

**No. 4**

**TUESDAY**

**Second Session**

**12<sup>th</sup> March 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 FOURTH 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.**

**ELVENTH SITTING**

**12<sup>th</sup> March, 2002**

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

The Honourable House of Assembly met at 10.15 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

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

Member for South Windward

Minister of Social Development, Co-operatives, The Family, Gender and Ecclesiastical Affairs Honourable Girlyn Miguel	Member for Marriacqua
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 Juliet George	Government Senator
Honourable Andrea Young	Government Senator/Deputy Speaker

## **ABSENT**

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Trade. Honourable Louis Straker	Member for Central Leeward
Minister of Education, Youth and Sports Honourable Michael Browne	Member for West St. George
Honourable Arnhim Eustace	Member for East Kingstown/ Leader of the Opposition
Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday	Member for Northern Grenadines
Honourable Terrance Ollivierre	Member for Southern Grenadines
Honourable Gerard Shallow	Opposition Senator
Honourable Major St. Claire Leacock	Opposition Senator

# SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

## HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2002

### PRAYERS

The Honourable Hendrick Alexander read the prayers of the House.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Before we do the Obituaries, I would want to read the Commonwealth Day 2002 message. And while I do so, I would also want to announce to the House that I have received correspondence from the Leader of the Opposition indicating that they will be boycotting this meeting of the House as they continue to protest the presence of the Honourable Minister of Tourism in the House.

“Over the last fifty years the Commonwealth has undergone a remarkable transformation from an association defined by its history into the modern, multicultural organization we know today. Across those years, it has been the privilege of many of us to witness that evolution; to see at first hand the contribution made by the Commonwealth’s leaders, as evident in Australia last week; and to share in the enthusiasm and warmth of its peoples.

Today, the Commonwealth is a meeting place for North and South, East and West. It is built on diversity – which is why this year’s theme, ‘Celebrating Diversity’, goes to the heart of the association.

Politically, the Commonwealth sees its diversity as a strength. That was certainly true of its invaluable contribution to the ending of Apartheid in South Africa. The practical assistance it was able to offer in such crucial areas reflects the kaleidoscope of its membership and its expertise. As a result, the Commonwealth was able to work with all the different communities of what is now proudly called ‘the rainbow nation’. Bridging social and political divides has also been a feature of the Commonwealth’s continuing work in seeking to encourage democracy, good governance, the rule of law, and respect for human rights.

In all this, we recognise that promoting diversity is not just tolerating difference. Living together as neighbours needs more than that. The true celebration of diversity involves reaching out, recognising and embracing difference, and in so doing enriching our lives. It requires respect for others and readiness to learn from

them; recognising that we have duties as well as rights; and seeking to leave the world a better place than the one we inherited.

As each of the last fifty years has passed, so too has our appreciation of the contribution made by the Commonwealth, an association of peoples as much as it is of governments, bound together, by ideals as well as interests. If the Commonwealth is to remain a force for good, we must ensure that those ideals are carried forward by the millions of young people across the world who are its future – so that they too can celebrate and build on the diversity of this unique organisation.

**Elizabeth R. “**

## **OBITUARIES**

**HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I take this opportunity to pay tribute to Mr. George L. Dickson of Mount Pleasant, Stubbs. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Dickson’s contribution to the development of our country is exemplary. Mr. Dickson entered the teaching service as a part time teacher in 1945. He was appointed a student teacher on 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1949. On the 1st January 1952 he was appointed Probationary Assistant Teacher and on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1952 he was appointed Certified Assistant Teacher.

Mr. Speaker, his role as a Head Teacher commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1956. He continued in this post until his retirement on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1983. Immediately after his retirement, he immediately re-entered the teaching service on 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 1983 as the first Principal of the newly upgraded Carapan Secondary School. He retired eventually at the end of August 1984.

Mr. Speaker, during his illustrious career, Mr. Dickson served as teacher at the Stubbs Government School. He was one of the first teachers on staff at the Richmond Hill Government School. He also served as teacher in charge of the Mustique Primary School. The Spring Village Primary School was where he first served after being appointed as Head teacher. Subsequently, he served as Head teacher at Union Methodist, Richland Park and Carapan Primary Schools. He acted briefly as Principal of the Adelphi Secondary School.

Mr. Speaker, his academic achievement included attending the Erdiston Teachers’ Training College in Barbados in 1969 for two years. He was awarded a Teachers’ Certificate with a distinction in Geography. In 1974 Mr. Dickson received a Bursary from the Commonwealth Education Fellowship Scheme and attended Cambridge Institute of Education in the United Kingdom for one year. He was awarded an advanced Diploma in Educational Studies. His main course of studies included primary education overseas, Psychology in relation to Education, Curriculum Studies and Comparative Education. In 1975, Mr. Dickson also pursued training in Educational Management and Administration. Apart from his teaching career, Mr.

Dickson was an accredited local preacher in the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and in the Americas. In 1998 he received an award for 50 years of preaching service. Mr. Dickson was married and lived at Mount Pleasant with his wife Dorothy Ballah Dickson, also a retired educator.

Mr. Speaker, over the many years – from 1945 until 1984 Mr. Dickson touched the lives of thousands. He instilled discipline in those who were in his charge. I have been the benefactor of his wise counsel on many occasions.

I dare say that there aren't many like him around today, so on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and this Honourable House I express sincere condolence to the family and friends of this stalwart in education – Mr. George Letchie Dickson. May he rest in peace.

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, I join my Honourable Colleague, the Minister of State in the Ministry of Education for the kind words that he has expressed on behalf of George Dickson, more popularly known as “Letchie”. As a matter of fact, it was not until his funeral that I knew that his first name was George. The Minister has outlined the dedication and the contribution that Mr. Dickson made during his lifetime towards the development of this our beloved country.

I knew Mr. Dickson for quite a few years. I always had to come into contact with him politically since for years he worked first as Poll Clerk and advanced from that to a more senior position. I am not sure if he was ever Registering Officer, but certainly during polling days he used to be there overseeing in whatever polling station it was and that this was done fairly and without favour. He was a very generous man, but was very strict, and adhered strictly to religious principles. He was very religious as we have been told and travelled throughout the length and breadth of this country to take the word of God to persons all over St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

We are saddened at his passing and we know that he touched the lives of many because no one more so than an educator, a teacher. No one comes more in contact with persons from all the different walks of life than a teacher. One thing that has been said is that he was a very strict disciplinarian but he was very fair in whatever he did. I think that we would miss him very much, but there comes a time when all of us must take the necessary departure. In this case, I understand that his was one of ease, and up to the time of his death he was conscious and was able to praise and give thanks to his God.

We extend condolences from the Constituency of South Windward which he resides in. I hope that his dear wife would be able (and I know she does) understand what is happening and to cope with life without his presence being there. May he rest in peace.

**HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise also to join in the obits at this time of a young man, his name is Glenroy Santana Gordon of Questelles. We have listened to the Obits of former Principal, Mr. Dickson and we heard of his illustrious academic career. We are not going to hear this about Santana. I think that it is quite fitting that in this week of national heritage and national heroes that this Honourable House- the peoples' House take time out to pay tribute to what we may regard as the unsung heroes as Mr. Dickson and people like Santana. Santana was born in 1955, the same year as myself. We grew up together as boys in the Questelles District. Santana did not have the opportunity or luck, whatever you may call it to have attain high academic training, but he was a very strong community person. I think that young people today can take example from people like Santana. He was very much aware of what was going on around him. He was what you may call a political animal. He always got involved, but in a very positive way. In fact, I think that even his political opponents were fond of him because he believed in the politics of peace. He believed that we can fight our battles on our side but not to get into violence etc. and I know that several of his political opponents are also his very close friends. Santana was an Electrician and in this field he really touched the lives of many persons, offering his services quite often, gratuitously, but he was an organiser and I know that from personal experiences. He certainly was very much important in the organizing and the organisation of the political campaign that we have just past, in the years 1998-2001.

Santana was active in other things than politics. As I said before, he was a community minded person. He was always involved. Any activity at the schools, at the community centres, at the churches that an Electrician was needed, Santana was there, and he offered his service quite willingly.

Unfortunately, when the time comes, none of us can really keep off the ravages of disease and about two years ago he found out that he had a terminal illness but that did not daunt his spirits. Even during his two last years when he suffered, knowing that he may not have long, most people who didn't know him closely and didn't know that he was sick, may not have known that. That is the type of person he was. He understood that he had to go but he thought that he will contribute to the end. And I can recall was said in the Eulogy about three weeks ago when the Honourable Prime Minister and I visited him on his dying bed he was interested on how the Party and this Government was doing. He expressed confidence that this Government was in good hands. He expressed to the Prime Minister to keep on fighting, not for him as he said, 'Comrade I gone through already', but he really thought that there was a lot to be done for the young people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and that this Party – the unity Labour Party was to do it.

Santana was loved by his family and his friends, and I know they too loved him. We certainly from the Unity Labour Party, from the South Leeward constituency and from the community of South Leeward and St. Vincent at large because those of us who would have attended the funeral and Sunday, there was a mammoth crowd – a crowd that any political party would have been proud of to be at any rally. There were thousands of people; an indication of how much a

humble young man from Questelles, Santana Glenroy Gordon touched persons in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

We wish that his family will be consoled by the support that many people have given, and may he rest in peace.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I want to join the preceding speakers in paying tribute to the educator, Letchie Dixon and also to Glenroy Santana Gordon. I wouldn't speak on Letchie Dixon because I think that both the Honourable Minister of State in the Ministry of Education and the Honourable Minister of National Security dealt fulsomely with the life of Letchie Dixon. I simply want to associate myself with their remarks and to convey to their family and friends, the condolences of the Government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

I however would wish to speak, Honourable Members, a little bit about a falling comrade, Glenroy Santana Gordon who has led a very disciplined and productive life. He was a young man who died recently. His funeral was on Sunday. Unfortunately I was out of the State on Government business and was unable to attend the funeral. But most of our parliamentary team was there and other members of the Unity Labour Party's leadership.

Glenroy Santana Gordon fought for justice, democracy, and the defence of our national independence, freedom and for the ennoblement of our Caribbean civilization. We have been fighters and warriors together in many notable battles from the 1970s onwards. He along with Minister of Health, the Minister of Education and myself and many other young men and women were members of a socialist organisation called the "Yulu United Liberation Movement (YULIMO). Nowadays Mr. Speaker, people try to shy away from their socialist past. I don't intend to do so. I am who I am and my history makes me, so help me God. The very name of the organisation Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members conjured up a rootedness in our history. The world YOULU is one of the original names for what is now known as St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I think in the Garifuna language it means rainbow. There is some controversy as to whether YOULU was the capital city or whether it was the country, but the preponderance of evidence seems to suggest that it refers to the country- YOULU and the BEGOS. The BEGOS means the Grenadines. And it is very significant that Santana dies and was buried in National Heritage Month, and on March 14<sup>th</sup> we will be celebrating the first legislatively sanctioned National Heroes' Day and the declaration of our first national hero, the Rt. Excellent Paramount Chief Joseph Chatoyer.

Santana struggled with YULIMO. I remembered him in many political classes. People forget that there is a generation who studied politics, reflected on the issues in the same way that the Rt. Honourable Milton Cato, the founding father of this nation, studied with the likes of Forbes Burnham in London when they were students; the politics of the region and of the world some twenty odd years. After that, people like Santana, Dougie Slater, Mike Browne, Casper London, Renwick Rose and many, many others including myself were involved in the systematic study

of politics. Some people don't know this. I used to leave here and go to South Rivers and hold a political class with three people. Casper London used to leave here and go to Questelles with his study group -himself, Santana and one other. And when we say that we have been beaten on the anvil of experience and forged in the cauldron of struggle and not just meaningless words, we have lived them.

In 1979 he became a member of the Peoples' Unity Movement. When the parties were combined and he stayed in what used to be called 'Left Politics' until his death. Because when the Unity Labour Party came together as a consequence of a merger between the Movement for National Unity which was itself a break away from the United Peoples' Movement. The merger between the MNU and the St. Vincent Labour Party then headed by our great Statesman, the Honourable Vincent Beache, Santana joined that struggle and argued with some on the left who said that he was getting involved in petty politics. But he saw the historic opening what the ULP represented and the necessity. And history has confirmed his correct analysis, the necessity for such a movement to get rid of the discredited New Democratic Party administration which increasingly from 1994 onwards was looking forward to the past.

Santana was involved in the trade Union Movement. He was an Activist for the National Progressive Workers' Union which organised on the agricultural plantations - the practically thankless task. He was involved in community organisations in the Questelles and in the South Leeward area. And what was remarkable when the Minister of Health and I saw him about two weeks or so ago when he had been hospitalized on his last occasion. In fact he send and call me to come to see him. He said 'comrade, I am going down, but I am not allowing this thing to defeat me without a fight'. He said, 'I am a fighter'. He said, 'anyway, let we don't talk about me'. I said, 'man tell me how you are going?' He said, 'no, no. The battle I have on my hands here, is I alone have to fight this one.' He said, 'it might defeat me and I feel it is getting the better of me.' He said, 'comrade, you know, we are fighters, I ain't allowing it to defeat me just so.' And we spoke about the Government, the Party and the performance. He expressed on his deathbed full satisfaction with the Unity Labour Party Government and its performance, and as always urged us that where there is weaknesses we must correct them, and reminded the Minister of Health and myself about the noble purposes why we originally got involved in political activities to uplift the lot of the ordinary man and woman in this country and to defend our national independence and our civilization. Dozens of men and women like Santana, hundreds of warriors like him constitute the backbone of this Government and the future of this nation. Today I promise Santana and his family, (and I have already spoken to his daughter who is going to secondary school), that we will never allow the vagabondry and the corruption which marked the NDP administration, and you will hear more about this from me within the next few weeks – that never, as long as we live we would allow this country to return to the likes of those who populate the leadership of the New Democratic Party. Never. We will fight peacefully and democratically as Santana had done and would want us to continue to do. May he rest in peace and may those who are around him know that they are in our prayers. And they can rest safely with the knowledge and the blessed assurance that this Government will continue

on the path to which it was elected, to provide a better life for the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I am obliged.

## MINUTES

The Minutes of the Sitting held on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2002, copies of which had previously been circulated were taken as read and confirmed.

## STATEMENTS

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I came today intending to speak on two or three issues in my capacity as Prime Minister, but the letter which was sent to you, Mr. Speaker, from the Leader of the Opposition and copied to me, as leader of Government business and Leader of this House it becomes necessary for me to make a statement in this regard.

In fairness to the Leader of the Opposition, I would read his letter to the Speaker in its entirety which was copied to me:

*“Dear Sir,*

*As you are aware at the last sitting of the Parliament on February, 19<sup>th</sup> 2002, the Opposition tabled a Motion in the House which called for resignation of the Hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture.*

*Through a series of steps not unexpected the Government contrived to limit the debate to a mere 1½ hours.*

*The strategy included two (2) long Ministerial Statements and inordinately long answers to six (6) simple questions posed by the Opposition.*

*The Opposition left the House in protest at the continued presence of the Hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture in the House.*

*The Opposition is still deeply concerned over this matter and has carried this issue to the public in a series of public meetings since February, 19<sup>th</sup>.*

*I have to inform you that as part of its continuing protest, the Opposition will boycott the sitting of the House scheduled for March 12<sup>th</sup> 2002.”*

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that this letter one which reeks with irresponsibility and arrogance. The Members of the Opposition are paid and paid handsomely comparatively with other

persons in this country for the work which they do and yet they are not coming here to do the peoples' business. They are away from work without leave.

Mr. Speaker, parts of the edifice of parliamentary democracy is that we have a House of Assembly. And this political architecture has not been constructed by some chance, it is something carefully designed and evolved for centuries in other countries, particularly the United Kingdom and adapted and adopted to suit our own circumstances. Here in this House we witness the practical manifestation of representative democracy. That is why the constitution calls each of us who is elected a representative. And we become a representative in free and fair election based on Universal Adult Suffrage.

In the last Elections, the NDP lost the elections. They got just over 40% of the vote, the ULP got in excess of 58% of the vote; the incumbent then, the NDP got a whopping thrashing 12 –3. Mr. Speaker, they owe their constituents. The Leader of the Opposition, the Member for the Northern Grenadines, the Member for the Southern Grenadines owe their respective constituencies their presence here today to debate matters. What do they wish to do?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I must indicate though that the Honourable Member for the Southern Grenadines has tendered an apology. He is in Taiwan.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Oh, he is in Taiwan. Well, I am obliged Mr. Speaker. I have to excuse him; he probably would have been here.

Mr. Speaker, under the rules of this House, the Leader of the Opposition tabled a motion on the last Sitting. It must be remembered by the general public that that day is set aside principal for opposition business up to 5:00 o' clock, but only after all the other subject matters are dealt with: Questions, Obituaries, Statements by Ministers. It is not the fault of the Government that there was only an 1½ hours to debate on the last occasion. The opposition didn't need to ask questions if they wanted more time for debate. If you ask questions which they consider simple that does not mean that the answers are not complex. It is an exercise in the logic to say that because a question is simple the answers necessary must be simplistic. We believe in transparency so we answer them fulsomely, as we always do the questions. Sometimes Mr. Speaker, we finish here with question time at 1:00 o'clock. There was nothing out of the ordinary. If the Leader of the Opposition had any tactical sense on the last occasion, after ministerial statements had been presented, he would not have asked any questions period, and he would have had more time to debate his motion. But he cannot fault me or the Government for his lack of judgment and his poor leadership in the House. He debated the matter; he made an hour speech and I made a response in twenty-six minute. His arguments, not according to me, but according to the Press; radio, television, newspapers and the general public listening that his arguments were torn apart and he was left tread there. It is not the fault of the Government that he didn't have a good case.

It is also not the fault of the Government that whatever case he purportedly had he presented it as an amateur. So he is now, apart from being just concerned he has adopted a cry baby posture as a grown man, left the House on the last occasion at 5:00 o'clock and did not participate in important bills which were before this House, including matters relating to finance; matters relating to national heroes - very important questions. You would recall Mr. Speaker, the thirty million dollar bond issue, the law in relation to the thirty million dollar bond issue was debated after his departure as it was expected it would have been because these childish pranks will not prevent the Government from doing its duty to the people nor governing. Who are they protesting against but themselves, and those who seek to manipulate them from behind?

So they cannot take the heat in the House, they run instead where they cannot get any opposition at a public meeting – a contrived one, where they transport persons with money provided by companies which sell food and drinks in the supermarket trade. They are becoming now two big families now in the supermarket trade are using them as the battering ram to try and prevent people getting lower prices which is the quest of the Unity Labour Party administration. And those supermarkets, just as how they were defeated in the Elections, they will be defeated again whilst they are in power. And we are fixing up the Government supermarket to sharpen the competition against them. And I am in discussion to see if I can bring in an overseas Caribbean Operator to sharpen the competition against them. And I am in discussion to see if I can bring in an overseas Caribbean operator to give people cheaper prices. I promise them that and I will deliver that. They do not understand that this Government has a massive mandate. They seem to think that we are in the back pocket of somebody who is already in the cemetery. No.

Mr. Speaker, we have had in this House the greatest transparency ever seen and democracy in this House. The first Opposition motion ever broadcast live took place last year and the second one this year under the Unity Labour Party administration. Two radio stations carry this meeting live today. It is carried live on Channel 45 on television. Never before has that happened. You remember Glen Jackson and other Radio Stations had to come here sneaking - do a tape by the side, run go up the road, play it in a delayed fashion until the then speaker stopped them and say he will bring them to contempt of Court, on contempt of Parliament under the direction of the same ex Prime Minister, Arnhim Eustace now Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, it must not be forgotten that before the arrival of the Unity Labour Party Government, this Honourable House under the James Mitchell/Arnhim Eustace leadership met with the frequency of the Supreme Soviet under Brezhnev -two, three and four times a year. People do not forget that the matter came to an absurdity one year in the 1990s when Parliament was prorogued. In August, two meetings were held up to August, Parliament was prorogued in August and not convened again until mid December for the budget. I want the public to remember these things. The NDP as a Party never liked Parliament, and that is why they are staying away now; and worse because they cannot take the heat.

