

**No. 2**

**THURSDAY**

**Second Session**

**17<sup>th</sup> January, 2002**

**Seventh Parliament**

**SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

**THE**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**ADVANCE COPY**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

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**THE**

**THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

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

**NINTH SITTING**

**17<sup>th</sup> January 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

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

Honourable Louis Straker

Member for Central Leeward

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

Member for South Windward

Minister of Education, Youth and Sports  
Honourable Michael Browne

Member for West St. George

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

Member for Marriaqua

Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries  
Honourable Selmon Walters

Member for South Central  
Windward

Minister of Health and the Environment  
Honourable Dr. Douglas Slater

Member for South Leeward

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

Member for North Leeward

Minister of Tourism and Culture  
Honourable Rene Baptist

Member for West Kingstown

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

Member for East St. George

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

Member for North Windward

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

Member for Central Kingstown

Minister of Transport, Works and Housing  
Honourable Julian Francis

Government Senator

Honourable Edwin Snagg

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

**OTHER MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE**

Honourable Arnhim Eustace

Member for East Kingstown/  
Leader of the Opposition

Honourable Terrance Ollivierre

Member for Southern Grenadines

Honourable Juliet George

Government Senator

Honourable Andrea Young

Government Senator/Deputy Speaker

Honourable Gerard Shallow

Opposition Senator

Honourable Major St. Claire Leacock

Opposition Senator

**ABSENT**

Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday

Member for Northern Grenadines

# **SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

## **HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**17<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 2002**

### **PRAYERS**

Honourable Speaker of the House read the prayers.

### **MOTIONS**

The Honourable Prime Minister/Minister of Finance moved a motion to pass the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) Regulations 2002.

**WHEREAS** the Proceeds of Crime and Money Laundering (Prevention) Act 2001 (No. 39 of 2001) section 67 provides for the regulation of financial institutions governed by the Act;

**AND WHEREAS** such regulations shall provide for the identification of customers, record keeping by financial institutions and training of staff and employees or financial institutions in recognizing money laundering.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that this Honourable House passes these Regulations by negative resolution of the House of Assembly.

I beg so to move this motion.

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members this is a straightforward motion. Honourable Members will recall that late last year this Honourable House passed the Proceeds of Crime and (Money Laundering) Prevention Act. And under that Act, regulations are to be made for the more efficacious implementation of provisions of that Act. And these regulations, which have been adopted by the Cabinet, now brought to the House pursuant of the powers conferred under section 67, of the Proceeds of Crime and Money Laundering Prevention Act 2001. That these regulations cover Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, those institutions in clause 3 of the regulations which are not compulsory institutions to be regulated but those which volunteer to be regulated. For instance under the Act it is known that Credit Unions for instance are not compulsorily regulated and covered by that Act and if they wish to submit themselves that these particular regulations will connect with voluntary

regulated institutions. Then the clause 4 addresses the issue of identification procedures. Now one of the problems in the business of Money Laundering, one of the problems in the functioning, not just of offshore financial institutions but onshore financial institutions is knowing your customer, identify your customer, know with whom you are actually dealing, not a phantom element and these regulations address that very important question. These regulations Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, impose certain obligations in relation to record keeping by the various institutions and for the continued verification of accounts including internal reporting procedures and then there is an imposition of training procedures on these institutions. And Clause 9 of the regulations creates (that's the offence section) creates the offences that a person who carries on business without complying with the requirements of these regulations commits an offence and is liable (a) on summary conviction to a fine of \$10,000 dollars (b) on conviction on indictment for a first offence to a fine of \$500,000 dollars or to a term of one year imprisonment or both and for a second or subsequent offence to a fine of \$1,000,000 million dollars or to a term of three years imprisonment or both. These are essentially administrative type offences and we fully expect that all financial institutions, offshore, onshore, those which have subjected themselves also to voluntary regulation that there would be no problem. This administration is not concerned about waving the big stick. What we are concerned about is building institutions and mechanisms to cut out as far as is humanly possible Money Laundering and the utilisation of the Proceeds of Crime and we believe that those institutions will follow the regulations.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members you will notice in the schedule that there is a procedure for the verification of individuals and a procedure for verification of corporate entities and a verification of identity of partnerships or unincorporated business and the verification of facilities established by telephone or internet. And these are quite detailed forms which will have to be straight forward but quite detailed which will have to be filled out, complied with in relation to the verification of identity of persons, corporate entities, partnerships of unincorporated businesses and for facilities established by the telephone or the internet. Mr. Speaker, these regulations were considered at a committee involving parliamentarians and persons involved in the offshore finance authority and involved in the business. They were drafted by a Vincentian who, Mr. Fitzroy Drayton, and we say thanks to him. He is attached to the Caribbean Anti-Money Laundering program in Trinidad which is financed through the Financial Action task force in the Caribbean financial Action task force. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the Proceeds of Crime Act and the Money Laundering Prevention Act plus these regulations and the Financial Intelligence Unit Act. They have driven essentially several horses coupled with their chariots through the existing Confidentiality Act. There are one or two provisions of the Confidentiality Act, which we still have to look at and we are coming to Parliament to reform that piece of legislation and then there are certain changes we will have to make like, to the International Banks Act. For instance, in addressing matters of bearers shares; to put the authority on a custodian for the bearer shares, not to have bearer shares outlawed because there are many countries which have come off the so-called FATF Blacklist who still retain bearer shares, it just means that we have to settle mechanism en train. And the mechanism which we have identified is to provide a custodian, so that at all times we

will know who is the actual owner of the bearer shares, so that the facility will still be available as a product in the offshore finance services, but it will be organised and structured in such a way to meet international standards of transparency.

Mr. Speaker, we have brought this particular measure today because we want to meet a particular deadline. On the 24<sup>th</sup> January, there is another date for the ongoing assessment of St. Vincent and the Grenadines as an offshore finance jurisdiction, and we will like to have disapproved by way of a negative resolution here in the House. The FATF has been satisfied recently with the progress we have been making and because of the progress, which we have been making in reforming the offshore finance authority both legislatively and administratively, they have not recommended any counter measures to be taken against us. So that we are working closely with them to clean up the offshore finance sector whilst at the same time maintaining a viable offshore sector, which is important for our diversification of our economy and for the creation of jobs, particularly quality jobs, for white collar persons and others but, also for the contribution which the offshore sector can make directly and indirectly to the Gross Domestic Product of this country. I remember when the Leader of the Opposition was Prime Minister he had estimated then that we have probably having a contribution of about \$36 million dollars directly and indirectly from the offshore finance sector. I doubt that it is that high but it doesn't make sense that we quibble over the numbers.

The fact is this, that it is making a contribution and we should try and retain it but, to do it in a way which does not shake our own reputation and the onshore economy because for example if defensive measures are taken against us regarding say corresponding banking facilities, it would mean that it will be very difficult for us to transact business on an import/export basis, very difficult for people to get their monies from overseas, migrants who are sending monies home to their families and so on and so forth. So that those who feel that we are, there are some who will say listen, "what's wrong with the blacklist? Do what you can do make your money, you will get some knocks along the way." But they don't quite understand how this business of international finance works and state power in the OECD, FATF countries, how that functions. Because all they will do is to give specific instructions, legal instructions, to their various banking institutions not to have corresponding banking relations with banks in St. Vincent and the Grenadines like for instance the National Commercial Bank. And that will give a severe blow to the Bank so you have to maintain, we have all decided in this House that we want to maintain the offshore finance sector. We all in the community decided that this is an aspect of our economic diversification program but, at the same we have to make it clean, we have to make it transparent, we have to bring it up to international standards. And then it will be the competitiveness of our product, the creativity of the people who work in the offshore business to come up with innovative products, financial products to offer to consumers, to clients overseas. And very critically, for us to maintain good governance and security in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, on Monday morning I met with two officials who have come out from the OECD to address the question of the harmful tax regime; the offshore sector here in St.

