder, it is much more than that. I think what I understand you want to get the term and I would help you Mr. Number 8, the word is punctuated equilibrium and it suggests whether an organization, or a country, or a state simply moves from one state to the other incrementally but perchance will in the absence of strategic direction, and I'm suggesting to you that I am quite satisfied that the several meetings that the Prime Ministerial Team are having in relation to this Bill, is to move us away from a chance activity and to have what I believe there will be called a strategic view, a long term view of where we as a people in the region can get by carefully and skillfully transforming ourselves. And I think that is most close to the truth. (Inaudible) There is a time when you must sleep and a time when you must listen [laughter] is only a matter of time before you get to the end of that bench you know, so you just have to be careful and know when you are not in the same league. I shouldn't even elevate you to a response but Mr. Speaker I move on. I move on and leave him in the careful hands of Toussaint L'Ouverture, I think he will be more comfortable there.

Let us get on with to the serious business of the House for those who are elected and nominated must do because that is why we are here. At the one time Mr. Speaker there may the distraction that they may want to bring, the Honourable Senator is right to speak about the fact that our individual sovereignty in the region is important. But it is equally important that none of us, who holds sovereignty, hold it so tightly that we lose sight of the greater benefit of the collective wisdom of all of us coming together. And I see the passage of this Bill or the attempt to pass this Immigration Bill is to give real meaning Mr. Speaker to the old adage that there is strength in numbers, but I am not going to be careless, I am not going to be indifferent because it is easy Mr. Speaker in this serious exercise for which this Parliament must be, because many of us can come in here and talk day and talk night without as the Senator said, feel it in the belly. But there are those of us who have invested many years of public sacrifice, time and

monies and energies to get ourselves where we are here now, and while I agree that all of us in this House mean well for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and indeed for our region, it is not patently obvious to me that all of us have the capacity to move and carry this country forward and those therefore who are little less endowed unfortunately must take the time out to listen and learn I dare say. I therefore agree Mr. Speaker; a little spanking is good, Honourable Minister of Social Development,

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Nobody on this side is a child.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: Well the door is open. I do concede.

DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: For my own edification. I am fascinated by the punctuated equilibrium approach. I assume for my own, because I need to understand the English Language if I can grasp the argument that if there is an equilibrium there is a balance and if it is punctuated it is pause, or punctuation is a pause. If it is in a balance and there is a pause, there is no forward movement and you are suggesting that our approach is one which has a forward movement, it means therefore, that there has to be in order for there to be a forward movement from that equilibrium there must be something which causes a disequilibrium to carry it to a higher level of equilibrium in order for it to move forward in stages. So that the notion of a punctuated equilibrium logically, I am trying to understand it, is really at a stand still with just pausing until the contradict element of a disequilibrium carries it at a higher level. I just want to understand the logic behind the formulation.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker I much obliged by the request by the Honourable Prime Minister and his interpretation is in a large measure fairly accurate, but if one was to picture the situation Mr. Speaker, what you would really be looking at if you are looking at the graph Mr. Prime Minister, is a situation in which a country seem to develop in a scar step fashion. It is there today, it jumps to another point, freezes itself for a time period, jumps and continuously. In contrast Mr. Prime Minister and Mr. Speaker, to those societies that are consistently and continuously on a growth path, in other words, it does not stand firm for an indefinite period of time but continues to grow and grow and grow and that is what we are talking about, that is a classic case now for example where the Government is appealing through the unions for example to suggest that we need a wage freeze, we need to pause and stay here for a moment, catch our breath. We can't go forward and that's not the only way and that's not the only approach, we could have easily taken another direction, which we are now trying to address by unfreezing minimum wages etc. in which we are going to allow an increase consumption pattern in the society, but this is not time for an economic lesson we can meet at a side bar Honourable Prime Minister, I get on with my contribution.

I want to say Mr. Speaker against the distraction.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Just a minute, I don't think there is need to shout like that. Honourable Members could you please give him a chance to make his contribution. There is no need for the shouting. It sounds like you are losing your cool. Yes.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, my cool and calm are assured but you know when the occasion is necessary to take off one's jacket and back one's shirt, it will have to happen. The Honourable Senator was quite correct Mr. Speaker when he drew our attention in this Parliament to what is happening in Europe and the development of the Euro dollar, because this is in fact what is closest to the issue. Cultural issues however valid, however important and is CLR James's reference is equally important are not what will make sure that our people in this region, in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines put food in the pot. And what the man on the street what to have answered when we talk to him about the Immigration Bill, is he or she better off by virtue of a piece of legislation because the legislation while it has a lot of pluses does also have the implications for some short term challenges which I would speak to this evening Mr. Speaker, which we would have to surmount and we cannot be indifferent to these eventualities. So in my conclusion with respect to that contribution for the Honourable Senator, it is not now a case, if ever, as he said that, we have been very good in the game of cricket in bettering our colonial masters and what they did, now more than ever through our economic performance we have to rise to the occasion in this new changing world order to demonstrate that we not only can pass legislative actions in our various Parliaments, but we can support them with economic and strategic plans that truly and genuinely advance the welfare of our people. A great civilization therefore Mr. Speaker, must be able to feed, clothe and shelter itself, protect its culture from foreign penetration and we must offer the people a vision of hope or if not prosperity, certainly the Bill must offer them a decent quality of life as we proceed in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. So having made those fairly detailed observations Mr. Speaker on the contributions of the Honourable Minister of National Security and the Senator, I get back to my own submission which emphasizes that this is not at all a new initiative. If anyone at all can claim right of passage in what is taking place here this evening Mr. Speaker, it is Sir James Mitchell. Not a new initiative at all. We therefore have to look at the piece of legislation and ask, whether the relevance of the Bill is in the context of the political union that we are trying to frame in these parts. It is a little difficult Mr. Speaker for me at this distance to determine whether the political imperative is indeed driving the economic requirements of the time or whether it is the other way around, that is, is it the economic imperatives that is driving us to this Immigration Bill to bring us closer. If we go back to the Euro debate Mr. Speaker, I would conclude that essentially it is the economic issues that are now driving the political arguments. We are living in a world now in which we are talking about mega blocks and all sorts of trading blocks. I suspect that if the Prime Ministers of the OECS had their way, this Act as directed would be both to the economic and political imperatives. Indeed, one probably cannot now be separated from the other. I take this approach Mr. Speaker, that in discussing this Bill, we do not leave the bone for the shadow. Put it another way Mr. Speaker, this Act must give real meaning to the social and economic life of all Vincentians and citizens of the OECS alike. We could easily term this Bill, 'the enter and reside' Bill because that is basically what the two passages says. Passage 1, these are the mechanisms for entering a country and

Passage 2, having entered, this is how you can stay in the country, enter and reside. So it's like having your home and having a guest. But any of us who want to welcome a guest into our homes must be sure and understand that there are implications for us for having that guest in our home. They have to share the facilities in our home, they have to share the bathroom, the electricity, the telephone, they have to be fed and they have to be provided for. If people are going to come to our shores and presumably, we also will be free to go to theirs and we haven't heard much about that Mr. Speaker, there is an implication for us, so that while the Bill Mr. Speaker, speaks about the mechanics of the issue, we also have to look at the biology of the actions.

Immigration Mr. Speaker is more than a security concern. It is more than taking care of the prohibited immigrants through specified clauses. There is Mr. Speaker, the issue of how immigration to our parts, to our country, our small limited size and land space affects the labour market dynamics. We are in a situation Mr. Speaker, that a man who comes here from a neighboring country with limited monies may be able to take care of himself for one day, one week or one month and if he doesn't get a job he has to begin to comprise himself and when a Vincentian may want to ask for \$10. per hour or for whatever, or \$40. per day he or she may be quite prepare to take a lower wage to make sure that a decision to move from part A to part B is not a failure. There is a real possibility Mr. Speaker, that in the new labour market dynamics of free movements of labour it can go in either way. We may get skilled people, we may get a surplus in the market but labour wages can be affected in one way or the other.

Mr. Speaker, when a person comes here to live from another Caribbean country, there are implications for the social security of the country for the N.I.S. Do we now, having placed for example portability provisions in the N.I.S that allows him to move from St. Lucia, Grenada, and Dominica and transfer his contribution of that island to the N.I.S here? Or does he or she begin to pay in when they get a job here and simply have their old age provisions taken care of without other considerations? I say that simply to say that all these are issues that have to be addressed Mr. Speaker. There is the issue of health provision. People who are coming in have to be accommodated in our hospitals or health care centres. Indeed, the same happens reciprocally, but there are implications. There are implications for housing availability, for rent and rates, for services of the utilities. Mr. Speaker, there may even be implications for electioneering. How long can a person reside in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines having being able to enter and reside before he or she can go and have his or her name on voters list, and what is the potential for that? I am raising these not as negatives Mr. Speaker, but to suggest

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, if I may just,

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: Let me just finish my statement please Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: No! I am saying if the Honourable Member will give way on a factual matter.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Give way.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Under the existing law the Representation of the people Act, a Commonwealth citizen who resides in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for a year is entitle to vote and he can be, once he is within the electoral district for the six month period, six months, it use to be three months, he can be registered to vote in that particular constituency whether or not you have this Bill and that is the law of the land. So that is not something, for instance the persons, there are a number of people here from Guyana, from Trinidad, from Barbados who voted in successive elections for one party or the other, once they are here for a particular period of time as Commonwealth citizens, they can vote and you can do the same thing if you go to Grenada and live for a year. I think their legislation is pretty much the same. And you can actually run for office, so that is not an implication. I say that because I don't want us to raise new fears about this provision. And that's all I wanted to raise.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: Thank you very much Mr. Prime Minister. Like you I don't want to raise fears because I want to be very positive about this Bill because I thinks it's the way to go, but I am glad that by your question, you are acknowledging that there are issues to be raised. And whether that is one in which we can dismiss and go to sleep comfortably on is fine, but the point is that there is much depth in the Bill and far less brevity than people may want us to believe and that's the purpose for us on this side, to make sure that we are okay and familiar that there are real issues as you like to say, flesh and blood issues that we can press and touch and real answers must be given too. And I hope certainly when I get back the three minutes that I lost a minute ago through the generosity of the Speaker; I'll be able to move on to other issue [laughter].