And I want to say Mr. Speaker, I want to see what they are doing next Parliament because when I come to the end of this meeting, I am going to move the adjournment of Parliament to March 28<sup>th</sup> on the anniversary of our Election victory. And there will be a particular agenda ready for them. Let them stay away! If they believe that this government because we have turned our cheek simply because we are a Party of good governance and we have allowed and tolerated things which would not be tolerated by any Government even in the mother of democracy – the United Kingdom. We are now spoken of as the most democratic country in the world. We are now spoken of as having the freest Press in the world. And some of them from the NDP who use the press take advantage of the fact that we have allowed the laws of defamation to go on holiday. Well, if they want to see something; if they want to fight on their hand, they can get one, and we would bring back the laws of defamation from holiday and let the get back to work in the law courts.

This action by the opposition is infantile, childish and is seeking to reverse the election victory of Rene Baptiste in West Kingstown. The issues, which they raised, were canvassed in West Kingstown last elections. They were defeated. All they have to do is to wait until the next election – not when they say it will be called but when I as Prime Minister advise the Governor General to dissolve the House of Assembly. It has nothing to do with them. When the people voted for the Unity Labour Party and my colleagues informed the Governor General that I command the majority of the House and should be appointed Prime Minister. At that moment I receive the power under the Constitution to advise the Governor General when the next Election will take place.

Mr. Speaker, the general public ought to know the Order Paper on which they are abstaining, the Order Paper which they are boycotting. First of all, they are boycotting five questions. Well this in itself is very interesting. They can ask fifteen questions for oral answers and four each for written answers. So they could ask a total of thirty-five questions between them. They have hardly been asking more than half of a dozen. This time they asked five. I can understand why they boycott their own questions because it is a lot of foolishness they asked. So they spend time putting in these questions.

Mr. Speaker, notice how they function. If you intended to boycott the House from the last occasion, why did you take the time to formulate questions? You have to submit these questions to the House ten days before. So on 2<sup>nd</sup> March when they submitted these they knew they were coming to the House, otherwise they would not have submitted them. So between the 19<sup>th</sup> February and the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March they agreed to submit questions. The 19<sup>th</sup> of February was the date of the last Sitting. What new information has come to light between the 2<sup>nd</sup> March and 12<sup>th</sup> March to justify a boycott of the House? It shows you that they have absolutely no method and that is why they are in the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, what are the matters for discussion here? The Immigration Restriction (Amendment) Bill 2002; the OECS Heads of Government decided that on March 12<sup>th</sup> all the countries will bring this Bill on the same day to finalise it. Dominica is doing theirs on the 25<sup>th</sup>

I believe because of the ordering of their Parliament. Grenada has passed it on Friday and on 19<sup>th</sup> it is going to the Senate, they passed it in the House of Representatives; today a most historic day in the deepening of Union in the region, the freeing up of travel, the Opposition is away on leave. Leave not given by the Parliament, but leave because of infantilism. It is a peculiar affliction, you know, which grown men and women when they lose an election and cannot come to term with their loss they become like children. They want to take up their marbles and run home. The only thing is this they do not own the marbles in here, it is the Unity Labour Party Government who own the marbles in here, we who run things here.

Mr. Speaker, then there is the Carriage by Sea Bill. There is the Management of Ship Generated Solid Waste Bill 2002. There is the Income Tax Amendment Bill 2002. Mr. Speaker, I believe it is probably this one why they must be saying away, because what happened, I want the country to know that the NDP administration, Mr. Eustace himself when he was Prime Minister in his budget debate in 2000 promise that he is going to increase the deductions from \$10,000 to \$12,000, but do you know something, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members they never took a law to Parliament to do it. It is us now, that have to bring the law into Parliament to provide the legal framework for working people to get the \$12,000 deduction. Could you imagine such monumental incompetence on the part of the NDP government? Announce something and for several months could not put it into place. Uh? No, so I believe that was something that shamed them why they did not want to come here today.

Mr. Speaker, those of us who have been in the Opposition will tell you, what the NDP used to do in this Parliament. The Rules of the House say, that every third meeting of a new session, the opposition business, or as they put it private members' business would have priority. Do you know what the NDP used to do in order not to have us bring any business, they would not prorogue the House at all, they would move from one session into, so that if you move from one into another, so there cannot be a third. So one year, when we had them on the ropes they did not prorogue the House at all, so we had no opportunity in that whole year to have any priority for Opposition business. And I promised the Opposition here in the House before the nation, that though the time had expired as Leader of the House, I would have time set aside for the conclusion of the debate. There is a debate here, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members which has started several sittings ago and is yet not completed, that is not something that is new. So the Opposition motion, Mr. Speaker, is still on the Order Paper, but it can obviously still only get for debate to continue if we on this side of the House outside of the period when the Opposition business has priority, allow it time for further debate. And I said here, we would allow it time for further debate. But since they have taken this course, they would just wait their turn. Since this is what they are doing, they will wait their turn. Because if the Leader of the Opposition was worth his salt, he would have written to me and said Prime Minister you gave a solemn promise in the House that you would want the debate to continue on the Opposition motion, can we work out a time, and I would have worked out the modalities with him. But he has spurned my offer, and behaved in such a childish way, I will not countenance any continued debate on that motion except in its normal way in the House. Because Mr. Speaker, before that motion are the Orders of the Day, the motion on Local Government and the motion which we have done on

the Inter American Convention Against Corruption. So all those would have to be debated first before you reached to the Opposition motion, to be concluded. I had intended to allow him to jump or to set aside another period on a day, but since he had decided to behave so childish, and so churlish, I would not allow that motion to jump, unless he comes and apologizes to the nation, for his childish conduct. If he apologizes to the nation for his childish conduct I will contemplate, I will reflect, and permit him the time, which he may wish.

Mr. Speaker, the Opposition, the motion did not come yet to a vote. I do not know if he was afraid that somebody on the Opposition side would have voted with Rene, he did not want it to conclude, I do not know why. He has let down the people of this country. He has shown that he wholly irresponsible; he is afflicted by such a lust for power, but his problem, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members is that time is running out. He is older than me about three to four years, I believe, so when he loses the next election, the only time he can come again is when he is about 70. And I do not think then, that the people would want. The Honourable Vincent Beache stepped down from the leadership of the party when he was approaching 70; he said he needed to give a younger man a chance, the Former Prime Minister Sir James when he was 70 he stepped down. So really, this period is the period of desperation for Arnhim Eustace. This is the period of desperation. I am deeply disappointed in him.

Mr. Speaker, he has been saying some things in public, which are so outrageous like for instance, his words now of speaking things which his brain is not telling them; he is hearing them for the first time when he utters them. He said for instance that that I am a wicked man that I made Allan Cruickshank's son have to leave university and not pay the balance of the fees which in fact the Government did not have to pay because the four year scholarship had concluded. But to do one more semester of three months. Without going to Cabinet I instructed the Director General of Finance and Planning to pay the \$47,000 for Allan Cruickshank's son to finish his education, but yet the Leader of the Opposition goes into a public meeting saying I let the boy have to leave school because he has no money to finish. It is that kind of a damnable untruth that preoccupies him. And if I may say, Mr. Speaker, the young man is back after having graduated and the Government would be pleased to employ him. You see they judge people by their own standards and that is the difficulty.

Mr. Speaker, as Leader of the House I thought it important that I make this very important statement to show to the people of this country that the Opposition is not interested in representative democracy, that they are too immature, too childish, to infantile to be considered for any serious leadership. They are a big disappointment. I thought better of the Leader of the Opposition frankly. I believe that the general public will look at them with utter amazement when they hear how the business is conducted for the rest of this day's sitting. And it would be interested to see whether also they would stay away on the next meeting and on, and on. If they wish to have a one party Parliament, I am sure that the people will give them what they desire.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to turn briefly to two other matters. I want to report as I always do when I make any official visit overseas. From Thursday the 7<sup>th</sup> of March until, Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> I

was in the British Virgin Islands (BVI) on an official visit. The Chief Minister requested that I pay an official visit to that country to strengthen bonds of friendship between our two countries. The delegation which accompanied me Mr. Speaker, included Mrs. Patricia Martin, the Director of Foreign Policy and Research. Inspector Glenroy Brewster, head of the special branch in the police force, and Mr. Ken Da Silva a businessman who trades with the British Virgin Island. I took Mr. Da Silva with me, so that he can follow up on some of the excellent work which had been done by a delegation a few weeks earlier headed by the Minister of Agriculture, and tremendous work has been done in that area to enhance the trading and there is already increased trading between St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the BVI as a consequence of Minister Walters trip and Mr. Da Silva was cementing some of those contacts.

Then, Mr. Speaker, we had a discussion with the executive and Legislative Councils for the better part of Friday. I also held discussions with the Governor His Excellency Mr. Savage, also with the Commissioner of Police. Inspector Brewster held extensive discussion with the police because security matters were high on the agenda, matters of trading and matters of co-operation, in a wide range of areas, in education, in health, in sports and in culture, the official visit Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members coincided with the opening of their new terminal building and at that terminal building the Chairman of the proceedings called on Sir James Mitchell who had been invited to the opening of the terminal building because he had contributed by way of advise to Chief Minister O'Neal when Sir James was Prime Minister and it was a very important occasion to have both someone from the Opposition who had been Prime Minister and myself at the opening. I have to report Mr. Speaker, that the relations between the BVI and St. Vincent and the Grenadines has been considerably strengthened. And the issue of visa requirements for St. Vincent, is something that we have sorted out before is not required that that again was confirmed by the Chief Minister in two excellent speeches which he made to Vincentians which I was the feature speaker. One in Road Town, the capital in Tortorla, and the other in Virgin Gorda, in the constituency which is represented by the Chief Minister, that is the off shore island.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to formally announce to the House though there would be an event on the 13<sup>th</sup> at Victoria Park where the citation will be read regarding the conferment of the Order of National Hero on the Rt. Excellent Paramount Chief Joseph Chatoyer; but I should point out Mr. Speaker, that on Monday the advisory committee having reported to the Governor General and he having submitted it to me, as Chairman of Cabinet made the recommendation that Paramount Chief Chatoyer be named as the First National Hero. The Government accepted, this recommendation and in accordance with the law, I so advised the Governor General. And yesterday, Monday His Excellency, sent this notice to me which is being published in the Gazette today, and I believe it has been read on radio, this is what Sir Charles Antrobus, His Excellency the Governor General stated:

“Acting in Accordance with Sections 11 and 12 of the Order of National Heroes Day, Act No. 7 of 2002, and on the advise of the Prime Minister, I hereby confer the Order of National Hero upon the

Rt. Excellent Paramount Chief Joseph Chatoyer, all the legal processes under the Act have been completed or met.”

I want to say Mr. Speaker, it gives this Government tremendous pride in being the Government which has at long last made a very positive step towards the retrieval of our history and the redefinition of ourselves as a people. [Applause]. Mr. Speaker, I should point out that I was not unaware of the historic circumstances which took place yesterday and it is amazing how history can be made so simply. When I drafted the Prime Minister’s formal advise to the Governor General and I gave one of my secretaries, I said to her, read this, you are doing something today, which you would be able to tell your great grandchildren that you were the secretary that typed the Prime Minister’s advise to be sent to the Governor General for the conferment of the Honour of the First National Hero. And when His Excellency’s conferment came afterwards, and was brought to me by my other secretary, I said hold this in your hand read it, I said this is something you would be able also to tell your great grandchildren. And we on this side of the House and all of us and everyone present here and everyone listening will know and remember what they were doing when the Prime Minister of the country announced in Parliament formally that the Governor General had conferred the Honour of the Order of National Hero on the Rt. Excellent Paramount Chief Joseph Chatoyer. [Applause]. And those who are going about their work and hearing it, I know they will take a pause, and to reflect on the heroism of Chatoyer.

I want to express the gratitude of this Government to the nine-member committee, the advisory committee headed by the distinguished Caribbean lady a patriot of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and an exceptional daughter of our civilization, Norma Keizer who took the committee through the paces, leading towards the recommendation for the conferment of the Order of National Hero.

Mr. Speaker, there will be many times when we have during the course of the next few days, to speak about Rt. Excellent Paramount Chief Chatoyer. I want Mr. Speaker, to thank everyone who has been associated with this exercise, going back some 30 years, and to pay tribute to all who have worked towards this end. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow evening on the 13<sup>th</sup> at 9 o’clock, the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the National Heritage Month Committee, present a national concert and ceremony for the declaration of Joseph Chatoyer First National Hero, programme begins at 9 p.m. at Victoria Park and concludes at 12:15. It involves, song and dance. Culture and music and speeches, by the Honourable Minister of Tourism and Culture, who has done an excellent job, in relation to National Heritage month, and must be commended; [Applause], and Mrs. Zola Ellis-Browne who would also address, she is the Honorary Council for Belize, and she is a Gurifuna, herself and I will read the declaration of, and the citation in relation to our First National Hero, and I would be very pleased also to have on stage the unveiling of the Chatoyer portrait by Mrs. Lucy Cato, who is the widow of the Founding Father of our nation. Tomorrow evening should be a very uplifting programme and I invite citizens, persons present in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and from all over the country to attend. Because of the distant areas of North Windward and North Leeward, the Government

is prepared to put on a limited amount of transportation to assist those persons who wish to come and I have indicated to some people from the Grenadines that if they make the arrangements I do not know how that could be done because it is with the boats from the Southern Grenadines, or from the Northern Grenadines that the Government would be prepared to accommodate also some transportation to pay for some transportation also for persons from the Grenadines to attend this event. If they wish to do so, they can get in touch during the course of the day, tomorrow with the Minister of Culture or the Honourable Senator Snagg, who is the Parliamentary Secretary for the Grenadines. We want to involve the entire nation in this exercise which brings to us great honour and glory.

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that on the programme, we are having primary school children, we are having calypsonians, we are having folk songs, patriotic songs, quadrille dancers, Carib ballet dancers, gospel songs, we are having dramatic performances, also there would be remarks made by Oswald Robinson of the World Gurifuna Council and the police band will provide music, so too, would the Sion Hill Euphorium Steel Band. It is very important for us to have the steel band in these enterprises. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, in that regard, I have received a letter and I must report it to the House from the President of the YULOUPAN Movement, Mr. Dougie 'Nose' Joseph in the following terms:

“On behalf of the steel band fraternity here at home and in the wider Caribbean greetings. It is with a sense of pride that I communicate to you the good news that St. Vincent and the Grenadines have been chosen to host the 2003 Caribbean Panorama Competition. The Executive committee of the Caribbean Steel Pan Association, (CARIPAN) took the decision at a meeting in St. Lucia over the last weekend. It was at your insistence that YULOUPAN Movement approached CARIPAN to hold a competition and now our bid has been successful we are extremely proud. We competed with four other countries to host the prestigious event; however we had the advantage over the others since our request was the only one that had the backing of the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance.” [Applause] “I now await your approval of a meeting to be convened at your convenience to discuss matters pertaining to the organization of the event.”

Of course we will in conjunction with the YULOUPAN Movement host the Caribbean Steel Pan Association Caribbean Panorama Competition next year 2003.

I am obliged, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE RENE BAPSTISTE:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I crave your indulgence to make one brief statement in respect of the heritage month activities. For the first time, in this country, Mr. Speaker, Government is taking the lead in recognizing the historic path and bringing to life that which is noble within us and forms part of our heritage. In doing so, we have on Friday the first of this month, named the area in the city of Kingstown, the Capital, of Granby Street, South River Road and Bonadie Street, as Heritage Square. The programme also continues, during the course of this week as the Honourable Prime Minister has indicated to this

Honourable House with the declaration tomorrow night. And I would invite every Vincentian, from all walks of life to be present because there will never be another first declaration of a national hero. You are living in exciting times when the Government is leading the people.

Our renowned historian Dr. Adrian Fraser will launch his book on the life and times of Joseph Chatoyer on Friday the 15<sup>th</sup>. As part of these celebrations, the National Youth Council has always been in the forefront of the advocacy of March 14<sup>th</sup> being declared as National Heroes Day. And they have kept up their advocacies in many ways with rallies and walks and races and wreath laying ceremonies at the Obelisk at Dorsetshire Hill. On March 14<sup>th</sup> it takes on a new significance Mr. Speaker, when it would be in like of the remembrance that we pay tribute to those who have fallen in World War I and World War II, at the Colonial Memorial. This is the people's memorial at Dorsetshire Hill. And I invite all to join the National Youth Council at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup>. There will be other rallies Mr. Speaker, at the Evesham Methodist School and at Sandy Bay and at Greiggs. Evesham begins at 2:00 p.m. Sandy Bay begins at 4:00 p.m. Greiggs at 4:00 p.m.

The month will continue next week; we will make the other announcements but I would like to inform the general public that a small group would be going over to Balliceaux for us to pay tribute to those who were left without a Shephard when Joseph Chatoyer fell in battle and they were taken to Balliceaux as the first step to exile and their blood cried out for justice. We are giving them that first justice by declaring their war hero, their leader in time of battle as our first National Hero. In respect of this decision, the Ministry of Tourism and Culture and the Department of Culture, Cultural Officer, Mr. Anthony Theobalds and the Research Officer, Mr. Michael Peters, in conjunction with UNESCO have caused to be published four booklets under the series known as our Cultural Heritage, Volume 1, Local Customs and Traditions, Volume 2, Activities and Entertainment, Volume 3, Festivals, and Volume 4, Famous Vincentians. Mr. Speaker, it is with pride and indeed a great honour for me as the Honourable Member and the Honourable Minister of Tourism and Culture in this Government to lay on the Table in accordance with the rules of this Honourable House these four volumes for the benefit of generations to come. [Applause].

Much Obligated, Mr. Speaker. And once again to the general public, be at Victoria Park tomorrow night. This is your moment in history. It will never happen again, be part of it. Thank you. [Applause].

## **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

### **MOTION**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that the proceedings of today's business be exempted under Provisions of the Standing Orders "Hours of Sitting" (S.O. 12(5)).

*Question put and agreed to.*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, may I just crave your indulgence in terms of the time. I believe that all Honourable Members would have received invitations for an event this evening which there would be a formal launching of the educational programme in St. Vincent and the Grenadines on the issue of Freedom of Movement, and deeper union. A matter which will be discussed today on the Order Paper. But that meeting is at 7:00 p.m. at the Methodist Church Hall, and Mr. Speaker, I have been asked to deliver the feature address, also the Director General of the OECS will address, so too the Leader of the Opposition. I think those are the persons I remember that are on the programme formally to make speeches, so I think it would be very helpful Mr. Speaker, if we could get out by 6:30 p.m. I just want to announce that one of the leading officials of the OECS Secretariat Mr. Jimmy Emmanuel is here today in the Gallery, Mr. Speaker, and I would just wish to recognize him and if perhaps may stand so that all members would see him. I am obliged.

**IMMIGRATION (RESTRICTIION) AMENDMENT BILL 2002**

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, I was absent the last meeting of the House and from the minutes I noticed that the report from the Select Committee is tabled in the House, so before I move the third reading, I would like that the report be adopted; but only to say, Mr. Speaker, that this Bill is an amendment to Cap. 78 that was here, which gave certain privileges to persons traveling or residing in St. Vincent, or want to reside in St. Vincent, or wanting to reside in St. Vincent where they had to apply to the Immigration Department for extensions. And they could be granted extensions up to a year. What this Bill, and I was told that it was debated last time, seeks to do, is to widen this section and as such Mr. Speaker, Section 5 of Cap. 78 there are two insertions that would, if this Bill is passed, would be inserted as Sections 4 and 5.