Vincent being a harmful tax regime as they have done since 1996 when they came out with this notion of a harmful tax regime. And you know that we in the region have been fighting a battle against this characterization, in fact even the United States of America where the Clinton administration was given some support to the notion of the offshore finance sector being a harmful tax regime for countries in Europe and the United States. The Bush administration through the secretary of the treasury, Paul Oneale has taken a different stance and said that look “you can’t tell a sovereign country how they must organise their taxes.” In any case, the republican party is advocating a reduction of taxes and they are saying “well you can’t tell us that because in some states in the U.S. you have regimes which may well be considered harmful tax regimes within the context of the OECD definition.” Of course since September the 11<sup>th</sup> the United States Government’s position on the issue of harmful tax regime remains but, they are addressing the question from a different way, because there have always been three dimensions to this issue (1) the question of transparency, (2) the issue of sharing of information and thirdly the issue of what is called ring-fencing; basically what that means is that the OECD did not want countries to have discriminatory tax regimes. One for people from outside and a different one for their nationals. And that if you are going to have the tax regime like that, have it for everybody. But because of the pressure from the U.S. Government that has been the idea of ring-fencing has been dropped. So the two central issues which remain that of sharing information and the issue of transparency which dovetails with the U.S. Government’s position for fighting the financing of international terrorism. So that we have got to understand that the international context for the functioning of the offshore finance industry has changed and is changing rapidly, and we have to be keeping in constant touch with all what is happening. I tell you every single day I read realms and realms of documents dealing with the offshore finance industry, simply to keep up with the changes which are taking place. And that happens in the offshore finance authority too and the Ministry of Finance. And it is coming at you from all sides, FATF, OECD, individual states, the United Nations, the recent resolution 1373 on the suppression of the financing of terrorism. The Central Bank is coming at you because it affects the integrity of the financial space, because there is one financial space.

So that all these points of influence and contact and pressure, they are coming. And the weak and the faint hearted may well say well “cha, don’t bother with it.” You throw your hand up in the air. But you can’t do that because, there are the jobs, there is the contribution to the GDP, and there is the potential in the industry. And that is why we have to do what we have been doing in the offshore industry. And we have made as I have said, tremendous strides over the past 9 months. Now, this is not to say that the previous Government was not seeking to address the issue. Though one of the problems in one amendment which was made to the Confidentiality Act. In my view, when I was in the House, on the Opposition at the time, and certainly it’s the view of the international community, that one of those amendments made things worse for St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Because the amendments spoke to the question of, and Honourable Members who were in the House then would remember, our Opposition then, to the then Government’s amendments in that regard. That is, you should only be sharing the information if there is a high probability or great likely hood of a conviction. Well now that is a standard, which is way above the international requirements and therefore makes it more

difficult for the sharing of the information. So that specific amendments will have to be addressed in this House shortly and instructions have been given by the political directorate to the draft persons to address that particular question. So it is an ongoing battle and we are getting there. We are hoping, we are targeting, and we don't know whether we are going to actually make it but we are targeting June this year as the date when we may be able to get off the Blacklist. The thing is, having been put on the blacklist is not easy to get off, because there is no express mechanism. And even when you have the law in place and that satisfies them they would say they would want to have a certain period of time to see how you are implementing the laws. So that is another difficulty, and in that regard in terms of the establishing Financial Intelligence Unit, which is important in the monitoring of the legislation.

I want to report to the House that we are in process of having the FIU Staffed, the Financial Intelligence Unit. As Honourable Members would know that there is a director of the FIU and several other positions, including a lawyer, including an accountant, a particular number of policemen, custom officers, other personnel. But upon the advise which we have received out of CALP the Caribbean Anti Money Laundering Program, the suggestion which they have made is that we really only need one full time person, of course the person will have to have secretarial staff, and that's the director. The lawyer could be someone operating from a particular state job. The accountant could be someone operating from a similar state job. The police and customs could be attached to other agencies and the other personnel, the same thing. And we have asked a Vincentian to consider filling the post of the director of the FIU and that person is given consideration. We have considered a number of names and that person is currently given consideration and we are hoping to have that sorted out very, very soon. The Government and the Opposition in this country are at one on the central issues in the Offshore Finance Sector and that is something, which is to our credit in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. There are aspects of their own emphasis which are different from the Opposition's emphasis as their function when they were in Government and ours which are somewhat different. For instance, the then Government was keen on, well they have passed the legislation for honorary citizenship, economic citizenship. We have repealed that legislation, and that has put us in good stead. Things like this have shown, have given us in a sense, credits in the political bank. Our reorganisation of the industry administratively and the way in which we have shown that this is an industry in which partisan politics is not to be involved because as you know the Deputy Offshore Finance Inspector is a very able Vincentian woman, Louise Mitchell, who is the daughter of Sir James, former Prime Minister. So that we have to present ourselves, and I say she got her job on merit and we Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, we need to keep that particular kind of orientation and focus in all matters but very particularly in this instant case in dealing with the offshore finance sector. Accordingly Mr. Speaker, as the motion states that this Honourable House passed these regulations by way of a negative resolution of the House of Assembly. I am Obligated.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members at this time we are debating the regulations, which will govern the operations on the Proceeds of Crime and Money Laundering Act, which we passed in this House recently. It is fair to say Mr. Speaker, that both

sides of the House recognises, that this sector of our Economy is an important pillar in the Economic Diversification process in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Mr. Speaker we in these parts don't have very many options in terms of the developments of our economies because of the onset of globalisation and trade liberalisation and the need to be competitive. But we are of the view Mr. Speaker, that in the offshore sector that we have the ability to compete. Mr. Speaker, over the last few years in this House, we have been making several changes in the legislation governing the operation of this offshore sector. And most of these changes Mr. Speaker, have been induced by the constant dynamics of the international environment in relation to this particular sector. Prime Minister in his statement mentioned not only what we are dealing with this morning but even the OECD initiative on harmful tax competition. And all these Mr. Speaker, are part of the same parcel. Mr. Speaker, these regulations set out procedures for the identification of entities and individuals, it has guidance notes Mr. Speaker, for that identification.

And Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to look back at schedule, I think it is the first schedule of the Money Laundering Act and we will see the list of institutions which will become the regulated institutions under this Act. And we have on that list Mr. Speaker, if I could name a few: Banks; licensed under the Banking Act, Banks; licensed under the international Banks Act, Building Societies; registered under the Building societies Act, Insurance companies under the relevant Act, international insurance businesses also Mr. Speaker, under the international Insurance Act 1996 and Mr. Speaker, also the registered agents of the offshore sector and trustees licensed under the registered agent and Trustees Licensing Act 1996. The person licensed to operate an exchange bureau, a person licensed as the dealer or investment adviser, a person who carries Mr. Speaker, or provides cash remittance services, a person who carries on postal courier services, mutual funds, and I relate to these Mr. Speaker, because I believe that it is important that our community understands that when we speak of a regulated business in the context of these regulations those are the kind of entities and individuals that we are referring to. And Mr. Speaker, there is a reference also to what is called relevant business activity and that activity includes Mr. Speaker, and this again is for the general public to get a clear understanding of what we are dealing with here in this House. It includes car dealerships, it includes jewelers, real estate agents, casinos, internet gaming, pool betting, lottery agents, barristers at law and solicitors, and accountants. So there are rights range Mr. Speaker, of activities, which we seek, activities and entities which we seek to regulate by these regulations that we are now debating. And Mr. Speaker, I think the Prime Minister in his presentation mentioned the importance of the identification procedures. And the fact that in these regulations there are guidance notes which have to be followed in relation to such identification, and I think that it is a very important aspect Mr. Speaker, of these regulations and those guidance notes are quite substantial and appear.....