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, this Bill comes before this House at a time when all is not well in the integration movement. I think those of us in the House would have been relieved today when the Prime Minister said that he was able to nip in bud the potential problem in Tortola, the Visa. I could understand why one more time the Prime Minister didn't take his Deputy into confidence or share the detailed information, so that he had to indicate only a few weeks ago that he did not know, but this is something we are coming accustom to. We have as well Mr. Speaker, the Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados fishing issue, which is a matter of concern for all of us. How can we have Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados being virtually at each other's throats over an issue? Two of closest and most important neighbours, we have to make sure that we are really running in the region on all cylinders. The Bill is coming too Mr. Speaker, when our own Prime Minister is recognizing that there are increased challenges for us in the drugs trafficking business and quite rightly, he has attempted to nip it in the discussion which is equal in Barbados and he is alluding that he is doing the same thing in Tortola. But these things have to be drugs opposed Mr. Speaker with any decision of bringing a Bill. Are our security forces up to speed to deal with these issues? There are challenges and answers must be provided, interdiction. Do we have to strengthen our coast guard services for example or on other coastal patrols?

Mr. Speaker, the Bill is also coming at a time when the region as a whole, we talk about colonialism as if it is gone and disappeared. It is facing new forms of economic colonization. Economic colonization Mr. Speaker, like the Minister of Trade attempting to address yesterday, by calling in people here in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, where through interlocking director is, 'number 8 may want to make a note of that Mr. Speaker,' where through interlocking is Mr. Speaker, we can have all kind of fancy deals being made on the high seas and more and more of the business people in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are marginalized, because all that is left to come to them here in Saint Vincent is the crumbs but the real business is being transacted elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, my fear on this side of the House is that the speed at which we are moving and rightly so Mr. Speaker, and I do not put this problem at the door steps of the Government, is not matched with enterprise and creativity by much of our private sector and Mr. Speaker, I believe that in this process that new productive energies will be necessary, there is a different word to energy, this one is energy. New productive energies from our combined economic base must be mobilized Mr. Speaker to see us through.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I think it is the dynamic energies.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: What Mr. Speaker, thank you for the assistance Prime Minister, but you could have shared that next door [laughter]. Mr. Speaker, I want to say to this Honourable House that while we are prepared to make room and provisions for our brothers and sisters in the neighbouring O.E.C.S countries, charity begins at home and we can't have on the one hand, half of our country unable to work and gain meaningful employment because of victimization and other actions on the part of the Administration while we are at the same time singing a song, 'open sesame, come into my parlour' to our neighbouring brothers. Make sure that the house and the bed we are making up for our neighbours, that those of us who are born and bread here, enjoy the same comfort.

Mr. Speaker, what therefore does this important piece of legislation speak to? It speaker to Mr. Speaker, the question of how we can proceed with important regionalist issues. And Regionalism Mr. Speaker is now the place where the global economy we are dealing is firmly, very firmly compartmentalized into regional trade blocks. In short Mr. Speaker, opening our doors, opening our flood gates to allow our brothers and sisters come into Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to take residence to bring their skills, to bring their expertise would not in and by itself provide an economic panacea for us, it would not take us out of the quagmire, the economic difficulties and challenges. So that any discussion and or debate Mr. Speaker, of an Immigration Bill for us and for our country, must also be proceeded simultaneously with the fundamental economic plan for the transformation of our Caribbean society, of our institutions, of our business practices. This is indeed Mr. Speaker, a time when we are facing very serious challenges and the challenges speak to how well we can restructure or transform our society to face these new regional imperatives. You know I was making a point and it is as fundamental

as this that while business places in Kingstown, many are really are disappearing are seeing their next door neighbour as their competitor the advent of K. Mart in Barbados even with the problems in the United States of America and price club in Trinidad and Tobago is saying to our populist, if we can't go to the United States, the United States will come to us. When you consider some unit of purchase as \$5000 of a fridge or some heavy duty piece of equipment, the time is well nigh that a K. Mart will send a plane to Saint Vincent to transport consumers to Barbados to buy in the same way that the Marketing Board may send a bus to take the goods to little Tokyo. This serious and meaningful competition that we are talking about and if we are not restructuring and preparing ourselves for the most sophisticated competitive environment, we may find that what we are doing, important as it is, is too little to live. Therefore Mr. Speaker, we in this Parliament and we are determined on this side to give support to the Government, recognized that integration issues must shift from inward to outward looking development strategies. And whether you want to hear it or not Mr. Speaker, sorry Mr. Speaker, and whether some of the Honourable Members, my apologies, are prepared to listen or not Mr. Speaker, the theoretical debate and the pragmatic approaches must continue to determine how our potential of a business development resulting from the wider market, that this freedom of movement hopes to achieve will really be a realize. Because I have made a point before in the Budget Speech and maybe I wasn't listened to. Governments create the enabling environments, but it is our firms, our businesses, small, big, medium size entrepreneurs, they are the ones who really create wealth. And I would suspect in the process of saying that Mr. Speaker, that the Governments do have a serious challenge on their hand, because on the one hand there is the notion of the disappearing state which is being preferred by some people, but we recognize increasingly in our small island states that there still continues to be a major guiding hand of the state in bringing our productive forces together. And I am saying that it may not be sufficient Mr. Speaker, simply to have an Immigration Bill and hope that our private sector will capitalize on the freedom of movement in the market but the Government may have to take additional steps to make sure that adequate and appropriate infrastructure is in place to realize these real synergies. I say it a little softly to get the attention.

Mr. Speaker, we have indeed in these parts come a long way. We have moved from a free trade area to a customs union and to a common market. The current logical stage, which I believe that this Bill is addressing Mr. Speaker, is that of an economic union, where as a natural complement to the Bill Mr. Speaker, we have to look at the question of the harmonization of our national economic policies, if the single market that we are talking about is to have real meanings. So that Mr. Speaker, we cannot have an O.E.C.S in which there are three or four beer factories and not a factory producing fruit juices. Well we can redirect our energies. We cannot Mr. Speaker, be operating on a O.E.C.S Region where there is a successful Erica's enterprise with pepper sauce here, but people in St. Lucia, Dominica can't get their pepper sold when through on orchestrated effort, a guiding hand of the Government and a complimentary of the business sector we could have a greater benefit. We cannot be in the regions speaking about freedom of movements Mr. Speaker when in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; coconuts are going to waste and in St. Lucia the same thing, while Dominica is enjoying all sorts of privileges because of their strategic leafage with leaver brothers and other companies. We have

to look and see how we can make sure that is genuine total economic integration that goes hand in hand with the opportunities being provided through an immigration Act. Mr. Speaker, I say that to make the point that we are not far from the point where we are talking about super national bodies which would be in power to make binding decisions and that's where I think the Prime Ministers are heading and in this regard our Prime Minister still has much work to do as an advocate of Caribbean Unity to reconcile his ambivalence as to the role of the Court of Appeal and whether....,

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You have ten minutes.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: Quite in order Mr. Speaker, in ten minutes I'll be able to wrap up. Because that is but one of the several pieces of binding decisions, legislations and communal approach that would be necessary with the advent of this Immigration Bill that is coming to our part.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be a little bit like the Prime Minister for a moment and to refer to some work that he is quite familiar with, the work of Brewster and Thomas, very old work. In the dynamics of the West Indies Integration who spoke rightfully and identify that our integration is limited by our weak linkages. No amount of coming of our people together through Immigration Bills without appropriate linkages between our Agricultural Sector, with our Financial Sector, with our Tourism and with our Human Resource Capacity would transform our societies. We are where we are today in Saint Vincent, in St. Lucia, in Grenada and in Dominica and in St. Kitts, because of a substantial absence of linkages between the various sectors. Dominica is one to date, which has made the greatest progress in this regard notwithstanding its own challenges. And I say this to make the point Mr. Speaker, to the Honourable Prime Minister because I have no doubt in my own heart that he means well for this House, he means well for this Saint Vincent. I have no doubt in my mind; I have questions as to whether he has control of the means. We and your team of Prime Ministers have to be put in at work simultaneously with your human resource teams, your business planners and your economic group to be making sure Mr. Speaker that these legislations are delivering or the people will lose faith in you and in us and in the Parliament and these are real lessons, the real experiences. Argentina Mr. Speaker is a case in point where a whole economy, a whole country, a whole society is gone a mock. I am sure that everybody in the Parliament of Argentina meant well for the society at one time or the other, but where did they go wrong?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: They want to deal with your policy they apply your policy.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: You are still to listen to my policies. Mr. Speaker, Brewster and Thomas argued for a diffusion of attributes of strengths and weaknesses throughout the integral part of the system. I believe that they are still valid today. We cannot Mr. Speaker, survive the challenges of the region solely on the promise of orthodox economic theory, which suggests that free trade maximizes global welfare and this answers and put some

light in the Prime Minister's suggestion. I repeat, we will not get ourselves out of this mess, out of this quagmire through orthodox economic theory, which proposed a free trade maximizes global welfare. It is more than likely Mr. Speaker, that we are reminded that the gains from the integration that we hope that this piece of legislation will bring are both static and dynamic and the static changes that we can expect in the short term are simply marginal in production and in consumption.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: It is impossible to have a static change. It is impossible, it is correct to counter pose static with dynamic, but it is impossible logically to have a static change.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: I said the gains from integration are therefore both static and dynamic, that's what I said. The gains are, that's what I said and the static are marginal in production and consumption and what we need Mr. Speaker is to see how dynamic we can be as a people through integration, emphasis on productivity, emphasis on economic growth, external economies as a result of factors outside of the firms, that is on our part, great use of technological change which the Minister of Technology may or may not support. Sourcing of factors of production inter-regionally, and I spoke and give hints of some of them how we could combine our economic base to get a better result using our competitive whips and making sure that we explore fully as we could Mr. Speaker, the value chain.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt whatsoever that those of us on this side of the House appreciate and understand the need for a closer Caribbean. But the approach to the development of the region Mr. Speaker must be holistic. It is not a matter of coming into the Parliament and seeming to be handing out berries from the low branches, so that we appear to be doing a lot by tinkering here and tinkering there and as I said in the Budget, a little mascara there and some elsewhere. It means Mr. Speaker that while you are doing this important legislative work that the real work must be proceeding a pace so that the peoples of these parts feel that at the end of the day as a result of their sweat and tears that they and their child will live a better quality of life. I therefore thank you Mr. Speaker for the time and I am much obliged while supporting this passage through this House. Thank you.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Trade.