What it is saying Mr. Speaker, in short is that any person who is member of the Organisation of the Eastern Caribbean State and those States are Anguilla, Antigua, BVI, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts/Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Any citizen of those States, they would be able to establish their identity, not only primarily by a passport, but they can use their drivers' license, their National Identification Card, or their voters registration card, or social security card, so that if you, in cases where we have had problems, where people had lost their passports, or people hide their passports, their wives or husbands, because you do not want them to travel, this would not prevent them, because once you have your ID Card or any of these measures that I have reiterated earlier, then you would be able to still use this to travel to any of the countries of the Eastern Caribbean States.

Mr. Speaker, this is not something that St. Vincent alone is doing. I think the Prime Minister adverted to this earlier in his statement. It is a measure for the further deepening of Caribbean Integration. You would have known in the past that we had measures put in place where we

had a constituency assembly and we went all over the place having meetings, but nothing became of that, this I believe is a step in the right direction. We are taking it gradually, we are going piece by piece, we are having freedom of movement so to speak by Eastern Caribbean Citizens; we are moving towards the finalization of the Single Market for the entire Caribbean not only the Eastern Caribbean States, but also the other CARICOM States.

So I think this is welcomed, Mr. Speaker. Debate has been full on this and I do not think that I would need to take up much more of your time, but to ask that Mr. Speaker, that the report from the Select Committee for a bill, Mr. Speaker, to amend the Immigration Restriction Act Cap. 78 be adopted.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the bill be read a third time by title and passed.

**HONOURABLE SELMON WLATERS:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

*Question put and agreed to.*

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS BY PRIME MINISTER**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I crave your indulgence to say that what we have witnessed today, is a most historic event. Sometimes history is made very simply. At this very moment the Parliaments of St. Lucia and St. Kitts/Nevis and Antigua and Barbuda are going through this identical exercise. The House of Representatives in Grenada did so last Friday and the Senate, because that is a bicameral legislature will do so on the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> of this month and I said so before, the parliament in the Commonwealth of Dominica will do so on the 25<sup>th</sup> of this month. This is something which persons for generations have struggled. And it is unfortunate that on such a historic day it has been marred by exceptional political pettiness here in St. Vincent. But we will not allow that to detract from the fact that this measure has had the support of all members of the House including the Opposition at the time of the second reading and at the time of the Select Committee. I want to congratulate the OECS Secretariat for steadying and for being firm on this matter and on all my colleague Prime Ministers who have ensured that this matter is brought to a successful conclusion. There are other things still to be done, for instance the OECS passport next year, targeted January 1<sup>st</sup>.

Mr. Speaker, if I may just for the general public to explain that although the British Virgin Islands and Anguilla are not involved in this exercise and therefore they are not involved in any reciprocity. That we in St. Vincent and the Grenadines has a commitment to the deepening of the OECS union. We have accorded the citizens of those countries the same privileges as all

OECS nationals to enter St. Vincent and the Grenadines even though the people from St. Vincent and the Grenadines will not be able to enter Anguilla and the British Virgin Islands on the same terms. We will be able to do so in each of the other countries in the OECS. In Dominica, St. Lucia, in St. Kitts/Nevis, Antigua/Barbuda, in Grenada and in Montserrat. And I think the public should be made aware of that. I think this is a measure for Caribbean people and for young people and those who are enterprising. This is a day for immense celebration. Chatoyer must be turning where he is in joy, because he used to move freely in all these islands and now the children of Chatoyer in the same week he has been declared National Hero also getting the task completed where there is in a sense a reversion to when he and his colleagues were able to jump on a boat and go to Grenada without having to present a passport. This has given me immense personal joy.

### **CARRIAGE OF GOODS BY SEA BILL 2002.**

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the second reading of a bill for an Act to amend the law, with respect to Carriage of Goods by Sea.

**HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

#### *Question put and agreed to.*

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, this is a very, very important piece of legislation. It is legislation that would benefit developing countries, more so in the past. Cap 3 (60) of the Act that is being amended, there is a convention attached to this bill, called the Haige Convention. I am sorry that the Opposition members are not here because I am sure that this bit of legislation would have been to their interest especially those members from the Grenadines. That is not to be.

Mr. Speaker, the bill seeks to give more rights to persons who are shipping rather than ship owners, to put it in layman terms, where we have an interpretation for Carrier and for what is also known as Actual Carrier. The Carrier actually is mostly more to the owners of the ships, but what in short the bill seeks to do, is before, and if this legislation is passed, it would now widen the scope of the responsibility of ship owners more than these were in the past. In the past for instance, Mr. Speaker, the ship owner was only responsible for loss or damage occurring to any goods during the discharge, or the loading under the old Haige rules. Under the new one, ship owner is responsible for your goods, material, from the time they enter the ship, and once negligence can be proven, then that ship owner or by extension actual carrier because you know sometimes you can ship and goods are transshipped once, so that you have one ship taking it to a certain destination and another ship by transshipment taking it. There, both of them, or one or the other various times, they are responsible for the goods that you have shipped, once it is a contract and this contract does not have to be a formal contract as we know it, the Bill of Lading

is accepted as a contract, but once that is signed that is accepted as a contract that is binding to the ship owners.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the old Haige Convention there were a lot of ambiguities and there were a lot of uncertainties and all of these as you can understand were weighted in favour of the ship owners. Now in the convention you would see that there is a scope of application and this spells out that the provision of this convention once it is passed, is applicable to all contracts if the Port of Loading is provided in the contract, Carriage by Sea is located in the contracting States. We deposited our accession to the convention in 1978; it is a United Nation Convention. Now, but we have not done anything, we have done nothing legislatively to bring this thing up to date, and this is what we are here for today. But it spoke of the application, Mr. Speaker, which entails the Port of Loading as provided for in the contract, and remember I said before that a Bill of Lading is taken as a genuine contract. The Port of Discharge, so that the ship owners, the carriers they are responsible for your goods until they are offloaded and the consignee receive those goods. Now we are also told that the provisions of the conventions they are applicable without regard to the nationality of the ship, the actual carrier, the shipper or the consignee. What it means is that you cannot say that you have a St. Vincent and the Grenadines registered ship or a Panamanian registering ship and therefore they are not responsible for whatever happened if they go into a port say India or Burma or whatever it is. The scope of the contract, the provision of the convention that could do, without regard to whatever the nationality of the ship is.

Now this does not include charter parties; if you want to charter a ship the convention does not include that. If you want to charter a ship and you want to do whatever it is, that is an entirely different matter. You have to make your own arrangements. But as far as normal trading is concerned it is applicable to all parties. Now, the period of responsibility as I was saying before, it covers the period during which the carrier is in charge of the goods at the port of loading and during the carriage and at the port of discharge. So as I have said before once you load the goods on the ship then you are responsible. And I remember about two, three years ago, the banana association, or WINDBAN, or WIBDEDCO had some problem with GEEST. Because as you know we used to ship our bananas by GEEST, and we were having a lot of ship rights and nobody could understand this; until it was found out that the fault which was blamed on the farmers was really not the farmers fault. That there was something wrong with the refrigeration equipment in one of these ships for GEEST and therefore the bananas were not refrigerated to the temperature that they should be and therefore they were ripening more easily and readily than in normal circumstances. And it was a big fight to get GEEST to accept this because they say they were not responsible; eventually I think common sense prevailed and we did get something back from GEEST, not the whole quantum but we did get something back. When this is passed, we will have no problem from this because it is the responsibility of the ship owners in the term the carrier, to ensure that your goods reach to the port of destination and off loaded as the condition that you shipped it in.

Then Mr. Speaker, there is the basis of liability giving you time for delay, the time you have to appeal, the time you have to know that your goods did not arrive, in the conditions that it was shipped and therefore the carrier is responsible. Also the convention is very wide Mr. Speaker, live animals, there are certain different conditions for if you are shipping live animals, you can understand why this is so, which is not the same as for dry goods and other things like this. Now, there is an exemption there, the animals there are special risks involved and so on but these are conditions that you would have to work out with the carrier.

Mr. Speaker, the carrier is not responsible, there is a section here where the carrier is not responsible for the loss or damage or the delivery resulting from measures to preserve or to save lives. For instance we just have over the Christmas period where a ship was coming Trinidad and because they had rough seas and the ship was very laden they had to throw off a lot of the cargo because the ship was in danger of sinking and lives might be lost, in those circumstances once they can prove this, then the ship has the right to do this, and they are not then liable for loss or damage. In that case I believe that the insurance will take this up, because this was a result of measures taken to save lives.

Mr. Speaker, as I said it is a very comprehensive convention. It also deals with deck cargo, what you could store on deck, what you should not store on deck, if you ship something that is liable to be damaged or spoil by the weather and the carrier decide that you must put it on deck, rather than put it down in the hold, then they also are liable if they damage your merchandise.

Mr. Speaker, these are some of the measures. It gives you the issue of issuing a Bill of Lading as I said before and it bears repeating again. This is a valid contract, but what is important is that, if you the shipper you must state quite clearly and categorically and truthfully what is in that Bill of Lading. You cannot expect to be saying that you have potatoes in a bag, and you also have cocaine and marijuana in it, because in that case if this is found out the carrier is not responsible because you had lied on your Bill of Lading and therefore the contract now becomes null and void. So the onus is on the shippers to ensure that what you are shipping you state on the Bill of Lading exactly what it is and if there are any special conditions etcetera, these must be stated on the Bill of Lading and that they can be used as evidentiary effect. They can be used inside of the port because it is a valid contract. And it also gives you the guarantees by the shipper that the shipper as I stated before, to give the carrier the accuracy of the particulars relating to the general nature of the goods, their marks, numbers, weights, et cetera. Nobody is saying that you have to go into details to say that you are shipping some gold and some 10 carats and some are 14-carats, we are not talking about that, but we are talking about if you are going to ship gold but you must state on it that it is gold, et cetera. So it is very comprehensive convention Mr. Speaker, and I think that anyone here, would want to see that this is passed speedily so that at least our shippers and to a certain extent even our ship owners would know what is happening and they can benefit.

Now, this convention does not apply for ships trading between ports in St. Vincent, if you want to trade from here to Chateaubelair, or you want to trade from here to Union Island, or Bequia or Canouan. The convention does not because you are within your own jurisdiction. So it do not applicable if a ship is taking goods like the Roll on Roll Off we had, Admiral, et cetera, this does not apply to them once they are trading within our jurisdiction, but if they leave and they go out and they are going to Margarita and they are going out to Trinidad or St. Lucia, or Grenada, then this convention would be applicable.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think that there is very much more that can be said except to go into a lot of details, but in short I am asking that this bill have an easy passage. Thank you.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Any further debate?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, the economic importance of this bill cannot be overstated. St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a maritime country. A very important point to reflect upon; we, live by imports and exports, and we have a large number of ship owners and they ply the length and breadth of the Caribbean. It is very important therefore Mr. Speaker, that the Carriage of Goods by Sea be properly regulated. It benefits the ship owners in terms of the precision of the law and it benefits the persons who contract with the ship owners who carry goods by sea. One of the problems with the Old Haige Rules of the 1924 Russells Convention is that there was a large measure of impression. And as a consequence of experience of the Haige Rules that the United Nations in 1978 fashioned this convention called the United Nations Convention and the Carriage of Goods by Sea otherwise known as the Hamburg Convention, and this Bill Mr. Speaker, brings into domestic law the Hamburg Convention, this is really what this bill is doing. Last year this Government acceded to the convention by depositing its instrument of accession at the United Nations. Because you see, the general public needs to understand St. Vincent and the Grenadines as an independent country has to interface with its external environment in a manner which enhances the development of this country which improves the living standards of people; which contributes to organized trade, and which protects people who hire ships to carry their goods and the ship owners themselves. And whilst the government has to be addressing all sorts of other problems, it has to examine a whole range of conventions and to decide which conventions internationally we should sign, which we should accede to and beyond that to bring them into domestic law. An obvious one recently after September 11<sup>th</sup> is Resolution 1373 on the financing of terrorism by the United Nations. Sometimes people see the Attorney General's Chambers and the see the Minister of Legal Affairs, they see the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and they watch these lovely professional women and strong professional men going about their business and sometimes they grumble; people onlookers they do not know, and they would say watch them, all of them they nah do nothing they just ah go office and sit down. I know the saying, because in this country, some people feel that if you are not planting bananas, if you are not fixing fridge, motorcar, making bread or flour, you ain't working. And some people feel if you are not using your strength, you ain't working. People who go away and study like the

Attorney General here and her staff two of them behind her, to advise the government, and then there is Mr. Kamat who is an international legal expert who is up at the Ministry of Legal Affairs, the Office of the Attorney General; they are the people with the Attorney General, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs interfacing with the particular ministries, in this case with the Minister of National Security and Seaports, and the office of the Prime Minister and going through and studying all these conventions, come to the conclusion that this is in the interest of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and to make a law which incorporates the convention in our own domestic law, and I want to congratulate the Attorney General's Office, and her staff of draft persons, from the key legal drafts persons to all the others who work very hard, Mr. Kamat, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the ambassadors from overseas and the Ministry of National Security and Seaports.

Mr. Speaker, when these Hamburg rules were drafted by the United Nations, Commission on International Trade Law, they were drafted as Honourable Minister said to remove ambiguity and uncertainties under the old Haige Rules and to bring about a more equitable balance between the interest of the ship owners and the cargo owner. The old Haige Rules, everybody recognized that they were unfairly weighted in favour of the ship owner, the carrier in several respects. When this bill comes into effect, if this House passes it, as it is likely will happen today, when the Act comes into operation, the provisions of the Carriage of Goods by Sea Act, the old one Chapter 360 which contain the old Haige Rules, the provisions will be repealed, save as regards to contracts of Carriage by Sea made before the commencement of this new Act which they were otherwise to which they were otherwise applicable, so that if there is a contract made under the old law yesterday, or today, before the Governor General signs this and it is published and it is brought into effect, there is a saving for those contracts so that the old law would apply. But any new contract that arise after the passage of this act, and after it is assented and published, after the whole process has gone through this is the new law that would apply. And I want to re-emphasize what the minister says because I know that minister says because I know that there is a great deal of mischief abroad in this country. To tell you one of the greatest evils we have to confront while we are trying to develop this country is ignorance of persons who have a lust for power, and can't get it and it is like, or they cannot get it back, it is like their skin got Mammy Rose and Stinging Nettle. And the Mammy Rose and the Stinging Nettle get them so worked up that they would talk foolishness. And you will hear them say through the influence of Mammy Rose and Stinging Nettle that they bringing in this new law, they will tell the people in the Grenadines and other shippers, you see this new law they bring in, it impose a whole set of new obligations, so if you have to go by boat down to Chateaubelair, or to Fancy, or to go down to Union or Canouan, they bring in a law to tighten up things on you, the law specifically says that that is not the case. I want to read clause 3 (3) of this bill.

The Hamburg Rules shall not apply to any contract of carriage by sea from a port in St. Vincent and the Grenadines to another port in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. It goes on to say in Clause 4 "all parties to a contract of Carriage by Sea relating to the Carriage of Goods

from any place in St. Vincent and the Grenadines to any place outside of St. Vincent and the Grenadines are taken to have intended to contract according to the provisions of this Act.

So it only applies between St. Vincent and other places and other places and us. I want to state it because I know how ignorance goes and one of the things is this, it is two or three lies per day and when you correct, they gone to another two or three lies. It is leadership by lies. Leadership by mischief and malice that is what St. Vincent and the Grenadines, right thinking people are now confronting and that is why I say so long as I have breath in body I would never allow the return of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to the governance by the lowest common denominator. When I say that they say I mean people who have not gone to university. My mother never go university and my father never went, but I tell you, they had good upbringing. They are not the lowest common denominator. The hardworking farmers, workers are not the lowest common denominator. Do you know who are the lowest common denominator, those who want something for nothing and use criminal conduct to get the something for nothing that is the lowest common denominator. Like if you are working in the public service and you thief poor people's money and you make jail that makes you a lowest common denominator. And you shortly will become the lowest common denominator if you allow criminals and vagabonds who are the lowest common denominator to lead you. So what is facing St. Vincent and the Grenadines is an avoidance of rules by the lowest common denominator in which for them untruth, lies, deception are the order of the day. Decency, truthfulness, patriotism, love of country, those are not the things that enter the picture. What enters the picture for them is the gravy train and power. Well when I bring here, as the Minister for Legal Affairs on the 28<sup>th</sup>, an amendment to the commission of Enquiry Act, to amend the Act, so that more power could be given to the commission in a Commission of Enquiry where they can take evidence in any part of the world so that we could deal with Ottley Hall and some other things. People do not understand how this Government and how this Prime Minister moves you know. Everybody yap, yap, yap and wants to move at their pace, certain things I move faster, and certain things I move slowly. Because when I see on those matters that I move slow, be assured that it will grind finer, so them who you see involved in corruption and the commission of inquiry come, like in Ottley Hall, those who they got any wrong doing, and you see how I do not get involved with the Director of Public Prosecution, when they get the report if there is evidence to prosecute and jail man, they will do that. I do not have anything to do with that, I am getting on with the business of running government. That is not my job.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is one which is intended to strengthen the legal framework and the legal architect in St. Vincent and the Grenadines to assist in the development of this country, and I commend it to this Honourable House I am obliged.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Any further debate on the bill?

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, except to say, this convention was opened for signatory, after 30<sup>th</sup> of April, 1969. That is 23 years ago, this was opened for signature.

When we were told that we got a bad hand, we inherited a bad hand to play. I think I mentioned that we did not have any face cards, we did not even have a jack, and people do not seem to understand what we are saying. However, it is measures like these that we have to go back and put to right. Twenty- three years and this is not the only one. We had the Atlantic Tuna 1, and quite a few others that we had to rush to meet deadlines so that we would not be blacklisted. In addition, one wonders what used to happen in the Ministry of Legal Affairs. Very high-powered people there, but nothing seemed to have got done. We should not have to bring this bill here Mr. Speaker. This should have been here years ago. Moreover, as I stated earlier if this bill had become an Act and if we had denounced the old convention, at least bananas would not have been in the position it is now, we would have gotten a lot more money out of GEEST for those bananas we had to pay for due to ship rights and other measures. What is happening Mr. Speaker, is that once this bill is passed and it becomes law we have to then inform the government of Belgium who was the depository of the 1924 Convention that we have denounced it and that this convention will take place. And I do not have to spell this out, the Ministry of Legal Affairs and the Attorney General and the very capable members there would do all of this.

Mr. Speaker, I now move that the House resolves itself into a Committee of the whole House to consider the bill clause by clause.

**HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House went into committee.*

*House resumed.*

*Bill read a third time by title and passed with no amendments.*

## **INCOME TAX AMENDMENT BILL 2002**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move an Act to amend the Income Tax Act Chapter 312.

The objects and reasons of this Bill to amend Section 47 of the Income Tax Act by providing that the standard deduction under the Income Tax Act shall be increased to \$12,000.00 per annum with effect from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2001.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move under Standing Order 48(2), that this bill be taken through all its stages at today's sitting and passed.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I beg to move the second reading of an Act to amend the Income Tax Act Chapter 312 of the Revised Edition of the Laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

*Question put and agreed.*

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Do we have any debate on the bill?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, this is a very straight-forward bill, we are actually doing some work which the NDP administration ought to have done. The public would not believe it that they announced measures in their budget the last time they were here, as government and they did not pass the Act to give legal effect to what they had said. Maybe they were under too much pressure from the Unity Labour Party, at the time so they were bazzidy, they could not think straight. And they still are not thinking straight. But that is a separate question.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is simply to amend the Income Tax Act by increasing the standard deduction to \$12,000.00 per annum. It should have been done legal from 1 January 2001, it was not done, and we are just doing the tidying up work in this regard, so that persons can be assured that the standard deduction \$12,000.00 now will have as of today when this bill is passed the juridical effect. That is all I which to say about it Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Further debate?