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, if I may just, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, has given way, if I may just indicate, it was an omission on my part earlier to indicate that the guidance notes will also be published to accompany these regulations. They will be about maybe about 80 pages, very extensive notes, so I just want to indicate that

because I did not mention that and that was not available. But they are not statutory, they are notes for guidance.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, and the institutions Mr. Speaker, will have to have satisfactory evidence of the identity of the entities or individuals involved. In other words Mr. Speaker, there must be a clear identification so that you know who you are dealing with. Mr. Speaker, the regulations provides also for record keeping procedures and interestingly and importantly the regulations also provide for a minimum retention time for such evidence. And Mr. Speaker, that minimum time has been set for 7 years. So if someone carries out a transaction at a commercial bank tomorrow, the bank, especially if it exceeds \$10, 000 dollars, the bank has to retain that evidence until the year 2009, January 17<sup>th</sup> at a minimum. Because there must be the right to look back at transactions in terms of deciding whether someone is involved in an illicit transaction of Money Laundering. And then Mr. Speaker, the regulations in 6 (2) provides for verification of accounts and for internal reporting procedures. In particular Mr. Speaker, regulations 7 (1) requires that a reporting officer be identified in the specific institution and that persons who are working in the institutions Mr. Speaker, if they are suspicious of a transaction must report that transaction to reporting officer who will carry out necessary investigation following agreed procedures. And Mr. Speaker, that is a very important aspect of these regulations. But it means Mr. Speaker, that in all these entities persons have to be trained, so that they understand how to spot the transactions, which may be suspicious, and that is a critical Mr. Speaker, a critical component of the regulation. And this may extend Mr. Speaker, down to a teller in a bank who is dealing with a businessperson, who has been making or carrying out transactions in the bank. And it requires some knowledge Mr. Speaker, and this is including the guidance notes, it requires some knowledge of the kind of business, what sort of level of deposits you expect the persons to making from time to time given the nature of the business that they are transacting. It requires Mr. Speaker, that you may be able to spot, well, on a normal business day, this person may deposit \$20, 000 dollars, based on the type of business he has carried out. And then suddenly you see a transaction where he is depositing \$50, 000 dollars or \$100, 000 dollars. And the person receiving those funds must be aware enough Mr. Speaker, to question at least in his mind, the transaction that is occurring and make a decision as to reporting, to the reporting officer in the institution. So this is going to put a specific responsibility Mr. Speaker, on the staff of the institutions, which are addressed in the list, or the schedule attached to the Money Laundering Act.

Mr. Speaker, it therefore requires a great deal of accountability and at the same time Mr. Speaker, as said before significant training. And Mr. Speaker, it is also important to note that in the regulations under 9 (1) what the offences are and the penalties associated with those offences. And Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote from the regulations in this regard, 9 (1) Mr. Speaker: “a person who carries on business without complying with the requirements of these regulations commits an offence and is liable (a) on summary conviction to a fine of \$10, 000 dollars. (b) on conviction on indictment for a first offence to a fine of \$500, 000 dollars or to a term of 1 year imprisonment or to both the fine and the imprisonment. And 2 Mr. Speaker, again on conviction and indictment; for a second or subsequent offence a fine of \$100, 000, 000

million dollars, or to a term of three years imprisonment, or to both the term of imprisonment and the fine.

Mr. Speaker, the severity of the penalties included in this bill, is an indication of the importance that is attached to this issue not only here but, internationally. St. Vincent and the Grenadines has to seen especially in these times Mr. Speaker, has taken a tough stance on these matters and when one speaks of fines and imprisonment running \$500, 000, 000 and \$1 million dollars that is a clear indication Mr. Speaker, of the importance that is attached to this particular set of regulations. Mr. Speaker, in the context of the future of the offshore finance sector Mr. Speaker, these regulations are therefore important. We have already passed the Money Laundering Act and now we have the regulations that go with them, and the Prime Minister has indicated that the guidance notes which are not yet appended could run up to 80 pages. Again Mr. Speaker, indicating the need for training and understanding of the staff of the various entities with regard to this particular matter. Mr. Speaker, we are a small country, small country and Mr. Speaker, we can come into this parliament and we can pass all the legislation that is required for the development and monitoring of the offshore finance sector. And Mr. Speaker, it is not sufficient to pass legislations. If passing legislations were sufficient Mr. Speaker, then all will be well, but we are required Mr. Speaker, to implement all of this legislation in the most meaningful manner. And in small countries Mr. Speaker, sometimes that is an onerous task in terms of our human resources and in terms of our financial resources. And I think you would recall Mr. Speaker, that when we discussed the Financial Intelligence Unit Bill, in this Parliament we made provision there for a fund where, when monies are confiscated, we will go into that fund and the monies will be used for the development and some of the implementation mechanisms required for this offshore finance sector. So Mr. Speaker, we must have the capacity to implement.

Today Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of concern about governance and transparency. The Government has been harping on this and making this point continuously. I have no problems Mr. Speaker, with issues of Government. There will be difference here and there in terms of interpretation but I think we all understand what it means. And Mr. Speaker, I say this because I recognise the significant cost and human resource constraints that we face. And at the same time Mr. Speaker, we must not only show that we can pass the legislation. We must not only show Mr. Speaker, that we have implementation capability or capacity. We must not only show Mr. Speaker, that we are able to finance that. We must not only show Mr. Speaker, that our offshore sector must become competitive, but we must show by our actions Mr. Speaker, that when we do these things in Parliament we mean what we say. We have to mean it Mr. Speaker, and that is why in previously based in this House Mr. Speaker, I have lamented the fact that a fugitive offshore banker was allowed to leave this country because when we deal with this type of legislation Mr. Speaker, we are stepping in the right direction. But when we let go someone who is now a subject of this very type of legislation, we are sending a signal Mr. Speaker, which is not acceptable.

We may want to dismiss that Mr. Speaker, but I will say this, things like that can be more damaging than we think. We are judged Mr. Speaker, not only by the legislation but, by our

performance in related matters. And we can't get away from that how we may want to, we are judged by that also. It is no point in having the framework Mr. Speaker, and then at the end of it all people do whatever they wish. And while I support Mr. Speaker, the regulations, I am saying to the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines that matters like the NANO matter should not be allowed to happen again.

And indeed Mr. Speaker, it will continue to reverberate for sometime to come until there is a settlement in relation to this particular matter. And we just can't get away from that; we may just want to dismiss it because it is convenient to do so Mr. Speaker, but reality dictates otherwise. Because I don't want to be part and parcel of simply passing legislations then actions are taken which makes that meaningless. Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to a matter and I hope I can get the serious clarification of that matter when the Prime Minister rounds up this debate on this motion. Mr. Speaker, a few days ago on this Honourable House, the Honourable Prime Minister drew to our attention the fact that two individuals live in the BVI, one from that country and one from St. Vincent and the Grenadines had escaped custody in the BVI, broke jail, chartered an aircraft and flew to St. Vincent and the Grenadines. One of them a Vincentian who hails from South Rivers I believe was convicted in the BVI for possession, I believe involved in the trafficking of marijuana some 28 pounds of it. And the Prime Minister gave an explanation and indicated that this matter has been dealt with, because the individuals had been arrested when they came to St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Mr. Speaker, in that same context the Prime Minister tried to allay our fears about the attitude of the BVI Government to us here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and their decision to hold back on requiring visas for Vincentians to go the BVI. I am alarmed Mr. Speaker, to say the least to hear that the 'BVI-an' or the Belonger to the BVI has been sent back and the Vincentian has been released. And I would wish to get a very clear understanding of that issue Mr. Speaker, because I regard it as extremely serious not only the context Mr. Speaker, of the offshore sector because, a lot of what he talked about in Money Laundering derives in the activity of drug trafficking. And I would like to get a very clear statement on that matter from the relevant authority. Because Mr. Speaker, to my mind the drug trafficker who has broken out of jail, chartered a plane to come here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, arrested, had been allowed to go free. And I want to know Mr. Speaker, I want to know why. What conditions occasioned his release, because I understand the other individual has been sent back to the BVI. Mr. Speaker, we seem to be developing a reputation in this country for allowing people to go free and Mr. Speaker, I say this in the context of the seriousness of which the Prime Minister himself has said in this country that he is going to be tough on crime and the causes of crime because that is consistent Mr. Speaker, to the type of legislation that we are attempting to pass here today; these regulations, because these are tough.

Mr. Speaker. We are not dealing with toughness on paper. We have to show that we mean what we say. And I really, I hope the information that I have Mr. Speaker, is wrong, because I can't understand what message we are attempting to send Mr. Speaker, to the international community in this regard. In the space of a couple of months we have two: Nano and now this other individual. And this cannot be a good message Mr. Speaker, cannot be a good message.

And with all our best efforts in this legislation that cannot continue, that cannot continue. And I am saying Mr. Speaker with in fact I nearly say a gentleman, with in fact a criminal has been released. He should be rearrested Mr. Speaker, he is not worth Mr. Speaker, the damage that will do to St, Vincent and the Grenadines' image, is not worth it. We expect employment and income from this offshore finance sector. That is why we are doing all these things. We expect employment and income for our people from this sector. So we can't let an individual Mr. Speaker, whatever connections we may have to get any special privileges.