HONOURABLE MR. LOUIS STRAKER: I thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker I would be very brief and probably would have no need for the lectern. I have listened to what Senator Leacock might call a very eloquent speech and I hate to follow him because Mr. Speaker, I can hardly respond to what he said because half of his words I can't interpret. Either he has a speech impediment or he has false teeth that seem to be joggling in his mouth and his shouting so much that I end up with a headache.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Minister you are to be mindful of the rules.

HONOURABLE MR. LOUIS STRAKER: Yes, I am mindful of the rules, that I am not offensive, I am just giving the facts that following him I have a headache because he hallows too much. I want to make sure that I communicate with the people of this country that when I speak they understand what I say and I don't have to try and impress anybody, because I have a couple degrees behind my name. And I am standing here because I can communicate with the people. I have heard the Senator this morning referring to disrespect being shown to one another in this House and within a matter of hours I heard him disrespecting the elected representative of the people of North Windward. Telling him he should be asleep and it's an insult for him even to answer him.

Mr. Speaker, the reason why he is not in the same league is because the member for North Windward offered himself and can communicate with the people of North Windward to get elected and I challenge the Senator to do likewise [Applause] he would never be elected by any constituency in this country because he can't communicate with people. And so when he tries to disrespect the member there, he must realize that the member was sent here by people and he got in here through the back door as a junior senator and he must learn to curb his abusive tongue in taking advantage of people who was sent here to represent other people.

Mr. Speaker, we are talking about an amendment to an Act call the Immigration (Restriction) Act. And as I looked at the Act Mr. Speaker, I noticed that this Act commencement February 23rd 1939. Much has happened through the years and we are talking about Immigration (Restriction) Act and the restriction goes to those who come from afar as well as those who come from within the region. And I am very happy, I don't like, I am not a man worshiper, but this I would say that we have a Prime Minister who has come like St. George in shining armour and is willing to pierce the political veil and cross the political divide, he has been pushing this issue of deepening the integration process in the Caribbean here for a long time and I had gone to a conference recently where I have espoused the cause of a Caribbean Integration and a certain ambassador from a certain country said well that's a Saint Vincent thing, that's not for us. Because it is widely known that it is the Prime Minister and the Government of Saint Vincent that has been pushing this thing. There are people who have advanced the cause, I am not saying that James Mitchell didn't, but in recent times and in terms of success for his effort, I must commend the Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. [applause] because what we are doing here is to loosen up the restriction in the Act and allow our brothers and sisters from the Caribbean Islands, some of the O.E.C.S Territories to come to our shores without the restrictions that are in the old Act.

Mr. Speaker, I think that this is one of the most important pieces of legislation being brought before this House since the dissolution of the federation, very significant, small in size. It is like Mr. Speaker those giant plates that are under the earth that we are told that move imperceptibly, but at some time or the other you have seismic disaster, a terrible earthquake because the gentle movement culminated a massive movement and a convulsive earthquake and this is the piece of legislation that would create such a dynamic situation in the Caribbean,

beginning with a few territories and beginning with this Bill when the other territories of the O.E.C.S bring this into effect and from there we spread out like ripples so that we can have a meaningful and a deeper integration process in the Caribbean.

Mr. Speaker the Bill is simple, and I must say that sometimes it is not the bubbles or the waves that come on top the sea is the one that drown the man, it is those massive movements of current underneath that when it takes hold of you, you go down and you never rise again. And so it is with this Bill that there are movements underneath, it's going to create a movement underneath that would create tremendous effect throughout the Caribbean and would bring into effect the kind of integration that all of us have been longing for in this part of the world.

Mr. Speaker for years since the dissolution of the Federation, there are those who have attempted in one form or the other to deepen the integration process. I know Sir James Mitchell has done his bit without much success and I know Mr. Speaker, I for one I have been saying from the time I returned here all my taste when I came back here from with the old Labour Party being interviewed, I was saying it make all the sense in the world for us to come together in some kind of integration process here in the Caribbean. We cannot remain as separate little lilies in a pond, we cannot remain as isolated islands just drifting and being carried about by the vicissitudes of life. We need to come together even as the major countries of the world, we have the NAFTA agreement which brings together North America, that is Canada and the United States and Mexico, we have the European Union, we have several major countries coming together and yet we as small islands in the Caribbean, while the objective factors are there that would lead us into a greater integration, we are just tinkling and moving at a glacial pace and we seem not to want to lose our little turf and the power that we have. And I am glad that this piece of legislation has come here for certainly, men like Marishew in Grenada and George Mc Intosh in Saint Vincent as well as Milton Cato, men like Dr. Carl Larvaneir, men like Le Blan in Dominica, Vere Bird, Robert Bradshaw, William Bramble all those who had worked hard for the old Federation, they will be glad to know that there is some movement a foot, however small it is, however imperceptible it is there is move a foot to what's deepening the integration process. I know that there are various institutions that have brought some measure of integration, cricket other forms, we have the courts that they have brought us some form of togetherness. But we have been longing to have that togetherness where the peoples would move together as one mass. We have had some form of integration as it were trickling down but this is the first time that we are going to have a mass movement where our brothers and sisters from the various Caribbean Islands can come together, move freely on our shores and feel at home in Saint Vincent as they are in Dominica or St. Lucia. It is unfortunate that some of our Caribbean brothers and sisters in the other islands, their Leaders are not as vigorous or vociferous in their espousal of this form of Caribbean Integration and it seems to be temporizing and move in such a tentative way as if they are moving without conviction. And this is why I have to give credit to our Prime Minister, because he was prepared that if it took Saint Vincent alone to go with this piece of legislation he would have done it and let the others follow. But I am glad that come the beginning of March, that there would be other islands

joining us in this great movement that we can at least begin to move from one island state to the other without some of the restrictions in the old Bill.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill speaks of the purpose of the Bill, the object of the Bill speaks of enabling the free movements of O.E.C.S Nationals within the O.E.C.S and in order to accomplish this we have to amend the old legislation. And the old legislation, the old Act is amended here under Cap. 78 where we are amending section 5 dealing with passports, heretofore a passport was an absolute necessity for in sub-paragraph 5(1), it says, 'a person entering Saint Vincent and the Grenadines without a passport shall be deemed to be a prohibited immigrant.' Now with this amendment Mr. Speaker, a person entering Saint Vincent and the Grenadines from the O.E.C.S countries would not have to have a passport and if they come without a passport, they would no longer be a prohibited immigrant. And the Bill says that notwithstanding the provisions of subsection 2, a citizen of any Member State of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States may establish his identity and nationality with an identity card in the form of a driver's licence or national identification card, both with a photograph and duly issued or renewed and valid for the period of his intended stay in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. So we have gotten rid of one of the restrictions that whereas heretofore, you had to have a passport to enter, we can now travel with a valid driver's licence and an identity card. So that our brothers and sisters from the various O.E.C.S countries can come here and we can go to their countries without the need of a passport, with just a driver's licence and the National Identification Card. What we need to do Mr. Speaker, is to go a little further and some of these forms that we have to fill out we need to get rid of some of them. I believe that it is in St. Lucia that when you leave St. Lucia, you don't have to fill out one of these cards that we currently have to fill out when we leave Saint Vincent.

Mr. Speaker, I think this goes even beyond what obtains when we had the West Indies Federation. Because there was no freedom, this kind of freedom of movement, but here we are going beyond that. Moving at a pace that would hopefully would enable us to broaden this integration process and get beyond where we were when we had the West Indies Federation. The other section that is being amended Mr. Speaker is paragraph 18 and paragraph 18 is amended by inserting after paragraph 4, the paragraph 5, notwithstanding anything contain in the sectioned, a citizen in the Member State of the O.E.C.S shall be entitled. Here we have an entitlement to enter or remain and work in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines except where he is a prohibited immigrant under the Act or where his permit to enter or remain in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has been revoked under section 21 of this Act. So this enables, entitles someone to enter here and to remain here with the valid identification, their driver's licence and they can stay for an extended period of time.

Mr. Speaker, if foreigners can come to our shores with a driver's licence why is it that our own Caribbean people, people from the O.E.C.S cannot come here with the same type of identification and accept them freely?

Mr. Speaker, by January 2003 it is hoped that we would have an O.E.C.S passport, even though the various countries would be on the passport. For example it would be an O.E.C.S passport but it would have the countries on the passport, identifying the countries from they come or this would be a step in the right direction towards deepening the integration process.

Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the Opposition Members have indicated that they would support the Bill and I am glad that most of the legislation brought here that we are getting the support regardless of the arête rate, they know that this Government is a Government of action. They know that we are taking the initiative and I would suspect that many of them are envious of the Members of the Government here. They must be telling themselves, why after seventeen years sitting in Government, they could not accomplish a small percentage of what we in less than one year can accomplish. And they must be blaming themselves that they appear backward and inefficient in not being able to do the things. That's why every piece of legislation they jump up and they say we support you, they have no choice but to support it because they know what we are doing is right. It is just that they were incompetent and they did not have the initiative to bring these things into fruition and therefore they must sit as lonely ducks over there and wish that they were here to enjoy the benefits of what we are doing here because truly this country has been blessed in having a U.L.P Government [applause] what we have done in the past few months that we have been in office we are the envy not only of the Opposition, they would never say that, a certain strong supporter of the Government told the Leader of the Opposition, that he gave, a strong supporter, he calls in all the time on the radio programmes sometimes opposing us vigorously but he told the Leader of the Opposition that he gave the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance 8 out of 10 for his Budget presentation. And he quarrel with the gentleman, saying, 'how could you that giving him 8 out of 10', he said, 'yes, it was a good presentation.' And so there are many N.D.P supporters who are saying you people are doing a tremendous job but they would not admit it in public.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: You are dreaming.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: No, I am not dreaming, you know whom you told that to. Yes you told that to somebody.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: What about what Carlyle told him?

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Yes, what did Carlyle tell you?

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: What did I tell Carlyle?

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Yes.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: I did not tell him anything.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: He stop talk to Carlyle [laughter].

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: He never tell you anything.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: No it wasn't him, I didn't say he told me that, I am just repeating what the Leader of the Opposition; I said it is somebody who calls in on the talk show. But Mr. Speaker I must commend my colleague here, the Minister of National Security for this piece of legislation and I must say that this Government is going in the right direction and the Opposition has seen that otherwise, they would not indicate that they are following us in supporting this piece of legislation. They could have done it but they didn't do it as well as the other piece of legislation with National Heroes. They sat on this for years and they couldn't do it. They told us this morning, yes we would support you and I know they would support the measures. Most of the measures we bring here, they have no choice, they know that the Government is going in the right direction. They may talk to rally their few faithful people around them in order to throw something to give them a little hope but they know that this Government is a Government of action. We can deliver to the people [applause] what you have failed to do in seventeen years is what we are doing here in a few months. And this is another aspect of it and I must commend our Prime Minister. I have gone with the Prime Minister to several countries in the Caribbean including Margarita Isle. When we went together at Rosie Douglas funeral and when I saw this Prime Minister how he was received and I may say almost idolize by the people of Dominica, after his speech that was so well received and the people treated him as though he were a great celebrity, I told him, I said, 'Prime Minister you have to take care of yourself, because you are the most precious asset we have, not only in Saint Vincent but in the region.' And I told him if there is anybody who would bring about a significant change in terms of integration in the Caribbean, it would be this man because he knows how to communicate with people, he knows how to mix with people, he knows how to talk to people and he has the right message for our people in these times. And so I must commend our Prime Minister for doing a tremendous job not only in terms of giving vision to this Government, not only in terms of enacting several of the things that some of the Opposition Members said were impossible to do, he has provided the leadership. I would not say that I am worshipping at his feet, but I tell you it is a tremendous pleasure to walk side by side with him and the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, said that I am number 8, but I tell you I will be number 12 because if there is any move at all to remove this Prime Minister, I would be the last one to say remove him because this country deserve this Prime Minister [applause]. Had it not been for this Prime Minister, we would not be where we are today [applause]. We are making tremendous progress despite the fact that you have given us such a bad hand. Had it not been for the leadership, the intellectual ability, and the energy of this Leader? If the N.D.P had gotten back in power, what we would have had is a continuation of the legacy of more higher unemployment, greater poverty, lower per capita income, but we are moving in the right direction all over the Caribbean. Our Leader is recognized as a Leader nobody recognizes Arnhim Eustace or the Leader of the Opposition as a Leader even when he was Prime Minister in the same vein that they would our Prime Minister here, nobody. And so it is God send that he rescue, he put you in the Opposition and put a man who can lead this country forward and I thank God that we have this piece of legislation to carry us forward, not only here in Saint

Vincent but throughout the Caribbean. Long live the peoples of the Caribbean. May we have greater integration and may our Leader, God bless him with health and energy so that he can go on and carry on the great job in leading not only this country but in giving his talent and his Leadership to the region. I thank you.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Any further debate Honourable Leader of the Opposition?

HONOURABLE MR. ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, we have had a fairly long debate on this Bill. I don't propose Mr. Speaker to add any great length. I would just like to make a few comments. First of all to my Honourable friend the last speaker. There is a little rhyme that I remember and it goes something like this, is a long time, little Tommy tucker, sang for his supper.

HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE: Sings, he sings.

HONOURABLE MR. ARNHIM EUSTACE: He sang, you don't tell me what to quote.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: That's exactly what you should sing in the rhymes

HONOURABLE MR. ARNHIM EUSTACE: I can understand your problem.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: I don't have a problem you have a one.

HONOURABLE MR. ARNHIM EUSTACE: You have to sing for your supper.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: You have to sing for James Mitchell

HONOURABLE MR. ARNHIM EUSTACE: You have to sing for your supper and therefore you find yourself that every time you get up on this floor of this Honourable having to sing for your supper.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Yes every time. You have to sing for yours and it put you in Opposition

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: And I realize that while you are a Seventh Day Adventist and you have your obligations to the God you serve you must make sure you don't water that down in any way.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Well you still sang but you didn't get any supper [laughter].

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Anyhow, that doesn't change the fact that you are singing for your supper all the time.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: At least I have been given my supper you got none.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker sometimes when I listen to debates in this House, it seems to me that the world, not Saint Vincent, the world began with the U.L.P.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: great change, great change.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: The world began there was nothing before, nothing existed. We have gone back to Genesis and when something is good that the N.D.P does or did it isn't mentioned, it is passed over and presented as something new and when there was a mistake by the N.D.P then that is the focus of all attention.

Mr. Speaker on March 28 despite having only three seats in this Honourable House the N.D.P got 41% of the votes in this country, 41% of the votes in this country. So this party Mr. Speaker represents a significant portion of the people in this country.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: You have between 20 and 25 thousand.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Well that is you and your reckoning.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I told you that the last time.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: That is your reckoning I don't pay much attention to that.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: You should have paid it the last time.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I have sat here meeting after meeting in this House in the last nine months and I have listened to all of the various comments. We have different styles. Mr. Leacock made a presentation, which I thought went to the meat of a lot of the matters, that this Bill is dealing with and I believe that the Prime Minister himself recognizes that. My friend of course, he cannot..., as a matter of fact he tap me in the back when I he was going outside, you understand what he is saying? I said, 'yes' and Mr. Speaker that is part of our problem. But I won't have much to say about that, I am satisfied that the Honourable Senator Leacock has a very clear grasp of the issues that confront us in relation to this Bill and while he gave his support to the measure, he pointed to the implications of the measure which is what is important for the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. They can understand if somebody else gets their job, that they can understand and what he was saying is that there are implications for our people coming out of this measure. He pointed to the fact that he doesn't want to scare anyone; he said there are certain realities that arise because of this. You see it is all well and good to pass the Bill. It is equally important Mr. Speaker, that implications are understood. The New Democratic Party has always supported the question of integration in this region, always. Last night I was looking back at the manifesto of 1979 and there is a whole section here on Caribbean Unity and Integration.

Mr. Speaker, the point I am trying to make here is that this is a process that will be ongoing. It has been ongoing for many years. I attended my first meetings of CARICOM Mr. Speaker, in 1970 that is thirty odd years ago.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: [inaudible]

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: No, well is 73 CARICOM came in, but it started by regional meeting, if you want to put it that way, in 1970. Lot of the issues that we discussed today was discussed then in this region. So progress has not been fast and indeed Mr. Speaker it seems to me that external circumstances will determine the pace at which we operate. Because throughout this region there are many people despite all the talk and the blaming of politicians for every issue in relation to integration there are many of our citizens who are not particularly interested and that is why you have reticence and reservations on the part of some Governments, even today. But we have made some progress over the years Mr. Speaker in the O.E.C.S. We have a common currency that is important, very, very important. We have some commonality in our court system. We have Mr. Speaker other areas of cooperation, technical cooperation. We share directorships Mr. Speaker in regional and international institutions. And all these are part of the integration process but all be it piece meal. We have a common external tariff and Saint Vincent, I repeat, Saint Vincent is the only country in the O.E.C.S that implement it fully and first, the provision of the common external tariff. Saint Vincent is the country that implemented the regional decision in relation to cruise ship passengers some years ago. And in many cases you have taken the first bite and we have suffered because others did not follow. Today we are trying again and we are taking the first bite in this piece of legislation Mr. Speaker, which is aimed at allowing O.E.C.S Nationals to come to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines without their passports. Does any other country this time have this legislation before their Parliament? Are we convinced that there will be reciprocity in this matter? Because we have heard that before, we have heard of it before and sometimes we have been burnt. But is a process that we have to continue with. We on this side of the House don't have any problem Mr. Speaker in continuing with that process. So if you want to make light work of our support, that's okay. We support it because we believe it is something that should be done. Not because you are doing it, so I want you to understand that. There were measures before within the same direction and right now you know that Antigua has faulted on this matter and they have given their reasons. They may sound logical but the reality is that they have faltered. And I hope Mr. Speaker that no other countries falter in between I sincerely hope so.