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, it is a very simply bill, but not so simple in its connotation. I do not know whether persons who were supposed to benefit from the \$11,000.00 to start with; because you might remember Mr. Speaker, they had announced the \$12,000.00 and before that there was another \$11,000.00 and apparently even that was not put into the legal framework it should. But because it was announced I think the Income Tax Department might have taken cognizance of that and allowed or agreed for the \$11,000.00 deduction. But it highlights, Mr. Speaker, the inefficiency, the incompetence, and I remember when we were on the Opposition, and the Honourable Minister of Education, Mike Browne spoke about the incompetence and the inefficiency of the government then, that they were very annoyed, but every day we are finding out more and more that the thing is 100 times as bad as we thought they were. And we have to spend a lot of time cleaning up the mess, that was left, when we should really be getting on with new measures to move this country forward. And I want the public to understand this, that they feel that more should be done, some people feel that more should be done, but Mr. Speaker, we have to lay the foundation and ensure that the foundation is sound and safe before we start putting up the block walls and we've been spending a lot of time, a lot of energy, a lot of manpower. And I am wondering sometimes, if this was not deliberate, that the NDP realizing that they were going out, deciding well, why

should we bother, let us leave them with the mess until they would have to spend time to clean up the mess.

We supported the measure, the \$12,000.00 because we feel that it is something that would benefit the country; to benefit those poor persons who cannot claim a lot for insurance other things that you cannot claim normally. And so I will support the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance in asking that this measure be speedily taken through all its courses. I wish it a speedy passage, Mr. Speaker.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful for the comments of the Minister of National Security, and if I may strengthen what he has been saying about the mess that was left for us to clean up, and I am talking here now about the legislative mess. When we came to office, things like these were not done, in putting announcements, public policies on a juridical footing. This country is a nation of laws, not of men. You have to enact laws, that is how proposals come forward, either they are there is existing laws, and you are permitted to have executive action within the framework of those laws or you have to bring new laws. That is why you have Parliament, and that is why it is important that you come to Parliament, but Mr. Speaker, when we came in we had the following blacklists, on St. Vincent and the Grenadines. We want the public to remember it because we have done so much over the past 11 months that sometimes they forget it, they take what has happened for granted, some people, including some of our own supporters. We met a threatened blacklist by the International Maritime Organization, that if we did not put our house in order, by the end of May, we would have been on International Maritime Organization blacklist, which would have made us lose \$4 million a year through merchant shipping, registering them. The NDP government had signed the 1995 convention, for six years they did nothing, in less than two months we had to come to Parliament several times, we came with an amendment first, to make the IMO know in London that we are putting our house in order. Came with a second one, important pieces of legislation, then we had to prepare a thick body of regulation to be approved by Cabinet, and we did them with about two weeks to spare. We met the deadline that saved us. We went on the white list.

Mr. Speaker, we met the threatened ICCAT blacklist. The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna, that if by June 30<sup>th</sup> we did not take certain measures, measures which were known to be taken for six, seven years, we had to come with legislation, I had to write 18-20 Heads of Government throughout the world in Africa, in Asia, in Europe, including the United Kingdom to support us, right here from the Caribbean too, to support us at the ICCAT and we staved off the retaliatory action, because they saw what were trying to do and we are almost complete with that process, but we first of all had to stave off the blacklist.

Then the Offshore Finance Sector had two blacklists, that of the OECD, the Organization for Economic Corporation and Development consisting of all the major developed countries in the world, they said that this country was an uncooperative tax haven. Mr. Speaker, just three weeks ago in this House and at a public meeting the Leader of the Opposition said that because

of the Nano Issue the government will never get off the OECD blacklist. Although we have done everything correct on the Nano issue, and the Court has upheld us, he still living in a dream world, his head bazzidy, he eat too much food at nights and he is seeing all kinds of strange dreams.

Mr. Speaker, we set about reforming the Offshore Finance Sector, change the regulatory framework, alter the legislation, interfaced with the representative from the OECD here and overseas, and before the 28<sup>th</sup> February, the OECD and ourselves came to a conclusion about certain matters and we signed a letter of commitment on certain things and it was announced in Paris, I saw a new report on it, that St. Vincent and the Grenadines will not appear on the OECD blacklist at the end of March. [Applause]. They have not sent us the new list yet, but they announced in Paris where they are headquartered that we would not be on it.

Then there is the FATF the Financial Action Task Force, there are 25 point criteria, the NDP administration had us labouring under that blacklist almost on every criterion we were blacklisted, we have now made progress on 22 of the 25 criteria and they are not taking any defensive measures against us, and Mr. Speaker, we intend that by June when another assessment would be made by the FATF we would have put all the legal and regulatory mechanism in place to set the stage to come off that blacklist too, but of course, the FATF would want to see us in addition to the laws what we put in place and the framework to see how they are working for a few months. So I am targeting June, for us to get everything in order, but that does not mean that we would get off the FATF in June, but the important thing is that there are no defensive measures to be taken against us because of where we are cleaning up this sector.

Do you know one of the points, one of the criteria on which they found the NDP administration guilty is that they said that in the offshore finance sector there was corruption. That is what the FATF said in the recent assessment, they said that the measures we have taken, the transparency, that they do not see corruption in the offshore sector again the way we are regulating it. Those are facts. And then Mr. Speaker, do you know they left us with a ramshackle legal architecture in the Fugitive Offenders Act, where when the Americans sent out their warrant for Mr. Nano, because he is a citizen of St. Vincent and the Grenadines you could not have held him on a charge of money laundering from overseas because that was not one of the offences for which extradition was permitted. Within a week, we addressed that matter; within one week we changed the law and we changed it when we brought to the House the Proceeds of Crime and Money Laundering Act, and the British High Commissioner out of Barbados sent me a magazine out of Britain, a magazine which assesses these things and they say the law we passed the Proceeds of Crime and the Money Laundering Prevention Act that it is a model piece of legislation which should be copied by other countries; little St. Vincent. I want to repeat it, passed here in this Parliament; a specialist journal in the United Kingdom wrote that, then this morning Mr. Speaker, the executive director of the St. Vincent Chamber of Industry and Commerce called me, Mr. Leroy Rose, he said he just got an e-mail message from

his daughter, and he would not mind me saying this, because he brought it to my attention. The comment before she goes into the article,

“Hi Dad, I saw this article today, it looks like St. Vincent and the Grenadines has finally done the right thing and it seems that the legislation is good.”

What is she talking about, the Proceeds of Crime and Money Laundering Prevention Act] and she then quotes an article and I want to read it from a news service in Britain called CompliNet, and it reads:

“Headline: St. Vincent’s new law, in many ways a model.”

In other words, this Parliament with this Government you know, dealing with the Proceeds of Crime, and Money Laundering, we pass a law which the people in England are saying is a model piece of legislation, done right here without any fanfare. No offshore financier brought \$5,000.00 to write the laws, like how Mitchell and Arnhim Eustace, Sir James and the Leader of the Opposition got Tim Scramton to come and write laws for St. Vincent. Nano hired the man to write the laws for Mitchell and the Leader of the Opposition government. Here what is says.

‘St. Vincent and the Grenadines has passed the Proceeds of Crime Money Laundering Regulations 2002. The regulations will be followed by a set of guidelines for affected financial services businesses. Among the provisions is the abolition of anonymous accounts. The transition period is very short, only one year during which all existing anonymous accounts must be identified. The regulations are unusual in having a codify identification procedure for those seeking to open bank accounts. [I want to read that] The regulations are unusual, in having a codified identification procedure for those seeking to open bank accounts. The 2002 regulations follows on from the Proceeds of Crime and Money Laundering Prevention Act 2002. This Act includes a number of measures of Asset seizure that still elude a number financial Action Task Force member jurisdictions. Strong information gathering powers and powers to detain cash on import or export. There is a remarkably simple provision relating to the burden of proof and it is one of such clarity and force that all those who would draft legislation should learn from it. [I want to read that again. It is not me who is saying so it is the English people, saying so. Let me read it again]. There is a remarkably simple provision relating to the burden of proof and it is one of such clarity and force that all those who would draft legislation should learn from it, where the burden of proof is put onto the defendant is to prove on the balance of probabilities but where it is on the prosecution the burden is to be on the common law burden of beyond reasonable doubt and it is how it is done with simplicity. The definitions of financial institutions that will be subject to regulatory provisions of the act are wide and include money services businesses and again going further than many so called better regulated countries, St. Vincent and the Grenadines

going further than many so called better regulated countries, of postal courier services, the list of affected activities includes lawyers, accounts and anyone offering casino internet gambling, pool betting and lottery agents.

Again, this is far wider than most FATF countries, now the FATF is those countries who are judging us now you know, but our law they are saying in England is even better in this regard than theirs. The Act provides for suspicious base reporting and there is no requirement for transaction base reporting. In addition, there is the Financial Intelligence Unit Act 2001, which creates an FIU to receive suspicious transactions reports and act appropriately. Mr. Speaker, the Director for the Financial Intelligence Service Mrs. Bollers, a lawyer from up in the DPP's office, she has already been appointed, she is just helping out with the rest of the assizes, and she would be on her job from the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, implementing this legislation. Do you see the mess that we have to clean up? And when I listen`1 to the liars and those who wallow in mischief. Those who are nothing but the lowest common denominator, when I listened to them, and you see what this government has done in 11 months, I repeat, the struggle that the people of this country have now on their hands, not only to make sure that we move forward in progress as we have been moving that never again must the lowest common denominator see the door of any ministerial building to say that they are occupying them as government. [Applause].

And Mr. Speaker, there is more mess which we will be cleaning up as I have said, we have studied the Commissions of Inquiries Act very carefully, and it needs to be strengthened to give wider powers so that some of our supporters who say that it is only one inquiry on, do not worry, just like we made all the promises to you and we are fulfilling them, we are dealing with each of the promises one by one.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable House resolves itself into a committee of the whole House to consider this bill clause by clause.

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House went into committee.*

*House resumed.*

*Bill read a third time by title and passed with no amendments.*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I would just like to report to the Honourable House that there is no Select Committee report for the National Parks Bill, or the National Lottery Authority Bill. The committees have not met; hopefully, we will do so before the next meeting of the House. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, other than the Bill in the name of the Honourable Speaker, the only one

that will remain for this afternoon will be the Management of Ship-Generated Solid Waste Bill 2002 for the second reading and thereafter.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I think this is a convenient time for us to take a break for lunch. I beg to move that this House stands suspended for the luncheon period until 2:30 p.m. It is now 1 o'clock.

*Question put and agreed to.*

SUSPENSION 1;00 p.m. (LUNCH)  
RESUMPTION 2:45 p.m.

## **MANAGEMENT OF SHIP-GENERATED SOLID WASTE BILL 2002**

**HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I beg to move the second reading of bill for an Act to provide for the powers and jurisdiction in relation to pollution of seas from ships; prevention of pollution from hips, prevention of pollution from solid waste; and other incidental matters.

**HONOURABLE SELMON WALTERS:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

*Question put and agreed to.*

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

**HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, this bill follows in a series of very important bills that have been debated and passed in this Honourable House over the past several months and certainly today and earlier, we heard discussions of the related bill. This bill will be dealing with the whole issue of protection of our environment and specifically our marine environment. But our environment being much more than the marine, it is the air that we breathe, the land on which we live and the waters in the rivers and the seas, from which we get nutrition; from which we get commerce, from which we earn foreign exchange in the important business of tourism.

So Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members it is important that as a responsible government that we formulate legislation that will put us in a very strong position to manage our resources, to protect our environment so that our country, the region will have sustainable development. This bill will apply to all ships registered under the flag of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and to all ships within the territorial and economic zone of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, which is 200 nautical miles from the shore. The background of this bill we will make reference to the Marpoll of '78, which is an international convention. It was designed specifically on recognition of the damage done to the environment, especially in this case the marine environment, by international shipping and other activities. Countries the world over

recognized that deleterious effect of dumping of solid and liquid waste and other toxic substances in our waterways will eventually affect the environment to such a negative point that development of countries would be affected. And so in their wisdom they developed this convention and this bill is to a great extent an extraction of these investigations that came up with the convention.

We in St. Vincent and the Grenadines form part of the OECS territories that have worked together in formulating this bill, as I said an extract from Marpoll convention to address our problem. It is important to note that in late 1990 the Caribbean region was annexed as a new special area, and special area where we found in Annex 1 of this bill, which outlined a series of areas mainly oceans or seas the world over that have been regarded as special areas. Some of them are the Mediterranean Sea, the Baltic Sea area, the Black Sea, the Red Sea, et cetera, and also the Antarctic area. And those of us who are very much au fait or read a lot about the environment; or are environmentally conscious will know about the care that is taken to protect the natural beauty and the environment of these areas. Therefore, the Caribbean region was added to this, the area in which we live. This is a special area.

And so Mr. Speaker, the whole question of governance is important in the debate of this bill. Because we have seen over the years that issues are debated internationally that affect us here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. We have heard lip service being paid to them, but the necessary legislation were not proposed nor debated nor enacted, and quite often we end up in serious problems. We have heard about examples right here debated here this morning by the Honourable Minister National Security. You would recall, and one of them that really stuck in my head, is when we almost got blacklisted for not enacting the proper legislation for the IMO where we almost lost up to \$5 million. I think it is important that listeners recognize these things. Because you know in debating a bill like this, it is a little heavy on the ears, probably on the average listener out there, because it is technical and the majority of our listeners are more interesting in hearing the raw politics and the issues of economics. However, these bills, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members do have significant impact on these very things that the average listeners are concerned about.

Take for example; this bill is going to put in place legislation that will seek to prevent the indiscriminate dumping of ship generated waste, especially solid waste in our oceans, or in our seas near by, and should violation of this legislation be carried out, penalties are in place and some substantial penalties up to \$500,000 for example for breaking these regulations. Now if we do not have these legislation enacted technically speaking, ships on our seas can indiscriminately dump garbage and other waste without being penalized because there is not legislation to govern that Act and so Mr. Speaker, we can see how important it is to enact these laws. Because the environment today, the whole issue of studies of the environment is so important. Almost everything that you hear today is related to the environment, and everybody is environmentally conscious, and so they should be and especially in the Caribbean region and I just want to read the definition of the wider Caribbean region. It is defined in the Marpoll Convention in Article 2, paragraph 1 of the Convention of the Protection and Development of

the Maritime Environment of the wider Caribbean region in Cartagena 1983. It means the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea proper including the bays and seas, therein and that portion of the Atlantic Ocean within the boundary constituted by 30 degrees north parallel from Florida eastward to 77 degrees, 30 minutes west Meridian. Thence a round line to the intersection of 20th degree north parallel, and I guess those persons who are fans of geography can be able to trace this, thence to another line southwesterly to the eastern boundary of French Guiana. So that is in our Caribbean basin area.

Now, it is very important that we classify this area as special area; in fact, just recently on two occasions I had the honour of representing our country at international forum, one in Colombia, Cartagena, where this was discussed, and in Canada where Ministers of the Environment and Ministers of Health were discussing among other things the effect of improper environmental management on smaller island developing State; such as us here in the Eastern Caribbean. They considered it so important that communiqués have been prepared to be presented at the world summit for sustainable development in South Africa to be conveyed at the end of August to September. This is very important because the scientists, the policy makers have recognized how important it is to protect our environment and so we must do our part in St. Vincent and the Grenadines by enacting proper legislation to cover this issue.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I want to say that we have had problems in the past, and these problems I think are derived from what have been said before either incompetence or lack of recognition of the importance of doing certain things that can be classified as good governance. We may recall Mr. Speaker, that for several years what is now known as the Solid Waste Management Project, a project that is an OECS project founded by international agencies has been trying to settle in. Because part of this legislation, in fact, where the solid waste management project will be responsible ultimately for the management of ship generated waste. It took years of several problems to really get it going. And it was not, I would say, until last year when the new administration came into effect that we really started to push to ensure, I am not saying that the previous administration did not do some work. I am saying that it was some added fire, by the ULP government, based on our promise in our manifesto, to significantly address questions of the environment and health, because we want a nation that is clean, healthy and we as policy makers must do our part to do so.

You would recall that coming towards the end of the year, or even before that there was the big move by the Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Health and the Environment, Ministry of Transport to clean up Kingstown, to clean up St. Vincent and the Grenadines. And a good job was done. But Mr. Speaker, cannot be ended by one on. And then it was the responsibility of the government to see to it that that initial cleaning up, it was if just before our coming into office there was a bad boy out there that was playing around in all the mud and you give him, his first bath, clean up all the dirt and then you put on some new clothes. But, you want to ensure that he continues to sit clean and in decent clothes, and so our government put some fire on the Solid Waste Management, and you may recall that coming towards the end of the year 2001 the Solid Waste Management project was told that they must provide an adequate

collection service for garbage for the extreme ends of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and in fact all of St. Vincent and the mainland. This at first had seemed impossible but because of the political will, and thanks to the hard work and effort of the management of the Solid Waste project it was done. Mr. Speaker, this is interesting, you know, because quite often we hear the opposition say that this cannot be done, you can't do that, and time again we demonstrate not just to them but to the citizens of St. Vincent and the Grenadines that what this Unity Labour Party says it will do, it can do and it does. [Applause].

This Act Mr. Speaker, will certainly put the responsibility on the Masters or sea captains and on their owners to properly store waste that would otherwise be dumped in the open sea and we want to let you know, that even though this law is applicable mainly to international shipping I want to take this opportunity to ask our local shipping agents and our local shippers, including even small pleasure boats that they too out of a sense of civic duty, it would be interesting that they adhere to some of the requisite of this law, such as at no time should plastic be dumped in the open seas. We all see on land, it is much more visible how damaging plastic is to the aesthetic; the beauty of the surrounding. You go to the banana area, and I do not mean in anyway to put the pressure on my colleague the Minister of Agriculture here, but certainly in agriculture activity we do see a lot of blue plastic all over the place, which creates a bad impression to the eye, that is the aesthetic. Just imagine if these are thrown in the sea where you cannot see easily what happens is that these plastics do cause pollution at the bed of the sea and even on the surface. The tides move and the tides move these plastics to our beaches.

And Mr. Speaker, this is very unsafe, because St. Vincent and the Grenadines right now depends mainly on tourism for our foreign exchange earnings. And our tourism in St. Vincent and the Grenadines is based mainly, the tourists come here, because of our beautiful beaches and seas, if we do not do what is necessary to protect this marine environment, and then we allow for plastics and other waste materials to be washed up by the tides on our pristine beaches then the tourists will complain. The tourists will stop coming and it is not just the parliamentarians that will have the problem; because the earnings that are derived from tourism are the same earnings that go into the social sector, the same earnings that pay salaries for everybody. The same earnings that patches the roads, clean the drains, provide employment and food for all of us. So Mr. Speaker, that is why I said at the beginning, even though the debate on some of these bills may not catch the attention of our "common folk" out there it is important to them that we do what we are doing here, because in the long run we all benefit from these.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the environment, you will hear a lot about the environment because this is basically what this bill is seeking to address, the improvement of the environment, and when we talk about the environment we must add here what are the responsibilities. I said earlier that the responsibility lies mainly with the owners, captains and masters of these ocean wind vessels or pleasure crafts, because it also applies to pleasure crafts. In fact it says, any craft, the tonnage of more than 400 tonnes gross, or craft carrying more than 15 passengers are covered by this legislation. But we must not just look at the marine

environment. Because marine pollution may start from the land, and I know that my colleague, the Minister of Tourism would have very special interest in this legislation, because it is the responsibility mainly of her ministry and all of us, as Parliamentarians and as citizens to ensure that our country remains in a state of aesthetic beauty. We must try and prevent the deforestation. We must try and prevent wanton disposal of garbage in public places, at the sides of the road, and we are moving very well in accomplishing that.