The last time we were told we did not have any legislation to deal with the matter, which I don't accept anyway, and I want to hear what is the reason this time. Because I am concerned Mr. Speaker, and the Prime Minister is very careful with his presentation last week. He made it plain that the BVI had taken the decision the executive counsel of the BVI had taken the decision to apply work permits for Vincentian nationals. But he was able to intervene with the Prime Minister and have that held back. What is the BVI to say to this present situation or what have they said. Are we going to face the prospect Mr. Speaker, of the BVI again changing its decision knowing how many of our nationals Mr. Speaker, are involved in the economy of that country. How many of our citizens here depend on remittances from their relatives there. I hope Mr. Speaker, that we get a very satisfactory explanation, because I said in this House already Mr. Speaker, when we boast about good governance, must remember too that some of those we boast who are so pleased about what we call our good governance are the people who are in fact in control of the BVI; that is the British Government. But the BVI is a colony and I maintained that the British Government would have known if not participated in the original decision Mr. Speaker, to impose visa restrictions on our nationals. And those Mr. Speaker, the British are part of the OECD. They are part of this very exercise, which is insisting that we raise certain standards, that we be transparent, and that we act within the framework of laws. The Prime Minister constantly says we are a country of laws. Let us hear Mr. Speaker, why it was necessary, because I am fearful Mr. Speaker, about the signal that we are sending.

When Mr. Speaker, we look at the amount of time and I agree it was time well-spent Mr. Speaker, in the Select Committee and the Money Laundering Bill. There were very good presentations by all parties and individuals involved in that exercise. And I think that we ended up Mr. Speaker, with a good piece of legislation. And the regulations that we are looking at here again Mr. Speaker, today are good regulations, they go to the meat of the matter in relation to this particular exercise. But Mr. Speaker, we cannot destroy all that work by actions Mr. Speaker, actions which to my mind, including the Nano, are reprehensible and damaging to the good name of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. And Mr. Speaker, we will continue to hear about this. We cannot Mr. Speaker, operate like this, who is going to take us seriously when we talk about legislation, who? I sit here in this Parliament, my support of a measure is considered sometimes, "well you supporting everything we do." I am not supporting the release of Nano or anybody else in matters of this sort. I want to make that very clear Mr. Speaker, because we are wasting time in this Honourable House, if that is how we act. And we cannot Mr. Speaker, speak from both sides of our mouth at the same time. We have to send clear and unambiguous signals, that we are serious of this particular exercise. We can't be seen as a nation of bunglers

Mr. Speaker. We have to be seen as intelligent people who are able to understand and appreciate the realities of the environment in which we exist to make the appropriate arrangements and legislations for the development of the sector and of our country generally. To implement and make regulations that governs those things. But most of all Mr. Speaker, at all times there must be no doubts as to our seriousness and the seriousness of our intent. And Mr. Speaker, today I feel discouraged. I think all of us Mr. Speaker, and it is not here in St. Vincent alone and the Grenadines Mr. Speaker, all of us in this region and other parts of the world are clear that we are facing a serious economic difficulty. And this whole exercise Mr. Speaker, at the end of it all is to improve the economic well being of our citizens, that is what it is about. When the Prime Minister comes to this Parliament and introduces his legislations, it is because of his aim at some development of our country. But we cannot take actions Mr. Speaker, subsequent to putting these types of legislation in place that negates them. In that case it is better that we don't do it.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member has ten minutes.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, I am much obliged. Mr. Speaker, I sometimes wonder. Last time they said, I am too concerned, I am too cautious but I am very real and very pragmatic. And I have a good grasp Mr. Speaker, about what is happening around us, very good grasp. And Mr. Speaker, it must not be assumed that because I am in opposition that I too do not have contacts with the international community. After all I have been dealing there for many years, many years. And I am aware Mr. Speaker, of how they operate and I am sure that the Prime Minister himself is aware about how they operate.

If the EU wants to put a slap on you, on St. Vincent and the Grenadines and turn down something, they are not going to say no. They tell you apply. Then they will say it has to go to Brussels for decision but, you know Brussels takes six weeks for holidays between August and September. So we can't give you the decision before later in the year. By the end of the year I say well, we had a number of other issues that we had to deal with and therefore we will deal with that next year. That is how it operates Mr. Speaker, that is how it operates. And when we take actions Mr. Speaker, which belie our words, then we are sending a signal to those very people. And Mr. Speaker, those signals not only affect the offshore sector, they affect the other sectors of our economy where we ask for assistance in the international community. They hold one head Mr. Speaker, on these matters, one head. The Prime Minister himself spoke in the last session about the need and the movement towards great integration, which is why we are doing it Mr. Speaker, because that is a better way for us to survive in the international community.

So let us not do anything Mr. Speaker, which makes us a laughing stock, which creates any doubts at all in the minds of the public and indeed Mr. Speaker, in our own minds in this House when actions are taken which negate very good work done in relation to legislation. Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister mentioned that he is looking at a target in June to get off of the Blacklist. I have no problem Mr. Speaker, indeed I will be happy if we could get off the Blacklist by June. But I am saying Mr. Speaker, actions are similar to ones we have taken in

recent times, including the Nano action and including this particular one I am discussing here today Mr. Speaker, will impact negatively in terms of our ability to meet that target. Any reasonable Government has to set targets in terms of what they wish to achieve. But that must be accompanied Mr. Speaker, by the requisite implementation of what we have decided in this Honourable House. Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister in his presentation spoke about the harmful tax initiative and I was pleased to hear him say that in relation to ring fencing there is some progress and I am very happy to hear that. And Mr. Speaker, I am more than happy because as all of us know Mr. Speaker, in our economy, in the economies in the OECS a Government's ability to stimulate and manipulate economic activity rests entirely on the fiscal side. And to the extent that there is progress in that area Mr. Speaker, in terms of ring fencing, I am very happy to hear it. Because I believe Mr. Speaker, that gives us an opportunity to make meaningful fiscal adjustments for the stimulation of our economy. But above all that Mr. Speaker, the international community must be satisfied that we are acting Mr. Speaker, in a manner consistent with the legislation that we bring to this Honourable House. I am much obliged Mr. Speaker.

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members. I am very grateful to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition for his support on these regulations. I want to respond to his contribution in two distinct, though related areas. (1) the regulations and matters connected thereto including the Nano issue and secondly, the matter of the release of the Vincentian who had escaped custody from the British Virgin Islands. Mr. Speaker, I will deal with the second matter first. I was informed this morning by a police officer when I arrived at the Courthouse. When I came to Parliament that a Vincentian had been released. Like the Leader of the Opposition, I was appalled.

I immediately give instructions that the commissioner be contacted. He was unavailable I could not get him. I spoke to the Minister of National Security on the issue and I give certain instructions. At the same time I had conveyed to a senior member of the special branch, instructions to be relayed to the commissioner of police on this matter. It does not require a rocket scientist to see that a monumental blunder was made by some person or persons in the police force and that I assure this House that there will be an inquiry to see whether this blunder was one of common ordinary garden negligence or whether there is more in the mortar beside the pestle. As Prime Minister I will not tolerate from anyone, however high he or she may be, in the Royal St. Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force, or however low any repeat any act or omission which comprises the security of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and its reputation as a country of laws.

I have made it plain already that I as Prime Minister take final responsibility because that is the nature of the system. But I will not take blame because I make a distinction between responsibility and blame. I cannot conduct the Police Force from the office of the Prime Minister. Someone who is a citizen of this country who has broken out of jail and who has

come to St. Vincent and the Grenadines in the circumstances of this Vincentian fugitive that there is in place in legislation for such persons to be dealt with and to be held. And it is incomprehensible for me to fathom that that person could have been released without the principal or officer of the crown, the attorney general having been informed. I cannot understand either in view of my conversations with the commissioner of police on the issue of these two persons and the relationship between that fact and the issue of the requirement of the visa and all the matters connected thereto which I discussed fully with the commissioner of police. Indeed I informed him that I would wish all the names of the top 100, 200 criminals from St. Vincent and the Grenadines to be given to the British Virgin Islands and for an extraordinarily close relationship to exist between both police forces because that is the context of my discussions with Chief Minister of the British Virgin Islands.