Mr. Speaker as someone who has been involved in the regional integration movement for over thirty years, not only here in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, but also at the Caribbean Development Bank. As a matter of fact my first job here Mr. Speaker, first time I was given an appointment was deemed with regional affairs, that was my area of work and I continued in that for many years. And in all the discussion tonight Mr. Speaker, I have not heard a single thing said which was not said 20, 30 years ago. But times are changing because that world in which we are living outside there has changed rapidly over the last 10, 15 years. And we always said

that we are reacting rather being proactive and I am saying the present efforts Mr. Speaker are reflection of the realities that we now face externally otherwise we will not have Governments lining up to pass this legislation. Let us not fool ourselves about that, there is no altruism here Mr. Speaker. This is a matter of countries beginning to recognize that the pressure externally is forcing us into certain actions. It is sad to say so, but that is the reality. It is the same pressure that has us focus and trying to restructure the banana industry. Is the same pressure Mr. Speaker that has us looking at our shipping and all the other activities that we are carrying out today. Is the same pressure that is helping us look at the offshore finance sector. As times change, and as the richer and more powerful countries try to impose their will, we can't deny that, we can't deny it at all. That is the reality that we face and what Senator Leacock was trying to point out, is that in that kind of environment, while it is important to take these measures we have to look at the overall situation. We have to look as to whether the Private Sector will perform, we have to look as to whether they would want to try and offer jobs to people who we are allowing in, in preference to our own people who may be similarly qualified because they might be able to get them at lower wages. These are things that we have to look at, but those are not sufficient conditions to say you should not do it. That is what he was saying, that is what he was talking about. We have to look to the cost for our social services, the health system, the education system of having people here for prolonged periods of time but it is important. That is what people want to know about, they want to have an assurance, they want to have an assurance that they not going to be worse off because of it. Nothing wrong with that, with all that is behind this legislation. All these are implications of the legislation. So he is not talking about any pie in the sky, he is talking sense.

Mr. Speaker at the present time we are discussing this legislation in good faith Mr. Speaker and you heard the Prime Minister this morning in a statement on the B.V.I. A country, which has been associating itself with our region, they have been doing that. They have been associating themselves and now they are taking a decision to impose Visa restrictions on Nationals of our country. That decision was taken. What the Prime Minister said this morning is that it has been held back. That doesn't mean that it was not taken. What I will wish to say Mr. Speaker is what led them to want to take such a decision? Here we all are talking about regional unity towards movement of people in our region. What will want them, what will cause them to want to discriminate in this way against nationals of this country? When so many of our national are working in that country making a contribution [Interjection] there are many reasons and I am going to give my reasons. I am giving all the reasons what I think. I will give the reasons I think.

Mr. Speaker, over the last couple of years, countries in this region have become concerned, deeply concerned about our role, in this country, in the drug trade. During election campaign here in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines that was an issue. I myself in my presentations made reference to the role of the then Leader of the Opposition who is now Prime Minister, his role in the defence of persons involve in the activity. I understand his legal answer because everybody supposes to have someone to defend them. But I believe that has implications for our country. He no longer does it but he is now Prime Minister of our country and I am concerned Mr.

Speaker that the executive council, which is headed by the Government, which means we dealing with a colony of the United Kingdom. I am concerned as to what the position of the Government of the United Kingdom is on that particular issue. Are they part of that decision, and if so why so? They are colony. Can the B.V.I Executive Council headed by the Governor make certain decisions without the knowledge of the Government? Can they make certain decision? I will like to hear that the decision is not held back but it is changed, because I am not at all satisfied that it can't be implemented later on. And I don't believe that the recent effort by a criminal element there to get to Saint Vincent by a charter plane is a good thing. And I am very glad that the local police caught them before they can get anywhere. All these are factors that are impacting Mr. Speaker and sometimes it makes you wonder whether you fall in the integration movement, but the reality is that you have no choice. The reality is that we do not have a choice. Whether we do it voluntarily or not it doesn't matter it will be forced upon us. The Prime Minister himself has pointed out on several occasions in this Parliament, several occasions that we have to respond, we have to respond to those external factors that are impacting upon us. Because let's face it, if this region does not get its act together, we will all sink together.

Senator Snagg was very right in his presentation. He put it in his own style, but he was very right. We have to place this thing in the context of what globalisation is doing to our world, what it is doing to small open island economies like our own and therefore you must see the movement of nationals in that general context between all respective countries. He was very right and I had no difficulty at all with that presentation. Because that is how we have to see this and that is why we support it because we understand why it is so. We understand it fully because if one wanted to be difficult or demagogic you could simply say to the public, boy fellar going to take way you jobs you know and therefore we can't support that legislation, that would have been easy to say. But we recognized that for the survival of our region, for the survival of our own country it is important that we make every effort to improve the regional integration process. I notice the Member for Central Leeward that he use the word, 'deepening' I see you are getting familiar with the jargon and Mr. Speaker that is what we have to do, deepen that integration process. But you see I have been hearing that for many, many years. And I have a certain level of healthy skepticism at the pace that we would move if we do not fail the external pressure. Because believe it or not it seems that every country is interested in maintaining its own backyard. We have had all sorts of endorsing schemes in this region. We have the scheme for the rationalization of industry in the O.E.C.S. I remember going to the meeting with Ebenezer Joshua when they were deciding to allocate industries to various O.E.C.S countries and Saint Vincent was allocated flour and mufflers in that meeting to serve the entire O.E.C.S market. But the flour was a success and the mufflers were disaster. We were allocated to be the sole producer and supplier of mufflers to the O.E.C.S market since in the 1970's. That is the same time that other countries were given other activities where they would be the sole, but as the economic pressures built, people went and got into activities which other countries had been allocated in their own national interest. I remember Mr. Joshua fell asleep in the meeting and someone, I think it was Antigua made a move to remove flour from the list for Saint Vincent. I had to nudge him, I say Mr. Joshua, they taking away flour. That is all I had to

say and he just let loose, they say they taking away the flour. I say these things Mr. Speaker to say to this Honourable House that what we are discussing here today is not new, it is necessary but it is not new. And we go come back to it you know, we will come back to it again, because that is how the process sometimes move. So as important as it is, Mr. Speaker and I think all of us Mr. Speaker are seize of the importance, important as it is one has to be eternally optimistic given the history of the integration movement in our region. You cannot let go that optimism, because we can't survive without it. That is the simple reality.

Mr. Speaker, reference was made to the role of the private sector. And I think Mr. Leacock referred to the role of global trade in world welfare. The assumption underline Mr. Speaker is that all private sector, because trade is not done by Governments, trade is done by firms and the underlining assumption there Mr. Speaker is that we have the firms that want to do that trade or that we can attract those firms to our shores to carry out those types of activities, but is that so? Can small open island economies at this point in time simply say well the private sector is the engine of growth and therefore Government should step aside? I don't think we can say that now. Even if one wanted to embrace that ideology you would have to do it with a great degree of caution and with reservations because we know all too well how important the role of the State is in small open island economies. So we have to take it little by little. I am saying the State has to play a role and it will continue to play a major role for sometime.

Mr. Speaker so in this piece of legislation we would be having nationals from other O.E.C.S countries coming to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on a driver's licence or their national identification card with a photograph. And the rationale for the photograph has been explained already by the Minister for National Security. We on this side of the House Mr. Speaker accept that amendment to Cap. 78. And in similar vein Mr. Speaker, we accept the amendment to section 18.

Well Mr. Speaker, it is sometimes very difficult to continue to have optimism after 30 years of dealing with the same issues over and over again. I want to say to this Honourable House that I in my capacity as Leader of the Opposition and in my personal capacity, say clearly that we have to go this way. But in doing so we must make it clear to our fellow citizens the implications, and must make it clear that we really have to do it. You know in another time it would have been easy to take the opposite way, but I have said at the opening of Parliament here that anytime legislation is presented in this House, which I believe is in the interest of the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines I will support it. If I do not believe so, I will oppose it and if it is generally acceptable and the areas, which I think, should be amended I will make proposals for those amendments. And I think Mr. Speaker that is the responsible thing to do. So I listened to the comments that this side of the House is supporting everything that the Government has but I am waiting for return of one or two pieces of legislation, which came here before which we did not support. You know we hear a lot of talk Mr. Speaker about together now, this is the way forward and at the same time that we are hearing that Mr. Speaker, we are hearing a lot of other things, which go in the opposite direction. We see a number of other actions being taken into our society, which go in a completely different direction. So I

don't know what it means, I never understood what it meant in the first case because there is no action has been taken that has satisfied me that that is a serious matter. And I want to make that plain that is my position on this matter.

Mr. Speaker the New Democratic Party, Members of the Opposition supports this measure and will say to the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines that it should be supported. And we expect that the facts would be laid before them so that they can fully understand despite the implications or possible implications, this is a measure that must be taken. Much-obliged Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members. I am yet again very pleased that the Opposition supports an important part of the legislative programme of the U.L.P Government [applause]. I think that it is unfortunate this evening that we don't have members of the press here listening, not one. I hope that they are listening on radio because this is a path-breaking piece of legislation. It is of immense importance and I am hopeful that many of our citizens are listening.

Mr. Speaker it is true to say that those successive Governments in Saint and the Grenadines since universal adults suffrage, Mr. Joshua's, Mr. Cato's, Sir James's, Mr. Eustace's Administration, the Leader of the Opposition Administration, that each of these Governments in one way or another has supported the deepening of regional integration. Sometimes some measures and initiatives have been taken where the ground was not sufficiently prepared and therefore they faltered. Because in anything you are doing in politics the change has to be managed [applause]. You have to be able to carry what the market can bear. You can't lag behind the people. You can't go too far ahead of them, but you at the same time must lead and get them to go in the right direction and if you get them to go in the right direction, very swiftly they come with you galloping. And I think that is something, which this Government has learnt, and I certainly have learnt it in all my years in politics and in life. Sometimes, you go to an objective by way of zigzags among and amiss a multitudes of contradictions, that is the nature of the real world. But your eyes always fixed on a strategic objective. To analyse carefully where you are and how do you manage the change to get to where you want to go. And when you involve not only your own population, but several other populations, the exercise becomes even more complex. And it is true that many failures along the path of integration themselves constitute an occasion for timidity by some persons, because you want to get it right and you don't want to fail yet again. But you cannot be so timid, so cautious that you are paralysed that you have no action, because if that is the case, may as well we do not lead.