Mr. Speaker, the solid waste project which has established a landfill, because over the past several years you have been having a dump. A dump is unacceptable. We have provided a landfill, we have provided trucks and they are doing a very good job. One would notice Mr. Speaker, some of the public skips are gradually being removed, because the trucks come around in all areas at least once per week. I want to take this opportunity to ask our citizens to contribute to contribute towards the protection of our environment by respecting the laws of the land, by listening for the notices of the Solid Waste Management Department, to know when to put out their garbage because if you do not what happens, is that if you put out, for example if the truck passes this morning, and you miss the truck and you put out the garbage tonight, certainly the doors and sometimes even vagrants are going to rummage in them and you are going, the thing about it, these garbage are going to be next to your house. They are going to fly about, making your yard dirty and possibly can spread disease. In fact, if you do not take care of your garbage, rodents like rats, can get involved in them and spread disease such as leptospirosis which are deadly.

Also these waste materials, if they are not properly cared for, quite often end up in the rivers and ravines not only by the wind by the willful disposal by citizens and this is unacceptable. So citizens please we want you to discontinue that practice of disposing garbage in our rivers. And the connection here Mr. Speaker, is that all rivers run into the sea, therefore any contamination of our streams, our rivers will eventually contaminate our marine environment, that is the sea. What is important here is that contamination of the sea does not only affect the beaches and its aesthetic beauty, but it affects the food chain, what is called bio diversity. Now, the sea has a very large range of living animals and these are important, because we have what is called the food chain which is a very microscopic animals are eaten by little smaller animals, little shrimp, later eaten by a bigger fish which is food for another size fish and some of them are food for us.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members we may recall that a few years ago, I think it is probably three years ago there was a big scare in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and in fact several Caribbean islands, when there was a huge fish kill and for months in fact, I knew persons who did not eat fish for up to a year, and this severely affected our economy. The fisher folk of this country for whom I hold great respect, these citizens suffered and suffered greatly. They suffered because of contamination of the sea by some of these very things that this legislation is trying to prevent and control. But it is not just they that suffered; it is their family who suffered and the economy of St. Vincent and the Grenadines suffered because I think, I cannot remember the exact figures, but I know millions worth of earnings were lost during that time, and most of our fisher folk are bread winners for large families and our national poverty line did rise. Mr.

Speaker, Honourable Members therefore, it is for reasons like these that this legislation is so important and why all of us citizens should be interested in it, and in any way that they might be involved should try and ensure that the laws are respected.

In this legislation, we would note that monitoring and assessment of the effects of pollution are the responsibilities of the relevant ministries. In this case the Ministry of Health and the Environment, but it may at times be the responsibility of the Ministry of National Security through the Coastguard and we have to ensure that certain rules, regulations are in place, and we can see these in sections 8 and 9 of this legislation. We see here in the monitoring and assessment that certificates for the monitoring of the ships log for the management of solid waste et cetera, must be kept on the ships, and the validity of these certificates are intact from one jurisdiction to the other, because it is a regional and by extension and international legislation where if you are granted a certificate in St. Vincent and the Grenadines it holds validity in other signatory nations to this legislation.

It also, shows that nations share responsibility. Nations of the Marpoll states share responsibility for communicating violations of this legislation and to cooperate in the detection and or violations and enforcement of penalties. This is noted in Cap. 364 and will note however that part of the penalties is that any ship found guilty may be delayed and at the discretion of the port master be charged or fined, may also or maybe sent to the next port of repair; and I hope that enacting this legislation may find some work for the Ottley Hall Marina, should we find any such ship in our waters that should be sent to the next port of call for repairs, and also however, we must note no undue detail to ships should be put in place by the relevant authorities. And we see this outlined in Cap. 364 subsection 12, (1 and 2).

So Mr. Speaker, it is a long legislation with several technical areas. Part 2 of the Act goes into more detail of the prevention of pollution by solid waste. We discussed already the special areas, protected areas. We discussed about the different details of substances that are not acceptable; the details are there on page 12 section 1, 2, 3 to 4. It is important to note some exemptions and some of the exemptions are seen in sub section 21. Where the section shall not apply to the disposal of solid waste from the ship or pleasure crafts where the disposal is necessary to secure the safety of the ships, and those on board or for the saving of lives at sea. And that is understandable and acceptable. If it is necessary to dispose materials as some of us know when a ship meets rough waters may have to do some dumping of the materials on board, certainly we cannot stick to the legislation when persons lives are at stake. Or another one is the escape of solid waste resulting from damaged to the ship or its equipment provided that all reasonable precautions have been taken before and after the damage to prevent or minimize the escape. Now, Mr. Speaker, we have to understand the importance of this because the Caribbean Sea is an important shipping lane for oil tankers and we know, we have heard of the damaging effect of oil spills on the shores of many countries. I could remember that big spill in Canada. I cannot remember the name of the ship now, but it caused billion of dollars of damage. We cannot afford this happening on our shores, because we must do what is within our responsibility to enact legislation so to protect our environment.

Now, record keeping Mr. Speaker, is very important because this legislation will guide us towards what are the necessary record keeping on the ships and also on the shore by the relevant authorities. Here I speak of the solid waste management authority because we have to keep records of what type of material been disposed so that we can give instructions of how to deal with this material, because you are seeing some parts of the legislation where they described where the distances from the shore where certain classification of materials may be disposed of. For example food waste, you may grind it up, cut it up in certain sizes and distribute it over three nautical miles away from the shore, certain other material would have to be twelve miles or twenty miles off. So these are details that must be kept and each ship is required to have posted in a very specific place a list of these regulations and also on shore the port authority should have in its repository a copy of this legislation and also related legislation especially the Marpoll Convention that can guide the employees and the shipping staff as to what is expected of them. So this legislation gives a very wide coverage of what is required.

In case of any, for example Mr. Speaker, it outlines the procedure of what must be taken in the case of accidental disposal of waste at sea. In this case, the ships captain or master or owner is required to report within 48 hours, to the nearest, in this case in our jurisdiction, to our port master, to our director. This is important and as I said before they should have a record of details of what the cargo of what the waste material is, so that the responsible authorities can have an idea of what is the potential damaging effect of such disposal so that you can put in mitigation, that is measures to minimize the damage. And after having received this information the legislation outlines the steps to be taken by the port master, communicate this information to the solid waste management authority to do the necessary. Mr. Speaker, it is therefore, important that the relevant personnel at the port, the relevant personnel in the Ministry of Health and the Environment become very au fait with this legislation so that we know how to act in the event of such a disaster.

Mr. Speaker, have to emphasize the importance of this bill for our environment. Mr. Speaker, as an environmentalist myself by training, and I am sure all of us, citizens of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, across the political divide. I guess I might be famous for saying these things; the environment and its damages do not really understand political divide. Just as how as I said before the mosquitoes do not know who is PPM and ULP and NDP. The damage done to our environment, and there is a reason Mr. Speaker, why I am saying this because it has been brought to our attention in the Ministry of Health and the Environment that there are persons from the other side of the political fence, that willfully at times just to embarrass the Government that is what they think they indiscriminately dispose of garbage.

Mr. Speaker this is unacceptable, and then they would come on the radio and talk about the inefficiencies of the garbage system and how nothing is being done. But the thing about it seems that some of them are blind because I think in all honesty people, friends and relatives who come to St. Vincent very often and they would comment to you that there is a significant improvement in the appearance of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and city Kingstown. So when

persons try to play pettie politics to try to make the place dirty, after all it is our country. It is not the NDP country or the PPM country or whatever, it is our country and we must, Mr. Speaker, discourage, all of us, and it is unfortunate that the Opposition should choose today, for many reasons that they should choose today to absent themselves from this Honourable House, because this morning we passed some historical legislations. I would not have wanted to even be overseas much more to be out of the House today at the passage of these legislations.

And certainly the Opposition has a responsibility not only to their supporters but especially the Representatives they have a responsibility to this Honourable House, to the citizens of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to participate in the debate of the House, to have their input so that when bills like these are discussed they share common ownership and responsibility to encourage our citizens, their supporters, our supporters and non supporters of either party to respect the laws and to help all of us. Because you know there is a common thing, people go out and say it is government this and government own so that you can do anything and is government so you can do this. And I always say that people must understand what is government. Government is much more than the Parliamentarians here.

In fact when we have government expenditure, and I think our citizens need to understand this that when we spend money in Government it is not Prime Minister's Gonsalves that takes it out of his pocket, nor Minister Walters, nor Minister Baptiste, nor the Opposition Leader it is the taxpayers of this country. The taxpayers of this country who are all of us, directly or indirectly have to foot the bill of cleaning up our country of governing this country, if you do not recognize that then you need to do so sooner rather than later. It is therefore the responsibility of any government that is worthwhile directing the process of this country, and in this case the Unity Labour Party Government sole fit this bill, to take responsible decisions, firstly to recognize the need for important legislation and this important, because as you know, we all learn when we come to Parliament and I am in a steep learning curve still.

I entered Parliament in 1998 and it was not until this administration came into governance that I realize what it really meant to be a legislature, because the year or two that was spent in Opposition there was hardly any legislation move forward, even those that were vital to have the country ticking over were postponed or ignored and really we saw a government of that day, just trying to hold on to basically hold on to what was called governance but not doing what was necessary for proper governance and it was as I said not until we reached on this side and I must take this opportunity to thank and congratulate the Attorney General's Office, [Applause]. Because when we look through these legislations they are not simple you know, I could imagine even for legal experts on this side, such as Minister Baptiste, the Honourable Prime Minister and the Honourable Minister of National Security because if though he is not formally yet from a university, but we do consider him one of our legal experts. Yet goatskin but yet he can handle. Senior Counsel.

You know when we go through these clauses and subsection it must be an onerous task on the Attorney General's Office but what is even more difficult Mr. Speaker, is that they come fast

and furious and as fast we bring them, I know that the Honourable Attorney General and her staff are there backing us up to present legislation that help us in the Government to better manage the affairs of this country and this is very important Mr. Speaker. And our listeners must recognize this, because usually in parliamentary debate before I did not think that firstly this did not come up, and the level was not where people, firstly they were not hearing it to start with, they were not knowing of what was going on, but we need to know because it is important that our citizens develop their understanding of governance because I think to some extent that it is why the past regime lost. Because they did not communicate with the people and to some extent even now we need to communicate with our people, let them understand what is governance; how you make laws, why you make laws, or the benefits of making laws and certainly even if it means making a law would save St. Vincent \$5 million as it did when we came in that at least would make them understand but laws like this by protecting our environment will save us many more millions because as I said before if we do not do it our seas get polluted, we lose food supply, we lose on tourism and therefore our economy will contract, and that will just sink us into more poverty.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members the part five of this bill deals with the administration, the powers of the administration, of the Minister to make regulations because there are provisions because life is a dynamic affair. As time goes on we may find that legislation, that today are effective, may later no longer be so and we have to respond to this dynamism, and so there would be provisions for regulations that see fit by the authorities. We also have to delegate administrative duties to other authorities. We have in this legislation provided for the protection of our public officers in the administration of their duties and it is outlined in the legislation in more details on page 31, part 5 subsection 35, right down to 49, the regulation for fees, stamp duties, et cetera. There is a responsibility for the director, of maritime affairs to maintain documents and other regulations, notices et cetera and it is important Mr. Speaker, to note in cases where there might be some conflict between this Act and the International convention, the Marpoll Convention should prevail.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members this Act as I said before very detailed, plenty but important. It is one that as I said before to guide St. Vincent and the Grenadines as to how we can best manage our environment. Already in place as we said the Solid Waste Management authority, we have now a landfill, this government is in the process of looking into the improving the liquid waste water, this too is critical, because we have some problems at some of our beaches contamination some of the members at the Ministry of Health have been providing me on a weekly basis with monitoring results of some of our beaches, which we must address. We have to find solutions to these problems; these are problems that have been going on for years, Mr. Speaker, no serious attempts have been made by the previous administration to really address them. It is now the task of this administration to really address that. It is now part of this administration to do so, and I can assure you Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members that this administration is committed, is capable and within our resources will address these problems.

And so Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members this piece of legislation is most important and I am pleased to have had the opportunity to open my batting in piloting a bill with this which is so dear to my previous professional life, an issue of the environment because the survival of mankind, fellow Vincentians of the region of mankind depends to a large extent on how we treat our environment and so Mr. Speaker, I wish that this legislation may have an easy passage and I doubt, that there should be any problem with passage of this, it is timely, it is overdue but now we are here with it. I am much obliged.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I want first of all to congratulate the principal draftsman of this Bill, Mrs. Judy Daniel Julian, the Legal Consultant and Environmental lawyer from Trinidad and Tobago, who was hired under the OECS Solid and Ship Generated Waste Management project founded by the World Bank. The original bill, which she drafted, was reviewed in the Office of the Attorney General.

I want also, Mr. Speaker, to join my colleague, the Minister of Health and the Environment for regretting the absence of the Opposition from the debate of this most critical bill relating to the environment. It is perhaps ironic, Mr. Speaker, that the people of East Kingstown are without their current representative, to listen to the debate that is to say the Leader of the Opposition when their immediate past representative Mr. Carlyle Dougan QC find time from his busy law practice to come and listen here in the House to this debate. [Applause]. It is in my view Mr. Speaker, it is a clear indication that the New Democratic Party must have made an error to cause to be replace my friend Mr. Dougan with the Leader of the Opposition in East Kingstown, because he obviously is paying greater attention to the interest of the people of East Kingstown, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines more generally in that he is here to listen to this debate, unfortunate he is not here, he cannot participate in the debate but who knows that the pressure on the Leader of the Opposition may be such that we may well see the return of Carlyle Dougan. Certainly the people of East Kingstown were far better represented, and one thing I know for sure, Mr. Speaker, if you may just permit me, to heckle the Leader of the Opposition that there is no way that when Mr. Carlyle Dougan ran for that constituency in 1989, and 1994 and he has gone back in 1998 that he would have won by mere 27 votes; because the record shows that he was always a substantial winner and in fact, on both occasions in 1998, and the year 2001 the current representative in East Kingstown won only because he received the tremendous support of Mr. Dougan who went on the platform and who importantly did house to house campaign to bring out to his die hard supporters and actually to tutor him as to what were the boundaries of that constituency. But as I understand it, the ingratitude of the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for East Kingstown is such that he seeks to excuse Mr. Dougan from any activities even though he is substantially responsible for handing him the seat in both 1998 and the year 2001 but that is how people can be. Old people say ungratefulness is worst than witchcraft. Well I am only commenting on what old people say. I am not necessarily giving currency to that particular viewpoint.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the governments of six member States, Antigua/Barbuda, Grenada, St. Christopher and Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Organisation

of Eastern Caribbean States are beneficiaries of loan, credit and grant funds from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, IBRD otherwise known as the World Bank, the Caribbean Development Bank, the global environmental facility and other agencies financed the Solid and Ship Generated Waste Management project, and what we see here before us today, is part of the output of the Solid and Ship Generated Waste Management project. The project was intended to improve solid-waste management systems in the OECS region with particular reference to ship generated waste and thus enhance the quality of both land and marine environment. Mr. Speaker I think it would put the debate in some wide context if I were to be permitted to read from the OEC regional environmental project, the project overview. It is a lengthy quote Mr. Speaker, if you would bear with me. It constitute the background for this exercise. Quote:

“The linkages between environment and development are no where more evident that in small islands belonging to the OECS. The Interrelated problems of population pressure and land scarcity have led to an over exploitation of natural resources without adequate consideration being given for the long-term sustainability of this sub region. Forests are being cleared relentlessly for subsistence and commercial agriculture and logging. Widespread beach mining, and inadequate solid and liquid waste management, also contribute to the pollution of the costal zone. But among all environmental issues facing OECS countries our preliminary analysis indicates that top priority needs to be given to addressing the degradation of coastal and marine resources and ineffective liquid and solid waste management because these problems pose a threat to the future of the islands principal income and employment generated activity, tourism. In addition, waste generated on the islands, waste discharged from ships using the Caribbean Sea add significantly to the degradation of the marine and coastal environment. In late 1990 several governments of the wider Caribbean area sought and obtained from the Marine Environment Protection Committee, of the International Maritime Organisation a special area designation for the regional sea under Marpoll Annex V which would prevent further degradation of the costal zone and marine inhabitants from ship generated garbage. The consequences are that vessels must store their waste on board and be able to discharge them at the first port of call.

I think I should repeat that Mr. Speaker, because this is germane to this piece of legislation. “Arising from the special area designation of the wider Caribbean as defined both in the law here and in Marpoll Annex V because the Marpoll Annex V, '73, '78 Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members must be read as one with the International Convention of the prevention of pollution from ships, 1973. And in 1990 we obtained in the region a special designation called a special area for the regional sea, which will prevent further degradation of coastal zone and Marine habitats from ship generated garbage. I repeat:

“The consequences are that vessels must store their waste on board and be able to discharge them at the first port of call. The Banks submitted to the 1990 Paris

meeting of the global environmental facility donors, a proposal for waste reception and disposal facilities for the wider Caribbean area including the OECS countries.

Mr. Speaker, this bill specially addresses the management of Ship generated Solid Waste but it is all part and parcel of the determination of this Government to make St. Vincent and the Grenadines environmentally sound.

Mr. Speaker, we in the ULP administration late last year and the Cabinet meeting at which we invited Mr. Cummings of the CWSA, Mr. O' Riley Lewis of the Solid Waste Management Unit, and Mr. Kenny Forde who is Chairman of the CWSA. And we called them to a full length Cabinet meeting, they presented a paper to us in advance, to discuss solid waste disposal. That is how we do our work. We summon them; we did not ask them just to old talk with us they presented a paper a comprehensive document, outlining every single aspect of solid waste disposal in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The meeting went on for hours. Mr. Speaker, we took the time out to go through this in detail with the technical and managerial people in Solid Waste and the policy managers because the disposal of solid waste is of critical importance to the well being of St. Vincent and the Grenadines as it evolves into a more modern society. And I would explain all the reasons, clearly for us and for our visitors and for tourism is the single largest gross earner of foreign exchange. Notice the word, gross, not necessarily net; gross earnings of foreign exchange.

And Mr. Speaker, we discussed this matter with the CWSA and the Solid Waste Management Unit which is under the CWSA and members will recall the technical persons at the CWSA were perhaps thinking that some time within this new year without a date actually being specified, that we would be involved in solid waste collection and disposal throughout the country. And I do not think the gentlemen from the CWSA would mind me saying this cause I listened for about an hour and a half without interruption and my colleagues know that when I don't interrupt you and I leave you to talk for an hour, hour and a half I already make up my mind on something which I am coming to you at so when all the presentations were done I said when am I going to get the collection of the solid waste disposal in the constituency of North Central Windward; in the Prime Minister's constituency. I said you stopping somewhere by Stubbs or there about, you have to reach throughout all my constituency and therefore anywhere between Stubbs and Mt. Bentick Bay road, Mt. Bentick shop which is the boundary for my constituency, you have to do that immediately. I was told that it was impossible; I say well fine, I'll go to Parliament, I'll amend the law, so that we can put some solid waste authority which can do it; and then they smiled and say Prime Minister it can be done.

This was early October; I say I want it done by the 31<sup>st</sup> October and Mr. Speaker it was done before the 31<sup>st</sup> of October. I tuned to the two representatives, the one from North Windward and the one from North Leeward our two colleagues; Minister of State in the Ministry of Agriculture and the Minister of Telecommunications and Industry, I said when do you want your garbage to be collected from Fancy come down and from Fitz Hughes? So every single point would be done on mainland St. Vincent, and they said Prime Minister we're not sure, I

said November 30<sup>th</sup>. They said yes. I was told again impossible, I said well we'll go through the same routine, they say it is possible and to the credit of the Solid Waste Management Unit and Mr. O'Riley Lewis who is doing an excellent job and Mr. Cummings shown himself to be a very good professional, and they actually did what they had to do by the end of the first week in November island wide, and people began to hear what they call the ice-cream truck collecting garbage. Never before in St. Vincent and the Grenadines; collecting garbage was a thing, which happens in town and near to town but not the whole country. The first time when a Chatoyer pickney see a garbage truck is since the ULP come to power.