So it is also incomprehensible to me that having held that discussion with the commissioner of police that that person could be released without the commissioner informing me that he was about to be release or released and that an ordinary police man has to inform me. It is completely unacceptable and I say in this House that the commissioner has questions to answer. I consulate on a front to the authority of the Prime Minister for this to be done without the Prime Minister being informed given the context of the discussion that I had held with him. See Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, there is a vast distinction between the Nano case and this particular case, both in fact and in law. In the Nano case: here is a Vincentian citizen for whom an extradition request was made in relation to an offence of Money Laundering where the Fugitive Offenders Act did not deal with the question of Money Laundering. And therefore there was no legal machinery legitimately to hold that person. There has since been the legal machinery put in place in this House with a rapidity which has endeared us to right thinking civilized nations the world over.

We further in that particular case, on our own, not by any, used the mechanisms of the law to do something which is now assessed to be more valuable than if Mr. Nano was actually held. That is to say to have a search warrant sworn before the Senior Magistrate obtained information for search warrant, search warrant issued and executed with the assistance of the FBI and other law enforcement authorities from the United States of America. That is a different case in that there was an allegation of Money Laundering not a conviction. There was an allegation in relation to the, for the use of the Fugitive Offenders Act which did not contain the legal requisites to act, that's an entirely different matter than someone who is convicted, who is in Police custody, who escapes, who comes here.

I have been told that they had requested evidence from, they requested the information in all its particularities from the BVI authorities but did not receive. But even if that is the case, to have a sufficiency of information that you could hold the person and if the individual wishes to challenge that holding let them come to the Court on the basis of habeas corpus. It seems to me to be elementary, as a/b/c and I cannot understand who tendered the advice, on which advise the police acted, if any advice was sought from a lawyer, I don't know. So I can assure this Honourable House that I am as astounded as the Leader of the Opposition is at the release of the

individual in question. And I assure that there will be an inquiry into the matter. I am a little sorry that the Leader of the Opposition did not indicate to me that he was going to raise it, otherwise I would have said to him please don't raise it because I have given certain instructions having found it out this morning. But the issue having been ventilated I don't know whether the person in question will seek to now go on the run.

Mr. Speaker, this matter cannot otherwise be described, in my view, on the facts before me but as one of monumental police incompetence. Without Mr. Speaker, knowing if there is anything other than incompetence. Mr. Speaker, I have been informed by the Minister of National Security, that advice was received from the Director of Public Prosecutions to the Commissioner of Police that they couldn't hold him. I insist nevertheless as Prime Minister I should have been informed on a matter of sub sensitive security in the circumstances, and I reiterate it is a matter of incompetence whatever the advice tendered by the Director of Public Prosecutions. So Mr. Speaker, I am hoping that the Police will set about and correct this error, which they have made, and to do so with expedition now that the matter has been ventilated in the House and was drawn to my attention for the first time this morning. You see Mr. Speaker, if I did not hold a discussion with the Commissioner of Police on the matter, if I did not show the importance of this and link it to the issue of the visas I could see it as an oversight. I do not want to come into the House and criticise public servants, and they have no right of reply in this House, but it is my duty to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and in the interest of transparency, to speak the truth as I see it, and as I know it.

Mr. Speaker, nevertheless all the law enforcement authorities and all the nation states with whom we have contact know that this Government is a Government of Laws and that this Government is one which is an exemplar of good governance. I want to say this Mr. Speaker, that yesterday the Charge d' Affairs, the senior diplomat at the Embassy of the United States of America in Barbados who is also accredited to St. Vincent and the Grenadines came to me to convey among other things the gratitude of the United States Government for the close collaboration between this Government and that Government and especially for our support on the Nano issue, that happened down to yesterday. I want to make that point with crystal clarity, and I would not call the name of the Charge d' Affairs just for a political effect, yesterday she and an official from her mission came to see me on a number of matters. In fact, she said that the levels of co-operation between this Government and the United States Government and with the security forces is unprecedented in this county, unprecedented so that errors of judgment by the police, individual acts of incompetence do not share that fundamental fact. And that when the Leader of the Opposition speaks about the Nano issue reverberating, with the greatest of respect to him it is reverberating in his head and no way else, because it has no resonance with the OECD Countries, with the United States of America and with Britain. In fact Mr. Speaker, the British Government and the American Government are commenting favourably on a matter, which I have not drawn to the public's attention, but I will do so now. And the manner in which the NDP Government acted when a similar incident arose a few years ago. I want to make the comparison between what happened with the lucky star and an incident on the 20<sup>th</sup> December with a Vincentian registered vessel called the Nesha. I must equally say and this is why I

express my own disappointment with the Leader of the Opposition on this particular matter on which he spoke openly that on the Nesha, the very day that I received the information I showed him the information about the Nesha. And when I received certain additional information at the very day in the House I also spoke to him about it, in fact there were only four persons who knew of the incident. The Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of National Security, and the Leader of the Opposition. Those were the only four persons in this House who knew and of course the Commissioner of Police, the Commissioner of Maritime affairs in Monaco and the controller of customs. And that is why I take on these matters a step, which has never been taken with me to share security information of this kind with the Leader of the Opposition.

The point about it Mr. Speaker, the Nesha which is a Vincentian registered vessel had left Mauritius with a ship load of sugar bound for Djibouti which is between the Yemen and the Sudan you know where that is in the heart of North Africa. The British Government received intelligence when the vessel left there but before it left there on its way to unload the balance of the sugar in the United Kingdom for Tate and Lyle, this vessel is owned by a company out of Bombay, India, that terrorist materials and maybe terrorist were aboard the vessel. Lest anybody say that this vessel was registered during the time of the ULP administration, it was registered during the NDP administration. Nothing hangs on that, I am just saying because I know that the mill will run. And the vessel was off the Isle of Wight in international waters sailing to the United Kingdom on the 20<sup>th</sup> December.

I was at the time making my Christmas rounds at various institutions and I was at the Lewis Punnett Home when I received a telephone call on the cell phone from the British Authorities requesting permission of me for the United Kingdom Authorities to board the vessel and search. I told the gentleman that I give authority for them to board, to search, to cease, and to take away any material or person from the Vincentian registered vessel and to keep me informed. I did not have to wait nine days like the NDP Prime Minister with the lucky star, which had millions of dollars of worth of hashish aboard when the Americans requested it to board. No, indeed all the deals in relation to lucky star have not yet been unearthed but they will be, they will be. On the one hand, nine days with the NDP after tremendous pressure from the U.S., on the other, within seconds, not even nine seconds. And I indicated to the British authorities if they wish to have the authority, which I have just given in writing, I could have it communicated to them immediately. They said well that might be necessary if they find any criminal misconduct. The vessel on my authorisation was searched by the British Government, thoroughly both at sea and in port. And I am pleased to report, as indeed the British Government had reported to me before Christmas and I heard Prime Minister Tony Blair on radio and I saw him on television addressing this exact question, about the ship being searched and about the co-operation which he had received, he did not say from whom but he knew the co-operation was from the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines on his cell phone at an old people's home within nine seconds.

So when you come here and talk to this Government about not collaborating and co-operating with law enforcement authorities and not doing things, the evidence is there. You see Mr. Speaker, I take the security of this state very seriously. I do not play politics with St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Anyone else who wishes to play politics with it can do so. But the first obligation of a Government and my first obligation before jobs are provided before roads are mended is to provide for the safety and security of the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and law and order. And I have made that absolutely clear, so that when we have these lapses by functionaries within the system I will speak honestly and truthfully about them because this Government on the issue of good governance, we cannot be better. Indeed the NDP Government was seeking for three years to get debt relief under the Commonwealth debt initiative of \$13 and a half million dollars. The British Government replied to the NDP Government to the Leader of the Opposition now when you occupy the different positions and said that we are not giving you debt relief for the following reasons: (1) you are not weighing down against corruption (2) you do not have a focused approach to poverty alleviation, poverty reduction and (3) you do not have what we consider a sound record on good governance.