What is the extant situation Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, of the integration movement in the region? I think it will be fairly true to say, that when one analyses the situation, you see a series of concentric circles. Outer concentric circles of lesser integration leading to inner

concentric circles of tighter integration, and the important thing is to ensure that between each of those elements of the integration movement, each of these concentric circles there is a point of contact. And that there is a dynamism in those points of contact. So for example Mr. Speaker, we have the Association of Caribbean States, which is an outer ring in the concentric circle. It addresses four questions largely. What may be called the four 'Ts', Trade, Tourism, Transport and Technology. It consists of all the Caribbean countries and others which are washed by the Caribbean sea in Latin America, Mexico, Columbia, Venezuela and so on and so forth and of course it includes Cuba, the Dominican Republic. And then you have CARICOM. CARICOM has moved from the stage of a free trade area and it evolved in a mixed way with a custom union into a common market. And In some respects it is not quite yet a common market and we are seeking to move it to a single market and economy. But that level of integration has a point of contact with the Association of Caribbean States, with the elements of Tourism and Technology and Trade and Transport. And within CARICOM itself, there is a mechanism like the regional negotiating machinery, which addresses the large questions of trade negotiations with the W.T.O with the European Union, the Coutonou Agreement and also now the other theatre of trade negotiations coming on stream in the free trade area of the Americas. And in the regional negotiating machinery you have the CARICOM countries all of them belong to it, but also Cuba and the Dominican Republic, which are States within the Association of Caribbean States. And then you have the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, which came into being by the Treaty of Basseterre in 1981. And that itself was an out growth of an old WISA, West Indies Associated States arrangement. And in some respects the O.E.C.S arrangements, the Treaty of Basseterre contemplates both functional integration and an elementary confederal apparatus. A confederal apparatus in the sense that there are certain essential functions to a State which are dealt with at the O.E.C.S level. And let us examine what we have and how this Bill which we are presenting today fits in to what we have and where we want to go and then you will see the strategic objective.

At the moment Mr. Speaker, Honourable Member, there is first of all a common currency. The European Union, which is further along the road than we are in some elements of integration, like for instance freedom of travel, passport arrangements, doing away with work permits, a European Parliament, a Confederal Arrangement with a President every six months and certain core functions attached to the European union. But in other respects, they have not been as integrated as we have been in the O.E.C.S, they have only come recently with a common currency and importing countries. For example the United Kingdom, they outside of the currency union, they do not have Euro. But we have the E.C dollar and we have a central bank. Now when your monetary policies are decided centrally that is a critical element of economic union, but it is also an element, which is missing from your own individual sovereignty though your sovereignty is in some respect enlarged because you pool it. It may sound contradictory but that is the reality. And that is why I say we move in contradictory ways.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it means therefore that the central economic policy elements that we have are general policy of economic development and public sector investment programmes, but the instruments, which remain are largely fiscal. But even here we are beginning to attempt to

coordinate our fiscal responses. Like for instance, we are seeking to have a common fiscal response to Cable and Wireless. That's not the only area, but that is one and that's a big one because Cable and Wireless provides in taxes I think \$10 million per year.

Mr. Speaker then there is also in addition to a common currency in the central bank, a vital institution in good governance. The essential legal system, high court, court of appeal, privy council, appellate, final appellate jurisdiction. And Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, there is a coordination at the level of the Magistracy even though there is not a common Magistracy. It's almost high bred because the judicial and legal services commission would make the appointments to the Magistracy, but essentially, they are determined contractually by the individual territories. So that's another important institution, the judiciary. So we have the currency and the bank, we have the judiciary. We have a regional security system, which includes the O.E.C.S countries plus Barbados where we seek to coordinate our defense arrangements and our security arrangements against external threats but also against particular threats to the security of the States internally. That's another dimension.

We have Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, ECTEL where we are now in the process of liberalization of the Telecommunication Sector, which is vital in this century, we have common positions. Licences, application for licences are made to the National N.T.R.C's, they are sent on to ECTEL, ECTEL makes the assessments and the recommendations and we will issue the licences in the respective countries. But there is a coordinating council of Ministers in ECTEL where there is an arrangement, which is arrived at. Minister Thompson goes tomorrow, to Grenada I believe, St. Lucia to address matters relating to the licensing in this liberalized period, well partially liberalized period. So there is ECTEL. We purchase pharmaceuticals in bulk. We have very importantly an O.E.C.S education strategy and yesterday at Cabinet we discussed elements of this with the officials from the Ministry of Education. That's how we conduct our business, you don't just send us a paper, and you come in person and let us interact, all of us. There is the matter of civil aviation, there is a common authority for civil aviation, and there is a common authority also for disaster management and disaster preparedness. The, of course for tertiary institutions, we have the University of the West Indies, though that is not an O.E.C.S based institution, it's wider than the O.E.C.S. We have through CARICOM, which has super-ceded certain economic arrangements within the economic ECCM area where you have a common external tariff and where we have deepening trading arrangements between our respective countries.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, these institutions, which are set up, sometimes they have difficulties. Like for instance, the Common External Tariff and the CARICOM arrangements generally. For instance, there is an article 56 protection. Our flour and that of Grenada because the O.E.C.S did these two flour Bills, until the year 2006 flour should not go into any O.E.C.S country other than from Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada. We had Antigua, the country doesn't know about this. I didn't speak about it because I didn't want to have any hiccups with Antigua publicly. I resolved the matter privately it presented a real threat to the Flour Mill. Because Antigua purchases 20% of our production, Saint Vincent consumes 30%.

And this is not a matter, which would have only affected employment, but the price of electricity since the Flour Mill is such a large consumer of electricity and would keep the unit price lower because of their high consumption. And Antigua give licences to two forty foot container loads. The first load when I heard about it I spoke to the Prime Minister, necessary communication, some of it firm but polite as you would expect. They were from Trinidad, as you would expect that I would in those circumstances in protecting the interest of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines within the framework of article 56. And after the first container came and was distributed in Antigua, I was assured that no more will come, then a second forty foot container went from Trinidad and then I was told, "well the licence still had contemplated two containers and once they had been granted they couldn't pull because contractual arrangements had been made." Of course I didn't that and I pointed certain inaccuracies there and the Flour Mill here on its own then in trying to resolve the matter from their own stand point and to keep their volumes started to sell flour to Trinidad at a price below what they would sell in Antigua. Because you have to keep you volumes up and put a mark on the bags saying, "not for re-export," and lo and behold some enterprising businessman with some contact in Antigua but from Trinidad re-exported that flour from Trinidad and was selling it on the Antiguan market below the price which the flour went directly to Antigua and all these are problems which have been resolved. But it is a dynamic situation. It doesn't mean because there are rules and regulations, there would not be hiccups and difficulties. So long as there are mechanisms to have them resolved and that you don't panic and there is no sense of crisis. You deal with them calmly and resolutely.

I have given this picture Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members; the only element, which has been missing, is the question of the movement of labour. We have seen here a capital market they didn't set up. We passed the legislation since we came into office, The Eastern Caribbean Stock Exchange, and that has been launched, but nothing on labour. So if you wish to move to an economic union and to deepening the political confederation and making it a substantial confederation, you have to have people moving. And that's where I disagree with Senator Leacock in his analysis where he was suggesting that this is just tinkering. And I think that part of the analysis was weak and that this does not address the issue of diffusion of strengths and weaknesses into the whole system when he quoted C. Y. Thomas, Professor Thomas and Professor Havluck Brewster on their volume on West Indian integration.

Parenthetically Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, in a true understanding of that volume and the arguments, which is being made, Brewster and Thomas were counter posing what was called, "mechanistic integration and organic integration." A mechanistic integration was one in which you didn't have the sufficiency of linkages. And part of the linkages involves people, real flesh and blood people moving. Not just linkages between industries, because they had made the point that shell was very integrated across the region but the region was not integrated. The enterprise was integrated and to have the deeper integration across the region, you needed the people. Among other things too, because they were talking about you getting involved at the production end not just at the trading end, [interception] no, I'm just coming. No, no, no, the point I'm making is that you said that this was tinkering and I am saying that

this is contributing to the organic form of integration, which C. Y. Thomas and Brewster spoke about. That is to say, the diffusion of the strengths and weaknesses in the system in such a way that the whole becomes more than a summation of the individual parts, and that is the analysis, which is offered by C. Y. Thomas and for a diffusion of the strengths and weaknesses into the whole you require an easier and freer movement of people. And therefore, this does not become on that analysis merely tangential, merely tinkering; it goes to the core of the matter. This does not mean that as you go to the core of the matter there are not difficulties and contradictions, which must be resolved, but is sometimes called concerns and fears. I want to use different language because I want to show that it is a natural process of change and movement. There is of course, in the CARICOM a movement of skilled persons. Persons graduating from University of the West Indies, entertainers, journalist and the like, but this legislation contemplates going further. Ordinary human beings not university graduates or not these quote and quote persons who would be perceived as elites. Because Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, we don't want the ordinary persons who are moving to see the integration business as a business only for the elites. And this measure has gone a great way to open up the region, open up the sub-region O.E.C.S for a movement of people. It is true to say that administratively St. Lucia and to a lesser extent Grenada have in the recent past been permitting persons from the O.E.C.S to enter by way of drivers licences and identification cards, that is true. But there is no legislative basis and there is certainly no common legislative business for it and becomes critical for us to put that in place. Yes, and we have never done that here and that is new here. Indeed I am hoping and I would discuss this with the Minister for National Security and the other Cabinet colleagues and the Immigration Authorities that I am hoping that even before this becomes law, we can perhaps go the administrative way of St. Lucia and Grenada by allowing it to happen.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say this, it has already been reported me that people from other O.E.C.S countries because of our utterances here in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have come to the airport with drivers licences and identification cards supporting the proposition of the Deputy Prime Minister that the people are ahead of us on this question, they are ahead of us on this question.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when a person comes with his passport or he comes his identification or he comes with his driver's licence. When he enters the immigration authorities will simply say to him, they would have looked at the document and he will enter and he can remain in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines unless he is a prohibited immigrant. This legislation doesn't yet say that he can enter and work. But clearly in the discussion, the issue must arise that once you can come in and remain at will the issue of work will arise and when we are having our discussion in the select committee that certainly will arise and the next stage clearly having facilitated the travel easily here and allowing you to remain, the question of the work permit, doing away with the work permit would arise. Already Mr. Speaker, there are people in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and there are Vincentians in Dominica and in St. Lucia and Grenada who have gone to those countries and who are working in them without work permit and nobody is troubling them, and here in Saint Vincent too. A person comes from Denary, a

banana-producing belt in St. Lucia, he has a girlfriend in Park Hill, the girlfriend has a piece of land two three acres, four acres of family land, when the guy comes in and he moves in with his girlfriend he is going to dig banana holes and dig tannia bank with his girlfriend. And who is going to bother with him unless he commits a criminal offence, gets into trouble? So that some of what this law is hoping to do is already taking place with people.