Mr. Speaker, to do this is very expensive you see the number of green trucks we have they are not cheap. To actually, to collect the garbage from every household cost in excess of \$20 a month. We charge \$5.00 put it on the water bill, \$5.00 to collect the garbage not per person, per household and Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition and those of the common denominator who advise him say that the \$5.00 is criminal, notice that, the lowest common denominator says it's criminal. Well you know there is a tendency for the lowest common denominator to know criminal conduct, they don't see it in their own eyes, and they see it in other people, when there is none. Now \$5.00 a month is a \$1.25 a week. You can't even get your nine year old son to throw way your garbage for a \$1.25 a week and then where are you going to throw it, and then, Mr. Speaker, you have five or so people inside of the House so ending up about 25 cents a person a week. It cost the same for a big sixteen ju-c as it cost a week to collect your garbage and throw it away. I want to repeat that, a big six ju-c is a \$1.25 big sixteen ju-c is a \$1.25 that is what it cost a week to throw way your garbage and Mr. Speaker, if you don't hand back the bottle it more expensive to buy the big sixteen, because you have to pay 25 cents, 50 cents for the bottle. You see we have clean up the country and you have to take the garbage from Fancy and take to the solid waste disposal site out at Diamond and I am coming to that.

I want the persons who are mining discriminately the sand at Diamond hear me, and hear me well. I am not a person I don't like to use the big stick approach, I always believe in persuading people, but I want them to hear this; you cannot be taking sand from Diamond and undermine the efficacy of the land fill which is out there. It is an act monumental selfishness to go and take away the sand and we are asking you to stop it you are causing a great danger to the landfill and if you do not stop it, the State which is the repository of the legitimate means of collision we will stop you. We do not want to use the big stick; we want to persuade you, please, you can't go and damage something which cost so much money and which is so valuable to this country.

Mr. Speaker, it is not only there, we took the decision to put the collection and the disposal of garbage in Bequia, the Northern Grenadines and in the Southern Grenadines, in the hands of the Solid Waste Disposal Unit it is hither to in the hands of the Northern Grenadines administration and the Southern Grenadines administration and you had pure confusion. Now it is in the hand of the Solid Waste Management Unit. The people are now seeing that there is a scientific way forward for the collection and disposal of garbage in the Grenadines. The solution is not there

yet but they are going down and meeting with the people discussing with them and start to take certain measures to improve temporarily this situation within the framework of an overall plan to find the permanent solution. I know that some persons who don't like the ULP will say, 'but way yo get dat from'.

Mr. Speaker, we keep in touch with our people, and last week not Friday here, the Friday before, sorry, the Monday last week, Monday the 5<sup>th</sup> thank you very much, the Parliamentary Secretary for the Grenadines in the Prime Minister's Office was with me and a whole delegation went down to Bequia and we had a meeting with the Bequia Tourism Association.

When I came to office first, the issue which they came to my office about; the Office of the Prime Minister was garbage collection and the dumpsite. When they came this time and I talk about what had happened and what is about to happen they said Prime Minister we didn't come here to talk to you about solid waste, we have met with the people in the Solid Waste Management Unit and we are satisfied that the Government is on the right track with that. What we want is the primary thing on our plate now is the issue of security. They had moved from solid waste, which was their top issue off the agenda because of the progress this Government has made on the question in less than 11 months. They can go and speak to three individuals whom we have met Miss Marie Kingston, who had worked, I don't know if she still works at Frangipani, Sir James' Hotel, Mr. Chester Peters, and Mr. Simmons and we are addressing the issue of security, we're doing that. Mr. Speaker, how the CWSA, the Solid Waste Management Unit deal with the matter in Bequia, and in Southern Grenadines whether to private contractors or what, that's their business, that's there technical domain. What we do we set the framework of public policy and leave the technicians to get on with their business.

Mr. Speaker, less than two weeks ago the Honourable Minister of Tourism and Culture, the Deputy Prime Minister and myself were at a meeting with 20 something, maybe 30 persons relating to the yachting business and allied tourism activities, we met in the Cabinet Room, the Minister of National Security should have been there, he had a cold and could not come to work. And they discussed this issue of ship-generated waste and how it is a problem and we assured them that we would address the matter, we heard all their complaints we went through the discussion. Mr. Speaker, there were other people in the tourism sector there the discussion there took four hours, see the amount of time the Prime Minister and other senior Ministers take to discuss with the shareholders, four hours on this and other issues and we are here today with a law in this parliament to address precisely that question about the management of ship generated-waste and they will hear us and when, the Opposition should be here to be dealing with this critical question but they are away on leave without permission.

I tell you this Mr. Speaker, they say that they are protesting, the Rules say you can't miss three meetings of the House in succession, without the Speaker giving permission, because if they do they forfeit their seats and they have to be a bye-election. I want the Leader of the Opposition to miss the one on the 28<sup>th</sup> and the one after that, if he name man and let us test it in East Kingstown as to whether he has a right to lead the Parliament of St. Vincent and the

Grenadines. Let him. No he is bright. But they afraid, they coward, miss three; you bad; miss three. Miss them; man I am anxious to hit the campaign trail. I'm hungry for it, miss three, yo name man. You will 'pamperset'. I bet you, in order to collect the money they will come in for a few minutes and they might leave in an act of cowardice. Let them do that, so they miss one, I want them miss two because Rene Baptiste ain't going anywhere unless she drop down dead or the people of West Kingstown recall her.

Mr. Speaker, why is it so important to address the Solid Waste Disposal Ship Generated-Waste and the cleaning up of the city? First of all for us it is a health issue. When you have a lot of garbage around the place you get more rats and it easier for people to get leptospirosis and that is not an easy disease, that's a fatal disease, you don't realize early you have leptospirosis the family could start to make arrangement with Mills. Then Mr. Speaker, when you don't have the garbage collection, people throw their garbage in the rivers, what happens when you go and bathe in the rivers, you get ringworm, the crayfish get kill, the river lobster them get kill, mullet them get kill, the suck stone, even the big river groupers get kill, the tri-tri you don't want to take it sometime they coarse, coarse, they die too, all that is what happen. You see children walking about with ringworm, they get from the river bathing. And you know, Mr. Speaker, I have done so far, in my constituency coming up to first anniversary I have done the following consultations in the communities, people may say Comrade Ralph don't have to do it, I have had consultations already in Park Hill, in Byrea, in Chester Cottage, in Colonarie. I have it planned. I miss the one in South Rivers, because I was away putting on public meeting two days later and in Georgetown it would be done and when I go through the area, you know what they tell me, they say the two best things that the government has done so far is to pay the poor people their severance pay and to bring the garbage truck to collect the garbage. They not concern about the \$5.00 because they know it is value for money.

The thing about it Mr. Speaker, had the NDP got back into Office they would not have \$5.00 you know, they would have charged \$10.00 or \$15.00. Or they would have been so afraid to charge anything that the garbage would not have been collected beyond Biabou, up that way, and Barrouallie the other side. So when they come to South Central Windward, in the Minister of Agriculture constituency, when they go up to Lauders, the people of Lauders would remember that if they were there, they would have been no solid waste collected, certainly not in Fancy and in Fitz Hughes.

Mr. Speaker, we cleaned up the town, why we cleaned up the town because it was a health hazard and it was terrible to the eye. It was economically counter productive, you build a big cruise ship berth for \$50 something million dollars but the cruise ship would not come because your town is nasty. And when I start to clean it up, when the Minister of Health start to clean it up, when Minister of Local Government start to clean it up, when the workers in sanitation and in CWSA start to clean it up, do you know what the Opposition said, we taking bread out of people's mouth because we cleaning up some people who are squatting who are using the back wall for toilet facilities at fore day morning. Mr. Speaker, what is happening, does the Opposition want this country to be led by the lowest common denominator, that have to have

some standards man and as soon as we clean up the place. You see the Minister of Tourism and Culture bringing back some tourists ships, did you notice that, according to Sugar George, the head of the Taxi Association, the ships them now coming fast and furious. And look and they are not really coming yet, you know, in numbers because you have to try and get them off the little route which they already agreed to have. Because they plan their routes two and three years in advance, so you begin to see the full work of the Minister of Tourism in this regard in two years time.

Then Mr. Speaker, you have the yachts emptying the waste in the area of Villa/Indian Bay. You have adjoining houses and some hotels emptying their wastewater and sometime more than their wastewater inside the sea, that is why when you go to bathe inside there sometimes your skin is scratching you. You are getting ear infection. We are a nation, a country with beautiful seascape and landscape and have to keep it so. It is part of our natural resources. So what are we doing, we are keeping our seascape and landscape clean, we are educating our people and we are raising Chatoyer higher and higher. That is the Unity Labour Party. That is how we are doing our work.

Mr. Speaker, when this law comes into being, all the various authorities, the Ministry of Health and the Environment, including the Medical Director of Health, the Port Authority, the Director of the Marine time Services, the Solid Waste Disposal Unit, all of them have responsibilities under this Act. Serious responsibilities and the ships which come to St. Vincent and the pleasure boats they have to comply with regulations which are not unique to St. Vincent but which we are applying in this legislation because of our commitment to the International Convention for the prevention of pollution from ships from 1973 and the Annex V of Marpol 73/78.

Mr. Speaker, at the Ports we do not have proper facilities for handling storing and disposing waste and we have to build that up properly. The disposal facilities are not of a high standard and the reception facilities for solid waste are generally poor. If you look in the bill Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members you will see the measures relating to the monitoring of the effects of the risks of pollution. The Detections of Violations and their Enforcement; the application of provisions relating to the Prevention of Pollution by Solid Waste. The Minister of Health went through all the provisions in some details. Provisions to control Marine pollution. The Monitoring and Enforcement Enquiries Legal Proceedings and the Jurisdiction of the Act. And then there are the powers relating to the administration of this Act.

Mr. Speaker, you take for instance there are special provisions for the disposal of Solid Waste within special areas, Clause 17, clause 22 has an interesting provision, a ship of 12 metres in length overall and every pleasure craft shall display plaque cards that notify the crew and passengers of the disposal requirements of section 15, 17, and 18 as applicable, those are provisions relating to the disposal of solid waste in special areas. So they cannot come anymore into the area after this law is passed, the yachts for instance which you see out at Young Island, they are supposed to have their holding tanks. And when those holding tanks are full they have

to dispose of it in a particular way, prescribed by the law, the garbage on top, you have to dispose of it in a particular way, but you know in St. Vincent under the NDP everything goes. Fellows will flush in the area without their holding tanks. They will take their garbage and leave it on the beach. Those days are coming to an end. And we are looking carefully and we want to work very closely with householders and hotels close to the beaches to make sure that they have proper facilities for waste water and for their sewage, because we have to protect our environment. In the same way, Mr. Speaker, the measure which has been taken through the Ministry of Works and Minister Francis must be congratulated on this to push the Cabinet between himself and the Minister of State in the Ministry of Agriculture, the Representative for North Windward about the degradation of Rabacca. What is interesting is this for years the NDP allowed people to go there and ravish Rabacca, mash up the riverbed make the crossing of people over the Dry River hazardous. I never see road turn, the different pieces of road you have to wriggle and turn because the fellows go with their big machines and their front end loaders and they do what they have to do. All that is charged per ton now, is \$2.50 that is all. It is not enough to cause any increase in the price of blocks, \$2.50 per ton, because the first man who increase the price on blocks is going to go out of the market because other people are not going to increase it. And what is interesting I saw about eight persons being asked randomly, either in news or the Searchlight Newspapers what they thought about the situation up there and only one out of them and the lady, I think was a vendor did not understand the issue she said it would be hard on poor people, she does not understand the issue, and I want if she is listening to me to understand that there is not going to be an increase in the price of the blocks and the Ministry has worked out a construction costs at most will go up between half of one percentage point and one percentage point depending upon the type of structure you are building. You have to preserve your environment, but it is interesting to notice that everybody else was asked say that the move is long overdue. That is what the people said you know. So when the Leader of the Opposition says that that is a problem for him, he is deeply concerned, he is in a permanent state of being concerned. It is the same thing when we said that we are going to increase the water rate in June by 10%. We have to do that not because we want to, it would come up to about \$1.90 for the average householder, not because you want to but in order to get the Windward water project going which is costing \$23 million and we are getting \$21 million dollars to borrow from the French and Mr. Speaker, the 21 million from the French they are lending us at just 2 ½%, which is very cheap money and to pay it back in 23 years, so it is good money, the project would last three years it would give a lot of jobs, it would give you very clean water, in the whole area coming out from the top of Jennings Mountain, up beyond Congo Valley. You have the cheapest water in the Caribbean. So what, the Leader of the Opposition according to the front page in the newspaper said he is concerned, what he would have done not have the agreement for the water so when you have the dry season again the people at Diamond do not have water? The people of Stubbs do not have, that the people in Park Hill must not have water. What is the matter with these people, do they have no foresight. Do they have no understanding and reflections about government? No. It is really disappointing.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke to the people again face to face with that water issue. And they say that they want their water. Now, there has not been a water increase since 1985, you have all kind of

increases taking place. There has been in some water catchments area a degradation of the environment where the water supply is, it is a health issue. The Dalloway project is being completed in June, a \$10 million project, which will provide some of the cleanest water in the world through a natural sand filtering system. That is what is being provided for the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, you know. Quality water at a very cheap price. If the people do not want that tell me I must not go and collect the money from the French Government because the French Government says they are not lending you the money unless you increase the water rate by 10% per month on an average that is a \$1.90 per month. Including the Government, \$1.90 so if they do not want me to take the money they must tell me, write in the newspaper and tell me I must not take the money. So that when you have a drought out Diamond like when you have four months drought and you cannot get water don't call Comrade Ralph. When you cannot get your water in Stubbs, do not call me, when Biabou short and you cannot get anything in Mt. Greenon at all, don't call me. If the French people are prepared to give you money, give this country money, lend us \$21 million at 2.5% for 23 years, you want to tell me we can't pay \$1.90 more for water a month? That is where we are. And they said I did not mention one thing in the last budget about it and that is an untruth. I said in the budget last year and there are copies of the speech available that there will be an increase in the water rate. I said hopefully not very soon. I was hoping to see if I could get it put off until January next year, or until June next year. But the French said that they are not delivering the money until I increase the water rate by the \$1.90 by the 10% that is what they told me. I have the document. So I have to do it for the good of the country. I must do it for the good of the country and when I speak to the people in the community, in the Town Hall meetings they tell me yes, Prime Minister go ahead and do it we think that it is a proper thing that you are doing there in order to bring the water supply to ease up the pressure on the people.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I am often amazed about the irresponsibility of some who should know better. Make your criticisms if they are justifiable but don't criticize for the sake of criticizing. Because one thing I tell you once I am satisfied in my mind and in my conscience that I am right and I come and talk to the people and the people say that is reasonable I know I have a mandate to do it and the government will see that it is done.

Mr. Speaker, I must congratulate the Minister of Health on the excellent work, which has been done in the area of the environment. I just hoping that they would do something about the Caratal River in my constituency which is an environmental problem, and I am asking that something be done there. But before I sit down, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I want to say this, when I went to both Colonaire and Byrea for the consultations and in Colonaire the language was even stronger. You know there is some people despite the collection of solid waste by the vehicle still throw their garbage in the river and still throw it in the sea and you know what some of them are saying; 'lay the Labour Hog them clean it up' and I want the public to know that, and that is the lowest common denominator, that I am talking about, 'let the Labour Hog them clean it up'. It is their environment that they are making unhealthy and unsightly, it is their children and themselves they are opening to disease but that ignorance is fueled by the official opposition throw it where you want, let the Labour Hog them clean it up.

Well, I have already spoken to the Minister of Health about this and I am quite sure that he would inform the Health Inspectors and the Environmental Inspectors, an example would be made about one or two of them because there are powers where they could be brought before the Court. You know I am one lawyer I do not really like to talk about bring people before the Court, I always like to persuade people. But there are some people who will not be persuaded and if you cannot hear you must feel. And there will be prosecutions for those who throw their garbage in the river and in the sea and in the road and when an example is made of them well then the others who are hard of hearing might decide to listen because there is a level of political ignorance spurred on by the lowest common denominator, which is poisonous to the body politic. The people of this country, the right thinking people of this country must stand up for standards. Not a question of supporting the ULP government, it happens that the ULP government is in Office doing these right things but you have to stand up and be counted. When persons want to nasty the city, you say no. When they want to throw their waste in the river and the sea, you say no, when they want to do it from ships you say no. When they want to do it from the wastewater from their houses or their hotels near to the beach you say no, because it is our patrimony, it is our land and the smaller the space the more serious we must be about the environment. In the United States of America they have larger spaces but in St. Vincent we are very small. Remember how I began by saying the increasing population and the small land space and the use create problems, we have to handle these matters carefully. I am sure the people in the tourism industry would be pleased to hear that we have now before Parliament, which would be passed today, the Management of Ship Generated Solid Waste. Mr. Speaker, I wish this bill speediest and most comfortable of passage.

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, I am going to be as brief as possible but as Minister responsible for seaports and airports and in fact this piece of legislation has to work in sync with the Merchant Shipping Act and the Port Authority Act because there are certain measures instituted in this Act that must be carried out by the Port Authority or under the Merchant Shipping Act. We are dealing now with solid waste disposal from ships but we will be coming back here soon to deal with liquid waste because it is becoming obvious that we cannot continue to dump raw sewage in the sea and there comes a time when the system we are using now, where the sewage goes into septic tanks and they drain slowly filtered that after a time the land become saturated and the bacterial count certainly will increase and it will affect our marine life and also when that happens we will further have greater coastal degradation.

A few last year I approached the Honourable Minister of Health because I was getting worried, and I am still getting worried where a gentleman from my own constituency who used to work at Customs got infected by leptospirosis, he nearly lost his life, they had to rush him to Trinidad and too long after there was another persons, a young Custom officer from Cane Garden who nearly lost his life through leptospirosis, the point I am making is that rats do not discriminate, it does not matter if it is Vincent Beache's toes they are going to nibble on, or John Jones or whoever it is. And it is time that the populace get to realize the seriousness of the dastardly act that they are doing by dumping their garbage anywhere they feel they should dump it. No one knows if it is going to be your child or whether it is going to be my child or somebody else's

child, well it would not be mine, because I certainly cannot make any more. But we have a culture, Mr. Speaker that has developed, I call it a culture, where people do whatever they want and however they want. I am shocked. When you look at the cruise ship berth that we are trying to clean up and to make presentable and as a matter of fact, not only presentable, to beautify it, Mr. Speaker, you see men going in there, there are toilet facilities there but they are going along the fence openly as though it is a pretty thing, openly urinating so that all who passes can have a look at maybe in their opinion a beautiful portrait. But you know and I know it is an ugly thing designed maybe for proper functioning, so I am not dealing with that. But I am giving warning, as Minister of National Security and the police that this must stop. We cannot, down to the Methodist Church I come out of the office and right at the wall there, they are not drunk, you see them openly urinating and doing what ever they want up to 1985 Mr. Speaker, Port Kingstown was seen and known as the most beautiful and the cleanest port in all of the Caribbean. Up to 1985, 17 years after we lost cruise ships coming here because they say Kingstown was too dirty. We had to clean up the mess and thanks to the Ministry and the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Social Development, but I noticed as well like everything else they are trying to come back one by one, sneakily. Now when you take action you are going to hear that you are trying to deny someone his or her rights, you are trying to deny this, you are trying to deny that. But as the Honourable Prime Minister is famous for saying that we are a country of laws and you must obey the laws. You elect us here to make the laws, to govern the country, but you cannot govern the country unless you make the laws. Now how can you expect that you have given me the entitlement to be a lawmaker but by the next breath you expect me to assist you to be a lawbreaker. It does not seem to make sense at all. And so we have to bring back a sense of pride and a sense of belonging. Vincentians seem to have no pride at all in their country. We do not seem to value the beauty, the freedom that we have here. Maybe it is like seeing a child grow up, if you look at the child everyday, you do not see the growth, but if you leave and go away for three months and you come back you would be surprised to see how large the child has grown and because maybe we hear all the time we hear all the time, we take everything for granted and we seem to appreciate greater the things that are nasty and bad. And this is not even balanced out as the Prime Minister say; we have people who you would not want your children to associate with because of their character but yet these are the same people who are supposed to be opinion makers, these are the same people whom you would spout day after day the rubbish and nonsense and some of us take pleasure in this and feel that this is a good thing.