Within a month of my getting into office I made the application to the British Government, and the British Government after five months of the ULP being in the office, through a member of the British Cabinet, the secretary of state Ms. Clare Short, Secretary of State for the Department for international development. When I visited her on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August last year at her office the first thing she said to me after she embraced me and kissed me, she said “Prime Minister I have something for you.” She gave me a letter, when I opened it, it was debt relief on the basis of our good governance, on the basis of our focused approach to poverty reduction and on the basis of our weighing down in practical terms on corruption. So what the Leader of the Opposition is talking about is a bass man beating only in his head reverberating there.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Prime Minister you have six minutes.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Look let me say this you know. I am not here to pull down any public official, I am here to simply ascertain facts. You want to play politics with National Security issues but you can't play National Securities issues whilst I am here. You can't play. You see the point about it is this, you deal with radio I deal with facts and I deal with all the circumstances. Yes, but you see the point about it is this, if that had been drawn to your attention in some way instead of speaking the way in which you spoke just now to see if you could facilitate the flight of that person you would have spoken to me as I came in and said “Prime Minister I am going to raise this thing.” Just so as I would have done, and as I have been doing. But of course I know there are persons who may say that I should not do it but, I will continue to do it because that is a mark of good governance, and that is the way in which we should function in a mature democratic society. And the people will make their judgment, and when the people make their judgment, I am quite sure they will make their judgment overwhelmingly again even more so in the favour of the ULP administration under the leadership of Ralph Gonsalves. You see Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that this issue is a

matter of national importance, separate and distinct from this debate, it is open if the Minister of National Security wishes under the rules of the House, statement on the matter.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I could use my general authority.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Yes. But I speak, I reply to the Leader of the Opposition in so far as my knowledge of these facts are concerned in relation to the issue what the Leader of the Opposition said he would have wanted clarification on. Because I want to say Mr. Speaker, as you notice in this House because of my profound respect for popular democracy that any question that is raised I answer it. I could have done like what some other person might do if they were here in my position now.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I think under 34(2) he can do it.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Yes I am pretty sure Mr. Speaker, if he is so inclined, that I could have said what you are talking about I don't know and I have nothing to say and that is the end of that. But I want that everybody who is involved in any position in the administration must know that we have to deal with these issues openly, with honesty and with transparency. The Commissioner of Police, Mr. William Harry is a very good policeman. There is no question in my mind about that. The Commissioner of Police has given distinct and dedicated service to this country. I insist that in the circumstances I should have been informed. I do not want to get into a dispute with the advice of the Director of Public Prosecutions. If that was his advice I beg to differ with it as a Lawyer and if that advice were brought to my attention I would have said there are other things, which could be done. Because sometimes a Lawyer may give an opinion based on the parameters on the advice, which is sought.

For example the lawyers for the Development Corporation his advice was sought as whether a contract entered into by the previous Development Corporation Board with the St. Vincent Brewery and offered to sell piece of land to the Brewery and the acceptance of that offer by the Brewery or the other way around, the Brewery made an offer and accepted by the Development Corporation and the money having been paid there is an enforceable contract and specific performance could have been sought from the Court and the Lawyer give that advice and that advice was brought to my attention and I say, "yes the Lawyer can give that advice, but the Lawyer was not asked what is the position if the Brewery is an alien company which it is in terms of the shares. Because what happened to that piece of land is that Stewart Engineering valued it at \$12 a square foot. The Brewery said they would buy it at \$4.50 a square foot. Claude Leach then the manager said "no \$6.50," no reason why he moved from \$12 to \$6.50. But as soon as they got the letter for \$6.50 he wrote them and said "don't bother with the \$6.50 we would take \$4.50," and in the end sold below \$4.50. On the file the facts were not clear as to why the Development Corporation the NDP Board will take less than \$4.50 which their valuator told them was \$12, Stewart Engineering So I suspected immediately that there was more in the mortar beside the pestle. And that is where good governance comes in you know. Was there any money passed between anybody, I am not saying the Brewery you know. I am

saying was there any money passed between anybody in relation to this matter? And we decided in the cabinet that we will not grant the alien landholding License to the Brewery, because they can have the land but the land if as an alien company you have land though the contract is not void from the beginning it is void ab initio as the instance of the crown and the Attorney General would be given certain instructions in that regard and of course because a state agency got the money we will pay it back but I contacted the Brewery Lawyer the next morning, last week after the cabinet decision was made and say “listen, we will take \$10 a square foot given the to and fro which has been going and we all decide we are going to pay the \$10 a square foot.

So that the point about it is this, a Lawyer may give advice but he may give advice relating to certain facts. If other facts are drawn to the attention of the Lawyer other kinds of advice will emerge. So when you get a brief with particular facts you give the advice on the basis of those facts, if other facts are not drawn to your attention. So the advice of the DPP for instance I don't know what are all the facts which were put to the DPP. In any event the BVI is not in Timbuktu and I am sure, I am satisfied that things other than the release in these circumstances could have been done. I want again to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his support on the regulations and I want to say to him in summary that Thierry Nano was not allowed to leave the state.

I want to say again that the United States of America is fully satisfied with the extent of the co-operation. Indeed Mr. Speaker, I will say this, the Attorney General in the United States having informed of the extent of our co-operation with the search warrant and getting the FBI to come down, at a breakfast meeting requested that it be transmitted to me how much the United States Government appreciates the support of the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines on this matter. They also agreed that given the legal architecture we could not have held Mr. Nano, they have agreed on that. And the message from the Attorney General was transmitted to me by way of a member of the British Authorities. So please don't bad mouth the country and this Government which has demonstrated good governance, which has shown its credentials and which Government has received the full acknowledgment in several countries including the British Government, including also the American Government and yesterday the Barbados' High Commissioner to St. Vincent and the Grenadines, non-resident Mr. Nigel Barrow expressed the gratitude of the Barbados Government for the work which we performed there, the police force who did excellent work in returning two Barbadian prisoners who had gotten out of custody in Barbados. I know the Police force is not perfect, I do not intend to make perfection the enemy of the good. The Police force is a good force and requires help in every single way to be better. But when issues arise of the nature which the Leader of the Opposition raised, it is critical that while we accept responsibility we do not accept blame because to do so would be to exculpate persons who had certain responsibilities and in my view those responsibilities were not shouldered in the most efficacious of ways. I am obliged.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Minister of National Security.

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to invoke section 34 (2) in the Standing Orders. I think just to elucidate certain points and to let, so that the public can understand. We have a very efficient police force here in St. Vincent, there are some members like in any organisation that do not pull their weight. Just to state what the facts are in this case, and that in my opinion, and I have to take some of the blame for that as Minister of National Security, responsibility, they say not responsibility I prefer to take the blame it does not matter. It is that where the Commissioner of Police would have lapsed is by not informing the Prime Minister of what has been done but I was informed.

The fact is, it is because of the deficiency and astuteness of the police why we were able to arrest these two persons. The information was not obtained from the BVI authorities in the BVI, the information was obtained from a radio transmission that was picked up by our Police. The two persons were arrested; the BVI authorities were contacted and they said that they would deal with the matter. The two persons were held for four days; no request came, nothing to say that they had committed any crime except from the radio transmission that was picked up. The DPP was contacted on what to do, because the people's lawyers were saying well you can't hold them unless you charge them, why are you holding the people. And his advice was we could not hold the persons unless we can charge them. There is nothing in St. Vincent we could have charged the two persons with. One person was sent back, he was not sent back, it was his parents who sent a ticket for Osbourne to go back. Osbourne was put on a plane and the BVI authorities were informed.

In short this is the fact; but more than that, the Vincentian's activities are monitored because up to now we are still awaiting word from the BVI as to the extent of this prison break out, whether there was prison break out or not. Well when we have condemned convicted felon on the radio spouting his nonsense and the Leader of the Opposition would accept that as a Bible, I don't where you got the information from but it does not matter where you got if from, what you got was false. I am giving you what it is now and you can check it out.