Mr. Speaker, it is important for us to remember this, that right at this moment as we speak the criminals, rogues and vagabonds and I want to repeat those terms because I understand there is a radio, a part-time radio journalist he doesn't like when I call people rogues and vagabonds. It's an alternative formulation for criminals because I want little space to be given to the criminals so that they could be identified and thought of in their communities as rogues and vagabonds until they correct their ways. So I am not going to refrain from using those words. I am going to be bold as a Leader, I said we are going to give little space to the criminals and we gave little space on the vagabonds and the rogues, because we can't function on the basis of the lowest common denominator. The Minister for National Security pointed out that there were more burglaries in the year 2001 than in 2000, though there were more thefts in 2000 than there were in 2001. When you go into somebody's home you are not just what I called a criminal you are a rogue and you are a vagabond. And you must be so identified and people must, you must have that name being called to you and if they don't call you so they must conceptualize so, so that they will shun you, criminals, rogues and vagabonds must be shunned in decent company. And while one forgives, one cannot forget the criminality of a particular person unless in the civilized community there is a rehabilitation of the criminal offender. Equally I wouldn't in that context refrain from using the word, convicted felon if a person factually is that, even though I may forgive the person as a human being for his felony and be civil to the person but that point remains.

Mr. Speaker what do we have to do additional to these things? And how have we arrived at this position? In Dominica last year at the 34th meeting of the O.E.C.S Authority, the Heads of Government, I was assigned the leadership by the O.E.C.S Heads to address this question of freer movement and the deeper union. And I have been working assiduously over the past few months. Speaking to the other Leaders on the Committee, particularly Prime Minister Anthony, but other Leaders too, working with the O.E.C.S Secretariat, they came here incidentally; one of the principal drafts persons of this Bill is the son of Carl Larbinierre who was the premier of the defunct Federation. He is the legal authority; he is the Deputy Premier in the Federation and his son heads the legal unit of the O.E.C.S. Coincidentally, I taught him also at University. And Mr. Speaker, we decided last year in Dominica that we will have January the 1st this year as the target year to bring about the freedom of movement. We got the Bill in place and I come to the House because we agreed on that, we were the first out of the block. Somebody has to move first. Yesterday in St. Lucia, I went there in the morning for a meeting with the O.E.C.S Secretariat and Prime Ministers Anthony and Charles and we all agreed that countries will bring this Bill to Parliament and the target date is the 28th of February to be the date when we come to Parliament finally for the third reading and we have to confirm that date at the O.E.C.S Heads

of Government Meeting in Anguilla on the 30th and 31st of this month, so we are moving. We say targets, we haven't actually accomplished yet but here we are in the House in January, so we are not doing too badly and I think that must be conceded. Then Mr. Speaker, there are other things which we have to do. We have discussed yesterday and we have discussed before having a common identification card. Dominica and St. Lucia it would appear that will proceed ahead because Dominica doesn't have an identification card and they are going to that with their electoral system. St. Lucia is going to have a new identification card. We have just invested a fair amount of money in issuing new identification cards as required under the electoral law of this country. Started by the previous Government and continued with us. Maybe one third of the electorate has been issued new identification cards. There will be some similarities with that card and those with Dominica and St. Lucia, but Dominica and St. Lucia will have the proto type of the O.E.C.S card and with the passage of time we will get to that one ourselves. And the target is for an O.E.C.S passport next year January the 1st 2003 just like the European Union passport. It may be the O.E.C.S at the top or it may be some other name if the confederal arrangements evolve to another name other than the O.E.C.S. But it would be issued by Saint Vincent, by Dominica, by St. Lucia, by all the various territories like the European union passport, European Union - United Kingdom, European Union - France, Germany and so on and so forth and it would be other..., the regular Vincentian passports will exist alongside with that until the time runs out on those one, your regular Vincentian passport like when we was associated state and we became independent. You had like the two kinds of passports co-existing for a while because some people may not want to go and buy a new passport. And there would be the consideration that no O.E.C.S passport would be issued to an economic citizen because we don't have economic citizenship here neither does St. Lucia. Hopefully economic citizenship could be phased out in those countries, which have it.

Then Mr. Speaker, we are going for the O.E.C.S Secretariat has been asked to design a shorter card, entry card. You know in the United Kingdom is the shortest entry card when you in there of every country I go to. They have a thing four questions, four. I don't see why we can't do that. Indeed, in St. Lucia as is the case in the British Virgin Islands and I don't see any reason why we can't go to it. Citizens of St. Lucia entering and leaving St. Lucia do not have to fill out a card, only non-nationals. Making the travel much easier. Mr. Speaker, then the same target date for the 28, we want to address the issue of property by having the 28th of February as a target date to do away with alien land holding requirements for O.E.C.S nationals in the respective countries. We have to reach that point in any event under the single market and economy. But that one as I would say, is more problematic than we doing it in the O.E.C.S itself. So with the land issue being addressed, with the travel and entering and the issue of the work permit being put on the agenda we are moving towards a deeper union, towards an economic union and a deepened form of a political confederation, which is a strategic objective. I take it in the stages so that everyone who is listening can see how we are moving because you have a strategic vision.

Mr. Speaker I'm obliged. On the travel facilitation the O.E.C.S Secretariat is doing a comprehensive review of all the legal issues involved. Immigration Departments should be

computerized to facilitate timely retrieval and sharing of information. Further training should be provided to Immigration Officers. Those security concerns, which arise, should be discussed with the O.E.C.S Police Chiefs and their RSS. One of them Mr. Speaker is for us to share the list of the vagabonds, the criminals and rogues, the top ones. And once we computerized, there will be an easier retrieval system across the board.

Mr. Speaker, we should put systems in place at the ports of entry to expeditiously resolve problems arising in implementing this initiative. And then we have a series of economic union priority issues. As I say it is a strategic objective we are moving to. The theme of the economic union should guide the work of the O.E.C.S and the ECCB. The particular circumstances of Anguilla, the British Virgin Islands and Montserrat need to be addressed for their colonies. Some review of the relevant issues should be undertaken such as the free trade in goods and services. Circulation of goods, services, labour and capital harmonize monetary, financial and social policies, appropriate governance arrangements and so on and so forth. The major issue like poverty reduction. We are looking at a regional and O.E.C.S approach to the subject and that's why we brought down Professor C. Y. Thomas and Dr. Barbara Boulton to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to assist us in the formulation of our poverty alleviation strategy plan. We have to do some further discussion on areas such as external relations, telecommunications, civil aviation utilities and common legislation of other kinds. We have to do follow up with an inventory of work commissioned by the O.E.C.S and ECCB on the economic union, which will be prepared and the areas of immediate focus should include justification for economic union, the legal requirements for the union, security and defense, public information, a review of the Treaty of Basseterre and implications of the initiatives which we have been taking for CARICOM.

Mr. Speaker, the approach, which we are presented, is one, which is well thought out. Mr. Speaker, I don't want to beat my chest on this issue whilst we have a number of people in this region who are committed to the deepening of regional integration, I do not yield to anyone in relation to my commitment, none. When I was twenty-five years old as a graduate student, I wrote a paper along with Strinbourne Lesstrawed we quartered it, called the political aspects of Windwards Leewards integration. When Dr. Patrick Emmanuel in the late 1980's or early 1990's wrote a book seven approaches to West Indian Integration, one of the approaches, which he studied, was what he called, "The Gonsalves Lesstrawed Approach." I was twenty-five years old when that paper was written by Strinbourne Lesstrawed who was recently the Director General of the O.E.C.S. And Mr. Speaker, I have remained committed to West Indian, to Caribbean Nationhood and to this Caribbean civilization. It's a noise in my blood; it is an echo in my bone. And this is part of that ongoing exercise. So we are going into a strategic objective but we have to manage it properly. I am very hardened to hear, somebody reported to me that Bongo Shacka who has been supportive of the New Democratic Party, he was in Grenada, and I am told that he was singing the praises of his great Prime Minister in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines about this initiative. Because there are people who cross party lines on this matter. Carlyle Dougan told me in front of a number of persons, included N.D.P persons, he saidst, "Prime Minister, you are on the right track with all the major issues, "He