Last week or week before the last I was going along Middle Street at Bonadie's Supermarket, and a young lady met me and says I want to know what is the government's position with the low income houses, so I said that has been advertised, it has been on the radio, we even had a survey carried out, and she said she never knew, and I asked what station do you listen to, she listens to Nice Radio, so is say, how are you going to know the things that are important you are not interesting in listening to, you listen to commess and all the other nonsense and the good things, the great things, the things you should know about pass you by. I said what I can advise you to do is to go around to the Minister of Transport and Works and they might be able to advise you better. But this is what has been happening in the country, we are not concerned

whether it is factual or not, once somebody can go on the radio and say something, nobody is prepared to investigate and to see whether this true or not. Even in this Honourable House here, we had the question of air-conditioning in Owia Factory. Could you imagine that we have Members of Parliament who would come here and ask a question about us installing air-conditioning in arrowroot factory Owia, only to find out because somebody says on the radio the ULP government has installed air-conditioning in Owia factory, they came and asked a question about it. Do you know what it was Mr. Speaker, they installed some extractor of fans in the drying house to help dry the starch quicker and because Lynch says it is air-conditioned we have Members of Parliament coming here asked a question here about air-conditioned units we established in Owia Factory. Can you imagine that. Eh? I say this to show that some of us are not setting the example and until we do this we will continue to grow up in ignorance and the school children out there who are hearing this and we have to do something to bring back a balance, to bring back decency to this country, because if we do not do that, it is not us here because our children and our children's children, those are the ones who are going to suffer and those are the ones who are going to find it hard.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister of Health and the Attorney General's Chambers, we know that they are doing a marvelous job and to say that this legislation should have been here long ago, it is not too late, we have to protect our environment, we have to ensure that things like these are not dumped into the sea. We are very strong on nuclear waste passing through the Caribbean and I support that they should not pass through. But this is nearer and closer home because unless we have these legislations and unless there are stiff penalties when ships are caught then we are going to have problems, our fish stocks are going to dwindle, we going to have coastal degradation and all of that and in the end those persons like in Rabacca who have made money on it not concerned about the long lasting negative effect on the country. They are not bothered because they make a few dollars. The only problem Mr. Speaker, is that they might not be able to enjoy the few dollars because the thing might become so bad, the environment so bad that disease would pervade, and they themselves because you do not know who would be stricken by this. And so Mr. Speaker, I think this legislation is most worthwhile and appropriate and I commend it for an easy passage.

**HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I rise to give support to this bill for an Act for the Management of Ship Generated Solid Waste that is now being debated before this Honourable House and I do so Mr. Speaker, because of the portfolio that I know with respect of tourism and culture, particularly as over the last few months my Ministry has been actively engaged with the yachting sector in respect of solid waste disposal. I think Mr. Speaker, that this could not come at a more timely occasion for us since we were discussing matters dealing with the yachts plying their trade, the mooring of yachts, the question relating to the boat boys who take garbage from yachts men to dispose of them somewhere on the land, either on the jetty or to throw them on the beach. With this legislation Mr. Speaker, before this Honourable House I undertake as a matter of duty and responsibility to ensure that the chartering companies received a copy of this legislation and would draw to their attention by memoranda the provisions that are in Clause 22, 23 and 24 which deals specifically with

pleasure crafts and the plaque cards are required to be displayed on their pleasure crafts and also Mr. Speaker dealing with management plans for waste and keeping the record books so that those yachts who happen to stay here for long periods of time would be well acquainted with what the provisions are and as well as the Honourable Prime Minister has indicated in our recent discussions in Cabinet Room with the sector and the stakeholders that they themselves have expressed concerns about this disposal. There is one important thing with having laws Mr. Speaker, they remain dead if we do not give them life and we have to have the courage of our own conviction in passing the laws here in this Honourable House and putting in place the mechanisms for the monitoring and the enforcement. It cannot be said that we have not done what we are supposed to do in the Honourable House but it leaves the Government Printer and it is published in the Government's gazette and a commencement date has been given for it coming into force and the director and the various officers are established that we must enforce the law. Our weakness has been in lack of will to enforce the law. We see it everyday, Mr. Speaker, everyday we have vehicles passing here shaking the windows. But nobody thinks about enforcing the law. Everyday you see people throwing garbage, and some people have explained to when solid waste management personnel went through my constituency and we looked at the way people were disposing of the garbage and the way the garbage was situated and I so concerned about the people particularly the people in the Edinboro where they were just tossing their garbage out of their car, and it would toss down into a woman's house, and that has going on for years many years. Mr. Speaker you should take a drive over there and see it now, we have one more spot left to clean up and that is where you turn the corner by the hard court to go down to the Marina. There is still a lot of garbage there and I plan to draw to the attention of the Solid Waste Management Unit because they are well meaning professionals and they are doing the best job they can within the resources they have but it is a two way street every citizen has a responsibility Mr. Speaker, to look after their garbage. Because it is remarkable when we go to Canada we do not do that. We would never ever think of rolling down the glass when we are going down the highway from the airport and let out a Mars chocolate paper, we are not going to do it, and we would do it in St. Vincent. And the reason why I rise Mr. Speaker, to make this contribution as well is that recently the Logos is tied up at the harbour and thousands of people are going on board it is nice to see that, they are going for the experience, some people because they like books and they want to read and to get some knowledge but the disappointing thing Mr. Speaker, is to leave the sweetie paper, the chubbies bottles, the locazsade bottles, they were left stranded in the cruise ship terminal, the snow cone cups. I hope it is not going in one ear and comes out of the next Mr. Speaker, we have a Litter Act and I am encouraging the Minister of Health and the Environment as soon as possible to ensure that we start to enforce that Litter Act. We do not like as the Honourable Prime Minister said to be a government to enforce, we prefer to persuade, using the alternative course of hauling people before the Courts, but we have grown to be a hard headed people, sometime choosing to misunderstand and not understand at all, Mr. Speaker. When this law before us comes into effect dealing, but particularly would affect the shipping sector I sincerely hope Mr. Speaker that we understand exactly the steps that we are taking because people often cry out for help from the Legislature and the Legislature would come here in faith and make these laws and when the laws go now for enforcement then is when you know how many brothers they have in

the enforcement authorities and how many uncles. Why are you putting your uncle and your brother through that? There is a certain little stubborn sector that continues to do this littering. By and large Mr. Speaker, since we have started our clean up thrust in the country people have been complying with the regulations but we have those who would not comply. And I am urging our stakeholders to ensure if they need help to do a synopsis so that they can place it on board the various yachts and the yachts that come in the tour operators who know yachts that are coming in and should have holding tanks and what is the position that we do a little summary that we give to them, because we have to do our part to maintain the environment, it is a shame to see goat, pig, cattle grazing on the beach, on the beach in the country Mr. Speaker. Could you imagine that? I bet if you shoot a pig you see how fast so many owners that pig has. Right now it has no owner. And solid waste management officers and myself are going back down into that area, so I can show them in three months, 90 days what has happened in that area.

Mr. Speaker, there are some provisions in this Act for prohibition of disposal into the territorial sea and for the requirements for on board management of Solid Waste by ships, I just received yesterday evening a copy of the latest Caribbean cruising magazine from the FCCA indicating that the FCCA and the ICCLLO, that is the International Cruise Line Body having signed agreements and attending courses in Florida in respect to educating their executives in relation to their management of solid waste on ships and ships coming through the area. Because they too are concerned, they cannot build mega ships to bring people to see nothing, they like dolphin watching, whale watching, going into the craft, so they would have no market, so they are going to university and schools, the people with the cruise lines, the people with the money who build the ships, to ensure that their own people understand the importance of preservation of the environment, and particularly for us here in the Caribbean we have such a fragile eco system that we have to be careful.

I look at the conditions of our rivers and the National Park Bill is still before this House, the select committee is still to meet, and I am asking all those who have something to say of a nature to contribute positively to the debate on these matters of public interest when it is announced at a meeting of the select committee that they would avail themselves of that opportunity Mr. Speaker, to bring their knowledge and bring their input into the laws that we are building in this country and when they having done so, that they themselves would help us to carry out the mandate to ensure that we preserve our environment. It is no longer something to say 'Decade of the Environment' we cannot say those things anymore, we would have to have an environment to leave because we are noticing problems with our fish stocks, at least that is what some of the fishermen have told me. We are noticing and the hoteliers have complained that some of their guests going to the water and bring out, you know, stuff in a plastic bag to show them, it means that we are not doing something right, so we have to do something right, we have to now do something right, otherwise we are only spiting ourselves, because one thing you would be assured of Mr. Speaker, is that there is always a choice, and the greatest thing in the world Mr. Speaker, is that you have a choice how to spend your money, Mr. Speaker, so if we want these things to work, if we want this legislation to work we

ourselves have to be the monitors and the enforcers of the legislation but in monitoring and enforcing I would like to urge the Minister of Health and the Environment for us to have a joint workshop on the implementation of this Act when it becomes an Act together with the Port Authority and the Airport and Seaport Authority so we could all be on the same page and reading from the same text.

Mr. Speaker, I commend this Bill to the Honourable House and wish it a speedy passage through all the stages.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Any further debate, Honourable Minister of Health.

**HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, let me once again thank my colleagues ministers, the Honourable Prime Minister, other ministers who have supported this bill and contributed very usefully to the debate. I want to assure you that we in the Ministry of Health and the Environment have taken notes of your suggestions and we will certainly wish to work together with you to ensure that the provisions of this Act when it is passed are taken seriously.

I want in my rounding up to reinforce some of the issues raised by my colleague Ministers, especially my colleague Minister mentioned about the effect of coastal degradation at Rabbacca. And it was interesting that I have some NDP friends that challenge me about the charges and the control that have been imposed on the mining of Rabbacca and also the increase in the water rate. Do you know what has been happening out there? They have not been listening so they do not understand why, after explaining to them as the Prime Minister has done they said well, but they never did tell we that, and you know who the they are, their so called leaders have been misleading them. Let us take the water situation, the proposed 10% increase and we say it is an average of \$1.90 per month, there are people who these days have resorted to drinking bottled water, what is the price of 1 litre bottled water? \$3.00, and if you are really going to drink bottled water, and one of the reason why people drink bottled water is because of their concerns about the unreliability of their water. What our government proposes to do is to ensure that St. Vincent continues to enjoy a high quality and supply of water so that you don't have to worry too much about bottled water. But let us put another comparison. All of us like to drink coconut water, and I am certain that those who like to do that drink about two or three per week, that is \$3.00 just imagine if you think paying \$1.90 or \$2.00 or \$10.00 more a month is bad, just imagine never miss the water till the well run dry. Just imagine one day when the water shut off, just imagine two days without water, can't bathe, can't wash, can't cook and the inconvenience then you would realize that the few dollars more is very much worth it because you are going to get a very much better supply. Because I want to tell you that all this is tied up the whole environmental problem because if you do not take care of the environment and already we are noticing it, remember last year we had a terrible drought, it was because of bad environmental practices. And I know the Prime Minister is very much concerned about what happened in last year's drought and it is because of this we are willing to take, even though we do not deserve it, to take the political pressure to increase the water rate

by 10% because we know, and I know the citizens of this country will acknowledge that it will be money well spent. And I tell you something, people will get their new water bill and would not notice it, do you know why there are times when one month you pay \$20.00 for water and another pay \$32.00, how are you going to know, you do not keep a check, and 10% of \$20.00 is \$2.00. I can talk personally, I spent, I noticed my water bill was \$30 something dollars and I have swimming pool at home, so when you hear they running off their mouth about big increase and that sort of thing, do you know what it means, instead of paying \$32.00 you are going to spend \$35.00. It really is insignificant, so we really must understand that we really must take care of the environment.

The Litter Act and its enforcement, I can assure you that as this government, we have said on this side we do not want to rule by the hard stick of the law, we will encourage you to comply with the law, but after the enactment of this law and other laws we will be making examples of those who decide to throw garbage over Layou Hill, those who decide to continue to throw garbage over Edinboro, those who decide to continue to throw garbage over Hope Bridge and anywhere else in the road we will take the necessary measures and people will pay for it, and we know after they start paying for it they will discontinue. We hope that by hearing this it will prevent us from having to take those measures.

Mr. Speaker, therefore again thanks again to my colleagues and the Attorney General's Office. I beg to move Mr. Speaker, that this House resolves itself into a committee of the whole House to consider this Bill clause by clause.

*House went into committee.*

*House resumed.*

*Bill read a third time by title and passed with minor amendments.*

## **LIVING WATER MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES INCORPORATION BILL 2002.**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Members I move the second reading of a bill for an Act to make provision for the incorporation of Living Waters Ministries International of the State of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Do you want us to take all at the same time? Okay we will take all at the same time. An Act to make provision of the incorporation of the Wells of Living Water Church of the State of St. Vincent and the Grenadines be read a second time. An Act to make provision for the Incorporation of the Apostolic Deliverance Church in the State of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. An Act to make provision for the incorporation of the Bethany Baptist Church in the State of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. An Act to make provision for the incorporation for Mt. Halibeth Christian Church of the World Incorporation Diocese of St. Vincent and the Grenadines Halibethian Church of Epiphany of the State of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. That all these Acts be read a second time. And that these bills be referred to a select committee.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, we can have one select committee for all the bills, it is just the usual, the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs, as Chairperson, Senator Young, the Minister of State in the Ministry of Education, and Senator Snagg and the Attorney General.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Are we going to proceed with the debate?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, there are some persons who have spoken already and I think Senator Young would like to make her contribution and perhaps we can wind up our debate on local government motion, because we have had several debates both by members on the government and the opposition side.

## **MOTION**

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT - CONTINUATION OF DEBATE**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Let me just read the resolution.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that this Honourable House direct the Government to set up promptly a commission to inquire publicly into and report upon most appropriate forms of Local Government for St. Vincent and the Grenadines with the view of establishing genuine democratic Local Government for St. Vincent and the Grenadines within twelve months of the passage of this motion.

**HONOURABLE ANDREA YOUNG:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I rise to make a very brief contribution to the debate on the reintroduction of Local Government in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, as we all know Mr. Speaker, this debate commenced sometime ago, but as unusual with the very hectic legislative agenda of this Unity Labour Party administration the motion had been put back. For the purposes of this debate, Mr. Speaker, and Honourable Members I wish to examine the Guyana model because I have found that this model is quite admirable though I concede that I do not have any facts at this current time as to how well it worked and if it is still working as conceived, but Mr. Speaker, in any event I believe that for any system to work, or any institution once the conceptual idea is in place what makes or breaks that system is whether you have a continuous assessment of the system, it depends on how the system is implemented and also whether before the implementation of the system you have taken the time to educate the people who are going to be involved in the system. So in this regard Mr. Speaker, for the success of this system our system of local government in St. Vincent there must be corresponding public education, the implementation must be on target it must be well thought out, there must be continual assessment of the system. It must be carefully monitored and Mr. Speaker, as circumstances require or demand the necessary modifications and reforms must be made.

Mr. Speaker, prior to the 1980 Guyana constitution, local government in the Caribbean was instituted by ordinary Acts of Parliament, however the 1980 Guyana constitution was the very first constitution in the Caribbean in which the system of local government was enshrined therein and Mr. Speaker, I believe that this is quite admirable and gives even more credence to the system of local government. Mr. Speaker, in that constitution they sought therein to give a definition of what local government ought to be and the duties to be imposed on the local democratic organs. And if I may be permitted to read Mr. Speaker, just to quote what it says in that 1980 Constitution of Guyana. Mr. Speaker, in the view of 1980 Guyana Constitution local government was seen as a vital aspect of social democracy and ought to be organized in such a manner as to secure the involvement of as many people as possible in the task of managing and developing their communities. The constitution went on to impose a duty on parliament to provide for the institution of a countrywide system of local government through the establishment of organs of local democratic power.

Mr. Speaker, in the Guyana 1980 Constitution when I refer to the constitution I refer to that constitution it also sets out the duties and responsibilities of these local democratic organs which has been charged with managing and developing their communities and I wish Mr. Speaker, to point these out briefly. One of the duties imposed on Parliament by the Guyana constitution is that Parliament has to ensure, in accordance with law, the efficient management and development of their areas and to provide leadership by example. Parliament also has the duty to maintain and protect the local democratic organs in the local government system in Guyana. They are also charged with the duty to improve the working and living conditions of the people in their communities to promote the social and cultural life of the people to raise the level of civic consciousness, to preserve law and order and to safe guard the rights of citizens among other things and these are set out in Article 71 (1) and 74 (1,3) of the Guyana constitution.

Mr. Speaker, for many people who are listening and for those who perhaps who have not been familiar with any sort of local government system, may ask the question why do we need local government and briefly Mr. Speaker, I will give in my opinion why system of local government is critical to the development of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Firstly it facilitates the decentralization of executive power, and for some of us this is perhaps the most obvious advantage because there are many advantages benefiting opportunities to be had from a system of local government.

We are all aware Mr. Speaker that political power and executive power, without local government is too centralized. And as a result the growth and development of communities outside of the centre and the people who live in these communities are severely restricted because they have very little or no power to chart their own destiny and to have much say in the development of their communities in which they live and which these very people understand perhaps even better than the people who sit at the centre of the executive power. In addition to that Mr. Speaker, there are other advantages to be had. There is increased efficiency, and this follows, Mr. Speaker, from the decentralization from the executive power whereby the

opportunity is created for greater efficiency in the functioning of the machinery of the state. It also paves the way, Mr. Speaker, for widespread participation by all sectors of the society and in this regard you will find that you have the participation of young people, middle age, the NGO's and so forth. And on this issue Mr. Speaker, I wish to refer to a text "Changing Caribbean Constitution" by Dr. Francis Alexis. At page 263, and 264 where on this issue of the level of increased participation by the different sectors of society, he has this to say, "a particular way of fostering people's participation is by strengthening the system of local government. Local government authorities are likely to come into closer daily touch with the broad masses of people than with central government or authorities even in these small Caribbean societies from grassroots at local government level to people's participation could flourish into a solid growth at the national level". And he goes on to advise Mr. Speaker, that it is right that people should be able to picture themselves and their local government institutions as meaningful participants in the processes of decision making and be able to see the decision making machinery as running fairly, in that way people would be less inclined to view the State as an alien creature and rather they would be more disposed to identify themselves with the State. And Mr. Speaker, on that issue of the widespread participation of different sectors of the society I think that Dr. Alexis in this book has aptly put the effect that local government may have on people's participation and the way that they view the state and the state machinery. Also in this book Mr. Speaker, the point is made that local government will in fact strengthen the regional integration process, in the sense Mr. Speaker, that we have in the Caribbean recognized for a long time the critical importance of regional integration to the development of several and tiny Caribbean states and the point here is that if people are given the opportunity at the local community and the national levels to participate in the functioning of government they would be better able to participate in the regional integration process and further Mr. Speaker, it is my view that local government will provide especially young people with an opportunity, perhaps the training and to understand and appreciate the workings and the machinery of the state and state organs and the functioning of government.