So that we must remember Mr. Speaker, Commissioner Harry was not promoted when he was skipped over for a very simple reason because under the law he did not stop us from holding.... the same Colonial Homes that you see we have in the Commission of Inquiry about you know, when we warned the Government that it was stupid and the people had to demonstrate and exactly what we said had come through. And when the NDP administration sought to bring pressure on Mr. Harry then, acting Commissioner that he should prevent us from holding that demonstration there, he is not stupid, he is a wise man he realise that this place might have been up in arms. And the level and the degree in the number of persons that came to that demonstration paid their own way. We did not pay any transportation to bring them. The Government shook in their boots and that is a fact. And so the only way they could have got back when time for promotion came they say "well you did not do our will so therefore you can't be promoted". I am sure almost every Vincentian knows this but these are the facts. Up to now we have not had a request from the authorities in the BVI although we had called them maybe about ten times with regard to these two persons. As the Prime Minister said, and I agree

with him, he should have been told and I am not making no excuse, I am not quite sure whether he was out of the state at the time. So that it is plain and clear, we are not playing politics with the security of this country. This country has never been as secure as it is now. I am not saying that it is perfect, never has been secure as it is now. I don't want to go over what we have done so far and what we intend to do but the criminals know that we are serious and they understand fully what we are saying.

But you see the Opposition has nothing and the Leader of the Opposition all he has been doing is flogging a dead horse. The Nano is not an issue it is a non-issue. But he feels that he can make political mileage out of it. I don't know what kind of political mileage he expects to make, but I understand his feelings because it is the same Nano and the same Nano Bank that accused him, so obviously I can understand the animosity that lurks there. But to blame the administration that we allowed Nano to go away it was the NDP that give the NDP citizenship not us, and campaign funds. But you tell us now that when you made him a citizen and he has all the rights of a citizen that he must not have those rights, well can't do that. You gave him those rights and because you gave him those rights he was able to use those rights as any other Vincentian citizen to get boldly, it was not secretly or anything on an aircraft and leave this country because there was nothing to hold him on. But we will continue to hear about the Nano issue because there is nothing else that they can talk about, nothing; we know this.

In short Mr. Speaker, these are the facts; we were very astute, the Police they were very vigilant that we were able to monitor and pick up a radio Broadcast that we had those persons coming down here and we arrested them, but after that the process must go on. And let me repeat, we did not even send back the guy Osbourne, his parents sent a ticket because the BVI authorities did nothing and he was able like anybody else to leave the country, he went back to the BVI. I am not sure what happened when he got back there. Those are the facts Mr. Speaker. I am obliged.

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members. The negative resolution on this matter has been moved and it has been seconded that this House is being asked to pass these regulations by a negative resolution of the House of Assembly. And it is simply a question, as I understand it unless persons will wish to vote against it otherwise it is taken that it is passed. I think that is my understanding of a negative resolution.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** That is understandable.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** So it is taken that it is passed Mr. Speaker...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** It is taken as it is passed unless anybody objects to it.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I will like to be guided by you. It is now quarter pass perhaps we can start the....

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Maybe I should put the question then...

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Okay, Fine.

*Question put and agreed to.  
Resolution passed.*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I want to be guided, it is quarter past 12. Perhaps we can maybe go until 1 o'clock on the next motion. I see some members apparently would like to have an early lunch. In which case Mr. Speaker, if we are taking the lunch now we should be back at half past one.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Unless you want to read the resolution now and then go straight into the debate when....

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Perhaps we can simply move it now, read it and then go into the debate. I am obliged Mr. Speaker, when we come back after lunch. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, this is a motion of Local Government. I beg to move this motion, which reads as follows:

**WHEREAS** the system of Government in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is far too centralised and inappropriate to the demands and circumstances of the new century;

**AND WHEREAS** the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is firmly of the view that the country would not progress as well as it should unless much political authority is devolved to the local communities;

**AND WHEREAS** the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have demonstrated overwhelming support for the introduction of genuine, democratic Local Government for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines as was evidenced in the recent general elections of March 28, 2001;

**BE IT RESOLVED** that this Honourable House directs the Government to set 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. I so move Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Mr. Speaker, I move to second the motion.

*Motion put and agreed to.*

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Maybe I'll indicate the adjournment at this time.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the adjournment of this Honourable House until 1:45 p.m.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**SUSPENSION 12:30 p.m. (Lunch)**

**RESUMPTION 1: 55 p.m.**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Prime Minister, the debate on the Local Government motion.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members. This motion has to be seen in the context of the public policy of this Government to deepen popular democracy, community participation, transparency in public accountability. The history of Local Government reform in St. Vincent and the Grenadines is one which has had a series of problems. Indeed in some respects the most effective local Government that we have had in St. Vincent and the Grenadines is during the colonial period with the Kingstown Town Board. And that structure which was sustained for many years until the former Prime Minister Sir James Mitchell past premier....

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Just one moment Mr. Prime Minister is this on air. I have not seen anybody sitting there for 705 so I am wondering, anybody can tell us that, monitor that and let us know if it is on air. Okay. Thank you. You may proceed.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I am obliged Mr. Speaker. Yes as it is known this country had a limited form of Local Government with the Town Board. Indeed at one time in the 1960's the elections for the Kingstown Board and the Honourable Leader of the Opposition would remember this because his father I think had contested for the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Labour Party as a member for the Town Board. Of course it is a matter of history that where he had sucked of the milk of the Labour Party he has now looked askance upon them. But that is always a matter for correction I have no doubt. In the same way Mr. Speaker, that those who were once Christians and had espoused atheism or at least agnosticism, shortly before they demise they run and call the priest so that they can perform the last rites, the sacrament of extreme unction. So I believe that there may be yet an application for extreme unction, the sacrament. I think Senator Leacock who is a recent convert to Catholicism understands this particular sacrament very well and with no doubt for his own interest induce the Leader of the Opposition to so go towards the table of the sacrament.

Mr. Speaker, one unfortunate feature of the Kingstown Board elections was that it had the divisiveness of a national campaign, and rather than uniting the people for community

endeavours it further divided them. That lesson is also one, which is manifest in Trinidad and Tobago. For instance, the last elections, Local Government elections nation wide in Trinidad and Tobago, saw the PMN and the UNC locked in partisan battle even more than at the general elections time. Because when the elections are held mid term the Opposition PMN says well “ You have to vote for a PMN Local Government because this is a referendum on the Government”. And the financing, which comes for those Local Government elections, is akin to that of a national campaign. In Jamaica the partisanship in the parishes, in the Kingston and St. Andrew corporation and through out the parishes is every bit and in many cases even more vicious than in a national campaign because there is in a sense a greater immediacy for limited spoils. So it seems to me Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, that one of the considerations when we are moving towards Local Government reform whilst we have to make it a democratic exercise, we have to find a way to avoid the divisions of the communities at the local level, wherein fact local level Government is about uniting the communities for common action on individual problems.

It means therefore Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members that we may well have to, in the Local Government commission which is been asked to be set up by this motion in the operative part of the motion, 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 in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, with a view to establishing genuinely democratic government within twelve months of the passage of this motion. It may well be Mr. Speaker, that one of the options which the Local Government commission, the reform of Local Government would have to contemplate is whether we do not have democratic representation on the Local Government bodies but, indirectly proportionate to the membership in the House or the votes, the proportionate sharing of the votes received at the last election if not elected members. And have a certain number of persons selected by a Local Government Commissioner from the non-Governmental organisations, the NGOs. So that the NGO community could be involved in the Local Government bodies as well as representatives selected by the Parliamentarians on both sides, whether you do it proportionate to the number of votes or to the number of seats, that is a matter for further determination, we can always refine the model of the framework. Because what I fear is that if we have the direct election you are going have the kind of intense partisan rivalries. I would like very much purely from my own personal narrow selfish party interest for it to be direct elections, so that we can sweep the whole country but, I am not looking at this matter purely from the stand point of a narrow partisan interest. I have to look at it in terms of the well being of the whole community. And I suggest Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members that a local Commissioner being appointed by the Government after requisite consultations, well they are appointed by the Governor General on the advise of the Prime Minister after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition. That is one way for the Local Government Commissioner that the person will be responsible for the coordination between the Central Government and the Local Government in terms of the distribution of resources, rather than having the permanent secretary in the Ministry of Local Government to deal with that matter which will be a detailed time consuming work. It seems to me that you will have to have a senior executive called a Local Government Commissioner to

be interfacing with the Central Government to get the monies from the Central Government for tasks to be performed within the remit of the Local Government body. We know the tasks, we all talk about them, helping to clean the streets, fixing some drains, repairing the windows for schools, clinics, that sort of Local Government activity deals with cemeteries and issues which really the national leaderships which ought not to be concerned about in a direct way. So that when you elect persons at election time for this Parliament you will know that you are also selecting essentially the body which will do the selection in the various areas for the Local Government authorities. But I am suggesting that there ought to be a component for non-Governmental organisations.