saidst, “People in the N.P.D don’t talk to me any longer, he say I am still an N.D.P man but you are on the right track and when you are on the right track I have to tell you.” This country is a small country, the O.E.C.S is 5 hundred 6 hundred thousand people though we have perhaps 3, 4 times that number in the Diaspora. I don’t want to get involve on this issue as to who is more regional integrationist. I could understand for effect that Senator Leacock was talking about Sir James. I am not denying that Sir James has been an integrationist. It is true to say that after the failure of the Tortola initiative, he himself told me, he say, “Ralph, I am tired with this”, he say, “is fellars like you have to take it up and run with that”, he say, “I done with that, I will support but I ain’t taking any lead role anymore on that.” He also said it in Parliament. He told me that personally. Well with me and the nature of the person I am, I may get tired, I am a human being, but on this issue and on many issues, which touch and concern the people of this country and the region I become renewed as an eagle. I don’t want to be pessimistic like the Leader of the Opposition on this and I urging him, I know he said..., you said you find it difficult to have optimism after 30 years. You said it is difficult to have optimism after 30 years of talking about the same things on regional integration this is what you said, so that the point about it is this so you ended up saying yes you are supporting it. But all I am saying to you, you were equivocating and like you were getting the overly courteous side of you is leading you towards pessimism and I am urging you not to be like that because I know you support regional integration. And that’s the point I am making, we cannot gave up, if you and I give up, what’s going to happen? You going to have people who are going to be the demo gags, who going to follow and when you give a mixed signal you leave space for the demo gags to enter and those who do not have your commitment and my commitment to this issue and we are the two at this moment, we are the two Leaders in this country of the respective political parties. I can’t yield my position to any body. There is no defacto Leader other than me. [Interception] No I don’t listen to him, I don’t listen to him at all. I don’t get chance to listen to the radio. People report to me, but you see I have to ask my friend the Leader of the Opposition for goodness sake and for the well being of the country. I want to see a strong Opposition. I want to see a Leader, someone who could be offered as an alternative. I don’t want to see a person of his stature, of the Leader of the Opposition stature following a convicted felon. And it pains me greatly, that’s all I’m saying, that is all I am saying. It pains me greatly and it pains the right thinking people in the community. It really does and that is my only point of departure. [Interception] No, there is no embarrassment created in the House in that regard and there cannot be. There may be an embarrassment created for you to the extent that you are a member of the House, but it can’t create for the House. I am just urging you to take a different posture in relation to mischief demagoguery, that’s all and to stand on certain clear principles and believe and don’t be equivocating on matters upon which you ought not to be equivocating. The issue of regional unity is a large question. It is a great cause and great causes cannot be won by doubtful men and women, no you are aboard but some persons want to hop off. They got a foot here and equivocating. Great causes [interception] no, but you see, this is the point I am saying everybody can put a claim to things. This is the first...,

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Senator Leacock I want to tell the Honourable Prime Minister his time is up but you are spurring him on.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: This is the first time Mr. Speaker that a Bill of this kind has come to this Parliament. We are in the year 2002, why is it that no one had come before? I am not saying that Mr. Joshua, Mr. Cato and Sir James had not made their contributions in this regard. But this vital area even on your own analysis and you going back to Professor Thomas and Professor Brewster [interception]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Could you wrap up now?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Well the point it is this, it showed me that you had seen the book and that in the first three or so pages or four pages where the conceptual part is discussed and you talked about diffusion of the strengths and weaknesses in the system. I remember the quote and I could give you the analysis because I had studied the whole volume. I don't have to read three pages you know, I studied the whole volume, and that's why off the top the of head I could tell you what they said and is about 20 years now I haven't read it. But I have internalized it.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Could you wrap up now?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: And Mr. Speaker therefore I want to say on this issue we don't need to have any party political differences, we don't need to have any party political differences Mr. Speaker on this question. But what we have to do Mr. Speaker is to not to have the doubts and be concerned and deeply concerned and skeptical and difficult to have optimism. That is allowing space for mischief-makers. Great causes are not won by doubtful men and women and this is a great cause and this is tremendous advance and this Bill I'm sure will receive the overwhelming support of the people of this sub-region. I'm obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of National Security.

HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE: Mr. Speaker, I think the debate was wholesome. I think that despite the fact that they were in certain respects irrelevancies and really when you look at the Standing Orders scope of debate one could have moved on a point a order that there was no relevance at some times towards the Bill. But it is good that you allowed some leeway so we went along with it. In fact Mr. Speaker, the only section of the Bill that really is of concern or should be of some concern to Members is the second part. Because in effect the amendment to section 5 is only an amendment to make it easier for O.E.C.S Nationals to travel because it didn't mean they couldn't travel before it only meant that they have to travel on a passport. But the amendment to section 18 I think it is it's the one that allows the O.E.C.S Nationals to enter and to remain and as the Honourable Prime Minister pointed out, we cannot operate in a vacuum and obviously unless the O.E.C.S Nationals are multi-millionaires and can just come on holidays, then sometime within the period that they enter and remain they would have to find meaningful employment.

Mr. Speaker, the debate is not finished because we are going to move this Bill to a Select Committee, but I just want to highlight and correct a few areas that came up in the debate. I think the Honourable Senator misunderstood what the Parliamentary Secretary was inferring. The Caribs didn't know anything about roti nor the Awaraks and they didn't know anything about boudjow and peleau. And they didn't know anything about fufu. Some people might call it, what is the thing we make with corn? Corn cou-cou and the point that the Honourable Parliamentary Secretary was making was that we are very fortunate in the Caribbean and that, you know the sad thing about it is that we ourselves do not seem to understand the level of our development along certain lines. Because what he was saying is that the Indians brought roti and peleau, the Africans would have brought fufu, the Chinese brought chowmein and the Carib used their arrowroot and their fish. They use to use the kind that they called casarwreath from cassava for the sauce for the fish and the point he was making is that we have a society that is more or less integrated. In that peleau is not a specialty for the East Indians and neither is roti. And that chowmein is not a dish that is specific to the Chinese that all of the Caribbean is so integrated that all of these dishes is a melting pot and we all are accustomed now to these dishes. I think that is what in simple terms he was trying to point out.\

You see Mr. Speaker; we have been exploring different forms of moving disintegration process forward. Take the police for instance. There are tremendous benefits to be gathered if we can have regional force. Promotion, law and order will be better administered, because when you have a Vincentian policeman in Antigua or St. Kitts he doesn't have family there and when anything happens he doesn't have to contend with loyalties. There are tremendous benefits to have regional prisons. And I am speaking about this because I am Minister of National Security and this has been explored, you know how beautiful, maybe that's not the proper adjective it would be anyhow, that if you have essential area where your violent criminals whether is from Antigua, St. Lucia or wherever it is can be incarcerated. I am not sure what is happening Mr. Speaker, but it's...

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: Minibus, minibus.

HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE: Oh I see. Okay. Yes, so that Mr. Speaker we have to move and we have learnt the lessons from the West Indian Federation that we have moved totally at one go and it didn't last. But over the years we have seen as the Prime Minister pointed out the different areas in which this integration movement was moving. Single market, the different areas within the O.E.C.S where we have commonalities and where we cooperate where we have cooperation. And this measure it is possible but I hope not and I don't see why it should fail, it is possible that it would fail. But the fact is, if we all agree, the area that we are concerned with, the criminality and criminals coming to Saint Vincent or criminals from Saint Vincent going to St. Lucia and the others, because you would have an integration system which must come you would be able to control better and the surveillance would be more effective on these criminals. They do it in the United States; they do it in Canada and in Britain and so on. They punch in the names in the computer and it comes up and you can know what is happening. In today's technological age this would not be very difficult and not all that expensive to have

an integrated system. The banks have it, other institutions have it and there is no reason why we when it comes to policing or immigration that this can't be done. And it would be done; it has to be done as a matter of fact.

Mr. Speaker, we have persons coming to Saint Vincent from Guyana from other areas I know we dealing with the O.E.C.S, and who want to stay in Saint Vincent and vice versa. You have Vincentians going to St. Lucia so what we have, we have contrive marriages. They don't last most of them because the marriage is a marriage of convenience. They do it in the United States and so on, they stamp down to a certain extent on that. So although we must be courteous if you want to swim we got to get in the water. Plain an simple. You ain't staying in dry land and learn to swim and it is only when you get in the water you are going to be able to find our whether you going to learn to swim. But unless we take the plunge we are going to be constantly here waiting for the ideal to occur and the ideal would never occur. We might make errors, we make mistakes, but I have always said once we can learn from the mistakes and from those lessons ensure that we do not make those same mistakes then even the mistakes can be beneficial.

So Mr. Speaker, I think with these few words I thank the Opposition for their support and thank the other Members on this side that debated the Bill. We have to understand that this is a Bill that came into being in 1939 and had been amended though the ages, through the different years, but it looks at though even in 1939 there was some foresight that this Immigration Act would have been amended all the time as you progressed to bring it into the situation that it is now.

And so Mr. Speaker I want to invoke Standing Order 51 and move that the Bill be committed to a Select Committee.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Second the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I would suggest again nine Members for the Committee. Prime Minister, Minister of National Security, the Deputy Prime Minister, Parliamentary Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office, Minister of Social Development, Senator Juliet George and the Attorney General.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker on this side of the Opposition, the Leader of the Opposition and Senator Leacock.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, we have had a very long day and it's late in the night, it's 10:30. I beg to move therefore that the House do stand suspended until tomorrow morning at 10:00 O'clock and before I invite a seconder Mr.

Speaker, I just indicate that the plan is to deal with other Bills tomorrow, to at least one of them through all the stages. The one on Caribbean, the other Immigration Bill and then perhaps we might just do the others by way of first readings and then move to the motion on Local Government. But Mr. Speaker as discussed with the Leader of the Opposition and to continue that debate or to finalize that debate on the 17th of January where we would also have the Order paper amended to include what has been circulated “The Regulation for the Proceeds of Crime.” The reason why we would like to have that motion on a negative resolution Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members is that there is on the 24th another reported situation with the FATF. And then Mr. Speaker thereafter I have discussed with the Leader of the Opposition for the next meeting of the House so that I can indicate so that Honourable Members can plan their schedule. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition would be out of the State towards the end of the month and also early into the new month and we have agreed among ourselves that the 19th of February would that day on which the Opposition business would be priority. The 19th of February.

Mr. Speaker if I may just have a matter confirmed on this adjournment that though there have been a prorogation of the House I take it that the same Select Committee we can agree that on the motion for the Constitutional Reform, that that same Committee exist that we can go ahead and do our work on the Constitutional Reform issue. So if we have an agreement on that, we simply note that the same persons, their mandate in a sense has been renewed and the Leader of the Opposition has agreed on that so we can proceed with that.

Therefore Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the suspension until tomorrow morning at 10:00 O’clock.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Second the motion.

SUSPENDED

*Question put and agreed to.
House Suspended until 10:00 a.m.*