Mr. Speaker, continuing on the Guyana model I wish to just look briefly at the actual structure of this system that has been enshrined in the Guyana constitution. Mr. Speaker in that system an area is first divided into regional democratic council and from that Mr. Speaker, you then have the national congress of local democratic organs, the Guyana constitution, Mr. Speaker, then goes on to give these regional institutions under the umbrella of the national institution a certain level of prestige and the way that it works Mr. Speaker, is that the constitution groups the National Congress as one of the supreme organs of democratic power, and it shares the same status with Parliament, with the President and the Cabinet, and it also gives to the Congress the right to elect two of its members to the national assembly of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, following from that there is then the Supreme Congress where all the members of the supreme congress are members of the national assembly and the national assembly is then comprised of these members of the supreme congress plus the members of the national council of local democratic organs. So, Mr. Speaker, at every instance the smallest grouping which is the regional democratic councils, it is then given a voice at the national congress of local

democratic organs and then Mr. Speaker, eventually the supreme congress and then in Parliament and it goes without saying Mr. Speaker, that the decision making process there under this type of system is shared across the board and that people in the communities and at the national level will have an opportunity to participate in the decision making process at the highest level. And then Mr. Speaker, there is also provision for the intermarriage of local government and central government whereby local authorities choose twelve members of the national assembly and all members of the national congress and the local democratic organs are elected by and from local authorities which sit with the national assembly that make contribution to the supreme congress of the people. So Mr. Speaker, it is not a situation where you have the local government functioning on its own and you have central government and there is no mechanism whereby both can relate and interact with each other. And Mr. Speaker, for the success of any local government system there must be some level of interaction between the local government authority and the central government.

Mr. Speaker, throughout the Caribbean there have been many reasons why different systems of local government have failed, we in setting up our own local government system have to examine these reasons as well and the circumstances in which these particular reasons were allowed, or managed to over ride the good intentions of the local government systems. We have to embark MR. Speaker, on public education for our people, to educate the people as to what type of systems there are the pros and cons of each system bear in mind our own circumstances in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. We have to try and keep, Mr. Speaker, out of our local government system the type of divisiveness that is rampant today for people who are desperate for power. And people who have no respect for our constitution and electoral process and Mr. Speaker, we are all aware that this administration in its manifesto had promised to look into the reintroduction of local government to set up the mechanisms for its reintroduction and like many of our other promises this is just another one that we are now fulfilling. And Mr. Speaker as time goes by we will fulfill all our promises made to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in our manifesto. And on that note I thank you Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members of the House.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Is there any further debate?

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, I am going to be very brief. This matter has been debated considerably both in and out of Parliament, and only to say that I give full support so that I can be on the record to show that I have given full support towards this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE CONRAD SAYERS:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to give my support to the motion moved by the Honourable Prime Minister and seconded by the Minister responsible for local government. This motion Mr. Speaker, is made on a number of premises, among them that the government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is far too centralized and too inappropriate to meet the demands and the circumstances of the new century. That is the first premise. The second premise is that our society cannot properly progress unless much of that centralized

political power is devolved to the peoples of the communities. The third Mr. Speaker, is that this government campaigned on the view that there is need for democratic local government, providing for the participation of the of the people in the governance of their lives at the community level and upon that campaign thrust, the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines gave to the Unity Labour Party an overwhelming mandate to implement the promise of instituting local government here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Unlike as expressed by the previous speaker this is a government that honours its promises and as you can see one by one these promises are being fulfilled and the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines are beginning more and more to trust this government and to repose much confidence in the government.

Mr. Speaker, the need for local government is becoming more and more obvious as we go along. I remember as a boy my mom talked about Gail De Shong, with much glee, because it was he it is was, the candidate for the Kingstown area, and that kind of gave me some sense of political consciousness with fervor and the support that you throw behind a candidate. And that provision of local government enabled the parliamentary representative to be free of certain on the ground details that can best be handled by people of another level and so allow that person time to deal with issue of a national interest or national stature.

Mr. Speaker, not too long ago we saw in the newspaper to make a case in point someone drawing reference to the untidy state of a canal or gutter in Paul's Avenue, and he puts that in the newspaper and said he hopes that the parliamentary representative looks at the letter. Well indeed Mr. Speaker, conscious as I am and progressive in my out look, in what is happening around me, I did look at the letter and did follow it up by taking the Warden of the Kingstown Board on the spot to see and by calling the Chief Environmental Officer Mr. Chiviton to discuss the matter, in fact this Wednesday to make a visit in that area tomorrow, 8:30 a.m. and this would be followed by another visit in Middle Street, because there again, Mr. Speaker, on Saturday evening I was there with the comrades in the area and it took a lot of guts to spend five minutes and we spent nearly an hour discussing matters of importance to the nation and I was very much taken aback with the stench that came from the gutters in the area. The waters are polluted and stagnant and I give them my word that I am going to do something about that Mr. Speaker. It is my belief that once a problem can be solved it must be solved and that is a problem that can be solved and it must not be around to go on any longer. These are things that the local government can take care of, cleaning of drains and up keep of facilities, government facilities, public buildings, cemeteries, the local government is empowered to do these things and so the people can have an opportunity to be part and to make an input, because Mr. Speaker, when we talk about sanitation and the cleaning of the environment, people tend not to be committed to something in which they had no input and hence I appreciate the call here for this Honourable House to direct the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to promptly set up a commission to inquire publicly and I am saying this to the public that you will have an opportunity to make an input to say what structures, how should this local government be structured, what should be the duration of the officers serving, how should it be financed and monitored, what sort of relationship should it have to the central government and how it should

perform its operations, how should it be financed, because this financial aspects is something that has been a problem over the years when local government is starved of finance because they happen to be of a different political persuasion than that of Central Government and so the whole process becomes stymied. So Mr. Speaker, with that I want to register my fullest support to the process of instituting local government here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and I trust it would be genuinely democratic and that it would allow for the full participation of our people because by that we know that we are able to develop political leadership at the community level, a greater awakening of the consciousness of our people and hence a better and more effective form of democracy and governance for the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Mr. Speaker, I wish this motion a quick, easy and successful passage through this Honourable House. I am much obliged, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

**HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL:** Mr. Speaker, I too as the Member for the North Windward constituency, I too rise to give support to this motion that is before this Honourable House. Mr. Speaker, every five years there is an election and a government is being elected, after that the ministers are elected to manage the ministries and boards are appointed to assist in the management of corporations. We know too well sometimes, Mr. Speaker, that members of boards may not necessarily be the most experienced and the most fitting persons for these boards. As I can recall Mr. Speaker, under one administration, that a farmer used to select nurses for the nursing profession and the opposite happened where a nurse was put in charge of a farmers organization. It is very important Mr. Speaker that local government goes to the people where the decisions are being made. St. Vincent is quite a unique country. There are many small villages, many towns, there is a city, but there is also a mainland and there are smaller islands under the responsibility of the mainland. In some areas the terrain can be quite severe. And the distance from the main centralized area is also far. Under these circumstances, Mr. Speaker, the need exists for people who are living in areas and sometimes we call them distress areas to be totally involved in the decision, in the governance of their own way forward.

Mr. Speaker, why would one really want to give authority to these communities? Over the years, Mr. Speaker, particularly from the constituency from which I come, there has been tremendous resources in this area but these resources were never harnessed for the benefit of the people living in that area and I always reminisce Mr. Speaker, where knowing my history, where since the 15<sup>th</sup> century we have had Spanish, the British, the French, have come to our shores to reap, and to rape our country of the resources that have been here and have gone with it, and I have looked at this country within the last couple of years where a similar situation is occurring, because I have been experienced in all of the areas. This motion touches the very depth of my heart. Education has always been a sore point in my constituency, in my area, health, sports, the area of security, of course we know that the area of North Windward is particularly one of the only constituencies without secondary education. But health has always been a concern to us and just a while ago the Minister of Education, the Minister of Health, tabled a bill before this Parliament to try and see how much we can improve the environment. And he also made mention of the Rabacca Dry River and what is happening there. Late last year the Prime Minister ensured that garbage collection was done throughout the country but yet we

see the trucks moving up and down the country collecting garbage as far as Fancy in the North in my Constituency and there is a turn around where garbage from the South ends up at Rabacca, the opposite of what we are asking for. Mr. Speaker, I would ask you if you can journey across the Rabacca Dry River and you would see the quantity of tires that has been brought in that area, leaving enormous amount of tyres and I am sure if there is a heavy rain at this point in time and the river is down and all those tyres end up in the river we can also end up with a serious fish kill again in this country. We have to be guided by our own experiences and that is why the need exist for the people who are living in these areas to be able to be part of their decision-making.

Just last weekend there was a shoot out in Sandy Bay, it was said that it was drug related, and we know there is a security problem in that area, of course, this government has been trying its best under the circumstances to try and bring a level of control to its problems that exist, but I still believe that there is need to involve the people in coming to a decision in security matters that exist in that area. But, what is more touching at this moment, Mr. Speaker, is that today we have seen through the Gazette that the Right Excellent Paramount Chief Joseph Chatoyer has been given the honour of National Hero. It is quite remarkable Mr. Speaker, again knowing our history, that Joseph Chatoyer a descendant of the Carib race is being made our first national hero. This Mr. Speaker is quite a touching moment for me, knowing that I am a descendant of the Carib race and knowing over the years that North of the Rabacca Dry River has always been indicated as the area of the Carib people.

Mr. Speaker, I know as a boy, I know the experiences I would have gone through in this country, where whenever you cross the Rabacca Dry River and you cross southwards what was metred out to you. I am glad that the majority of Vincentians at this point in time, have come to the realization of what is our history and we are all one people and that the people North of the Rabacca Dry River is no different than the people living Calliaqua, Kingstown, Chateaubelair or elsewhere. Mr. Speaker, given the opportunities we have excelled in any of the areas comparable with any other person in this country. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, this motion which I believe is long overdue particularly for the people in my constituency this motion has the support of the people of the constituency of North Windward.

Mr. Speaker, the Rabacca Dry River has been an issue for many years, and having been elected as the people's representative this was one of the issues of which they were very much concerned about. Mr. Speaker, very early, in the life of this government through the Ministry of Agriculture, I remembered that a memo came to the Parliament but my colleagues then thought it was not right, I pursue to get them to understand what is happening, and this is where local government is important. Finally, I got my colleagues to understand what is happening at the Rabacca Dry River and the Government has now taken full control of the operations at the River. The people are now much more satisfied of what is happening because they have had the experience over the years, particularly when the river is down in terms of crossing the river. It has not been an easy experience Mr. Speaker, but I am sure most of us would have heard of some of the negatives coming out of the operations now at the river. Well, of course, this

administration would not be able to satisfy the desire of each and everyone of us, but I am sure that the majority of persons in this country are happy, they are glad that we have taken full control and that the people have called on the government for doing it, the government has answered, this is why local government is important. The people must have a say in their way forward.

Mr. Speaker, at the moment the people in the constituency of North Windward want to be part of showing and they want to be part and parcel of guiding their own destiny. I am sure that the people they have the will and desire and can make a contribution. I do not know what form or forms that the local government may probably take, I do not know if we would want to go with the Guyana model or the Trinidad model or whatever model is there but once the people are part and parcel of their decision making. Once they can guide their own destiny, then Mr. Speaker, I am happy and so are the people of North Windward. Mr. Speaker, I am giving full support to this motion and wish the best for this motion. I am obliged. Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Prime Minister.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, we have had over a number of different days sitting, excellent debate on the Motion regarding the establishment of democratic local Government. We have had eleven speakers, nine from the Government side and two from the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, it would be useful to remind the general public as to what the Motion actually states. There are three limbs to the preamble and there is one operative section of the Motion.

Whereas the system of the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is far too centralized and inappropriate for the demands and circumstances of the new century.

I think we have enough debate on that for persons to reasonably conclude that, that is the case that the system of Government is far too centralized and inappropriate for the demands and circumstances for the new century.

And whereas the Government of Saint and the Grenadines is firmly of the view that the country will not progress well as it should unless much political authority is devolved to the local communities,

It's been the hallmark of this administration that we want to involve all the people so that we would have central Government will give up some political authority to the people in the communities to address the community problems.

And whereas the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have demonstrated overwhelming support for the introduction of genuine democratic local Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, as is evidenced in the recent general election of March 2001.

We had that in our manifesto and the people voted for us, so we take it as a mandate to proceed here in parliament.

Be it resolved that this Honourable House directs the Government to sets up promptly a commission to inquire publicly into and report upon the most appropriate forms of local Government for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines with a view to establishing genuine democratic local Government for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines within twelve months of the passage of this Motion.

Mr. Speaker when I had introduced this Motion, I had indicated to the Leader of the Opposition privately and to the House that the Government has prepared to amend the operative part of the Motion where we are saying here that

Be it resolved that this Honourable House direct the Government to be se up promptly a Commission

We were saying that they may have a Select Committee of the House as we did on the Constitutional Motion to set up the commission and set up the terms of reference; but unfortunately the Opposition is not here, so I can't proceed in that way to have a Select Committee set up. So it is not our fault, they have excluded themselves and they will have to answer to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines as to why they were not here to be part of the exercise to assist in setting up of the Commission. The business of Government has to go on and the Government will keep the Motion and the operative section as it was stated originally.

Mr. Speaker, several questions arose of great interest in the Motion in the debate particularly. One the issue of financing our position, is that we are against extra financing by taxation of the local authorities so they have to allocation from the centre, and we also have studied the government into their countries and when you have direct elections for local government authorities you have some with the Government some not with the Government and what you have then is political tribalism and fighting at the local level, when what we want to have at the local level is more unity and you can't have a situation in a small country it seem to me but it is for the commission to decide with the inputs from the people or for the Commission to recommend; we will decide that if you have a local Government authority opposed to the Government they will have little funding from the Government and they going to try to be obstructionists to the Government. What is more democratic is that what is reflective in the country as a whole that the local Government authorities will be reflective, that majority will be

reflective there to an indirect system of election and also for appointments to be made by NGO active in the community, non Governmental organisation and community based organisations to be part of this genuinely democratic exercise. That is a view, which I am suggesting for consideration by the general public.

Mr. Speaker, clearly three communities which are relatively isolated North of the Dry River I am sure that will be special consideration in any Local Government arrangement similarly the Northern Grenadines and the Southern Grenadines even though it is easier to get to Bequia from Kingstown as it is to get to Sandy Bay from Kingstown. So those are three more or less relatively isolated communities for special considerations. Mr. Speaker I want to thank all the Members who spoke on the Government side, Minister of Social Development, the Minister of Tourism and Culture, Minister of Transport and Housing, Minister of Education, Sports and Youth Affairs, Senator Young, the Honourable Minister of National Security, the Honourable Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Honourable Minister of State in the Ministry of Agriculture, and from the Opposition the Honourable Member of Southern Grenadines and the Honourable Senator Shallow.

The debate having been wound up Mr. speaker, I submit it to the consideration of the House and therefore move that this Honourable House direct the Government to set up promptly a Commission to inquire publicly into and report upon the most appropriate forms of Local Government for St. Vincent and the Grenadines with a view to establishing genuine democratic local government with in twelve months of the passage of this Motion.

*Question put and agreed to  
Resolution passed  
Motion put and agreed to and passed.*

## **INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION AGAINST CORRUPTION -- 1996**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members this motion is to be moved by the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Trade. He has been the one who had been the signatory to this Convention in Costa Rica a few months ago, he is away on official business in South Africa, Mr. Speaker, and therefore I am asking that this particular motion be stood down until the next sitting of the House.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** The motion number three Opposition motion again by virtue of the fact that this motion was moved by the Opposition is set on the Order Paper for today's sitting and according to the authority invested in me by Rule 22(5), I have determined that we proceed with this motion this evening.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the House I indicate that there were two speakers on this motion, the Leader of the Opposition and myself

on the last occasion and I have been advised that no member of the Government would wish... [Pause] I believe, I thought that no one else wanted to debate, but it seems as though the Honourable Minister of National Security.

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, I would indeed be brief as possible, but when I look at this motion I am amazed. As a matter of fact I am dumbfounded because I just want to point out a few particulars with relation to the Motion. Now, Mr. Speaker the recital commonly term the recital that is the whereas, as is in this Motion the very many, when you look at them they are in the tens, but one thing Mr. Speaker, that struck me, is in one of the recitals it states that one of the reasons for bringing in this Motion is a matter and issue that took place in 1958. That is what is said in the Motion,

And Whereas that it is well established that the Nano family has been involved in several high profile scandals and disputes including; the Egyptian tank purchase scandal in 1958,

But Mr. Speaker in 1958 we were, had not even received Statehood as yet, as far as I know; but this is one of the part that has been brought as a reason for bringing this motion. And then the Cancer Drug Scandal in 1960s; I was not in the House, then I was not even in St. Vincent in 1960 and then Mr. Speaker the Bracco scandal in 1992, but who was in Government in 1992? We were the Opposition, and we remember, if my memory serves me right, having to say something say about this, Oh sorry, 1990, that is quite true there was no Opposition in the House that is quite true. I don't understand, either somebody isn't thinking right or according to the people they "bassardy" and then Mr. Speaker, even in this thing, I am not sure because I do believe we can say anything in Parliament and cannot be charged for contempt cause this is the highest institution in this land but there are implications here, about, that the judgment was arrived at by fraud. Now these are very serious things to say. The High Court met, a judge was there and you are saying here that the judgment was arrived at by fraud. I don't think this is something you wanted to say in Parliament but that is what the Leader of the Opposition is stating here.

And then Mr. Speaker in 1999, you might remember, Mr. Speaker, that in 1999 there was a one seat, the Government only had a very slim margin, and only in the House. They didn't have it in the popular votes, and yet we are being blamed for what happened in 1999. The Government did nothing about this in 1999 when they were sweet with the New Bank and the Nano.

Let me go on further because I am going to be very short Mr. Speaker, by the own words of the Leader of the Opposition, here is what he says in one of the whereas;

And Whereas the Honourable Minister Miss Rene Baptiste was up to the time of being elected and still is very much associated with the Nano's as the representative of the Nano's investments.

Up to the time of being elected. So what is this telling you Mr. speaker, the people knew it, she was associated up to the time but yet she elected, so what are they making rowdy about. What are you saying, that you must deny the rights of the people, the people say that we want such and such as a representative, but you are now saying that this must not be so, well that cannot be democratic.

So, Mr. Speaker, and lastly because I want to be brief. And there is another whereas here, because there are so many of them

“And whereas it is unethical,” listen to the words unethical “for Ministers of Government to act as lawyers for institutions that are owned and controlled by the government”.

Mr. Speaker, in the 1990's it was not just unethical it was illegal, you remember Parnel Campbell and the Orange Hill Estate when we brought a motion here, and they changed the law to make it that lawyers can contract even though in the Constitution then it stated that you can do it if you disclosed your interest, Parnel Campbell never did this, and so they changed it from being illegal; so now the Honourable Leader of the Opposition could come here now and say that it is unethical, well if it is unethical there is nothing to bring to this House and so Mr. Speaker, with those few words I do not see how in all fairness that we can support this type of resolution. Thank you. [Applause].

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Any further debate on this Motion? If no further debate then I would read the resolution and we would put it to the vote.

**Be it resolved** that in the public interest and in order to restore the good reputation of this country both politically and as a pre-eminent offshore centre, this Honourable House call on the Minister of tourism to resign her office and as a member of this Honourable House with immediate effect.

*The question was put and defeated.  
Motion was defeated.*

## ADJOURNMENT

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, we have actually met our deadline of 6:30 p.m. concluding the people's business today, to go off to the meeting of the OECS.

Accordingly Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House, do stand adjourned until March 28<sup>th</sup> at 10 a.m.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned at 6:30 p.m.*