I also make this point about NGOs because there are a number of very good NGO personalities who can do very useful work in the communities but who may not wish to get involved in the partisan politics if you have the direct election. And they represent interest and persons and they have an important contribution and it is now recognised worldwide that NGOs though not persons directly elected they should have a role, broadly speaking in the governance of the country – community organisations, community based organisations, the chamber of industry and commerce, the labour movements and so on and so forth, religious organisations, and the details can be worked out; that is one possible model. Another one is to have direct elections for everybody with the advantage that direct democracy has, but the disadvantage that it will divide even more the communities these small communities when we are looking for cohesion.

Mr. Speaker, whatever form the Local Government takes a few are clear. The people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines would not want to have Local Government authorities if the Local Government authorities are given powers of taxation because people don't want to have two sets of taxes. In the old days the Town Board used to have a levy a tax of some kind. Now I have my doubts my real serious doubts whether the general public will go for that. Then of course we have to decide whether we will use the existing constituency boundaries save and except those in the city to have the existing constituency boundaries as Local Government authorities. And if you do it in order to keep in nexus, a link between the Local Government bodies and the Parliament, it can be that the Parliamentarians themselves for the particular constituency can be ex-officio members as has happened in some Local Government authorities, models comparatively in other parts of the world. The idea is not to have Local Government bodies acting out of sync with the national entity otherwise you can have paralysis. Local Government authorities going one way, the national Parliament going another way, the Government going another way than the Local Government authorities. And what you would have would be ineffective Local Government because the national entity will simply starve them of funds, that is a practical matter of life. So I put these issues in the mix to show when we begin the discussion a lot of ideas emerge. I am not proposing any particular model of Local Government; the Government is not doing that. What I am doing from the vantage point of my own experience, my own reading of the comparative literature, my own reflections of our own reality to put forward ideas which may in addition to other ideas from members on this side and from members on the other side, from NGOs personalities, professionals and all the ideas will contend.

We have in our own midst here to show you the seriousness of this Government under question. The Ministry of Local Government has invited an expert in the field of Local Government, a lecturer of the University of the West Indies Dr. Ragonath, he is here. And he is invited to come and hear the debate. Because we intend to engage Dr. Ragonath to be involved in public education exercises on the issue of Local Government and to assist us in framing a particular model for St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Dr. Ragonath is not going to decide, we will decide, we the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. But as there is an expert from outside and in the region we make use of that expert so that he can bring to bear his own research in comparative knowledge and practical experiences in this particular field. Mr. Speaker, it is well known that the Local Government contributes greatly to the training of national leaders.

You can see a young man or young woman in Colonaire, South Rivers, East Kingstown, West St. George, wherever being involved in Local Government and understanding issues in a practical way but what is a budget. How do you plan a budget, how do you implement a budget, how you draw corporate plans, how you conceptualise things, how you move to implementation or work plans, what is the system like, how to interface with people with whom you are serving. And one of the weaknesses perhaps for contemporary Parliamentarians even though by and large we are more technically competent and more educated in a formal sense than many former Parliaments of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, there is still the issue of being in a context where you could have been trained and got certain things come to you by second nature through Local Government involvement.

George McIntosh late great Leader was on the Town Board for many, many years never got an opportunity to serve in a Ministerial capacity simply because he was defeated in 1951 and the Ministerial council system did not come into being until 1956. Not even an embryonic system which came into being in 1954. But there is no doubt that someone like George McIntosh would have functioned extremely well as a Minister of Government because of his Local Government experience and I think that that is true from comparative experiences and studies all over the world and certainly in the Caribbean.

Mr. Speaker, if I may say parenthetically you know it distresses me, sometimes I wonder whether I should not and I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition sometimes feels like this, other members sometime you feel just momentarily in my case like you should give up because of the essential backwardness of some people, those who should know better.

In my New Years speech to the nation I spoke among other things about the necessity and desirability for training modules to be put for senior public servants, other public servants and I say that's ongoing which should be done for senior management personnel in the public sector, public enterprises and for the members of the board of public enterprises and for Parliamentarians. I made the point too that many of the persons in all these categories are highly skilled and technically trained people. We see them here and an array of persons with universities degrees, advanced degrees, graduate teachers alike over on the Opposition also but

because I said that there ought to be training for Parliamentarians, I did not say the Government I said Parliamentarians all of us. I heard my friend Keith Joseph on the radio last night while I was coming from a function said “well the Prime Minister said that members of the government need to have some training and what is going to happen in this country are we going to sit by and wait until they have graduated from their training to run the Government”, words to that effect. Now Keith Joseph who is an educator out at the Community College, of course he will be very happy given his instinctive egotism and egoism that I raise his name in the house but I raise it as I said parenthetically this is not to say that he is a parenthesis I am not suggesting at all that he is a parenthesis, I am just raising the issue parenthetically. And really there must be some professional responsibility on an educator because I who have four degrees, a bachelor of Science in Economics, a Masters in Government, PHD in Political Science/ Political Economy, a degree of utter Barrister, I have taught at Universities, I have been to several different Universities, the best in the world I have taught at several of them in the Caribbean, in Africa, in England, in United States. I have written extensively, I have been a Lawyer and even; please Mr. Speaker, for this very moment permit me to be immodest that someone whom, it has been acknowledged that if it is asserted that he is possessed of certain legal skills that the person who hear it would be able to concur and say the point is not without merit. But I want to have training because I learn every day and I am sure that the Honourable Members on the Opposition would like the Government to devise a program of training which will involve them, well to get the professional to devise it. Because there are so many things that we all need to be learning on an ongoing basis, and I am hoping that I will continue to learn until I die. And that is why reading to me, studying, is part of me as drinking water and eating food.

So when you make a point of great sensitivity and intelligence, if I may say, and someone wishes to popo it. Everyone here has the technical capacity in this house for governance everybody here. But what are the alternative conceptual frameworks within which one is, ought to govern. What ought to be the nature of the relationships between the Politician and the Public servant. How does one manage change? What are the variables in the process of the management of change? What is the nature of the external environment? And how does that external environment which none of us can understand sufficiently about, as I tell you, daily, I am at my office 11 o’ clocks at nights, 12 o’ clock at nights sometimes beyond that time, not just reading state papers but studying issues and reading about them.

For instance we have a program on poverty alleviation. A number of experts dealing with poverty, we assemble them and I said well the interventions you are talking about are fine, Government must put in money to do this and to do that and as you know we put \$250, 000 dollars to begin the poverty alleviation fund, we have the agricultural diversification fund and so on and so forth. I say but let us turn the issue onto the poor and put it in this way. The poor they possess abundance of capital, dead capital though, much of it, the question is to make that dead capital live; they get title deed for their lands so that it goes into the market place. Now that is an idea developed by Hernando Desoto a Peruvian economist. First in the book ‘The Other Path’ which is an answer to Sendero Lumenoso, ‘The Shining Path’ in Peru. And adumbrated in a very scholarly and incisive way in a recent book called ‘The Mysteries of

Capital'. So Hernando Desoto can teach me. Well he may not be able to teach Keith Joseph who knows everything about every subject under the sun and therefore by definition knows nothing. Because a logical proposition is that if you proclaim to know everything about everything logically you know nothing because it is your lack of knowledge why you presume to know everything about everything. So all of us need training and it is important for us to assert that with modesty from the top. So when I say to the minibus drivers; we have to organise a training program for minibus drivers as to how they conduct themselves in their business, to make them better entrepreneurs and for them to have better relations with people and how to dress and talk to people and so on and so forth. If I say I don't want any training, a big man there in the minibus say "well you don't want any training how you want me to take training", you know it is a peculiar thing.

We are advancing a new model of leadership, which we are doing here in the presentation of this motion. We not only inspire, which is necessary but we seek to draw out of people that which is good and noble in them and to draw out of the people that which they themselves do not even know they possess. That is the highest quality of leadership. But you know sometimes you advancing these concepts; very often it is like throwing to some people 'pearls before swines'. I am sorry that I have to speak in this manner but it becomes necessary sometimes so to speak.

I am sure that persons who are going to go in Local Government, and we say that this is a training ground for other kinds of Leadership that those persons would not feel humiliated. And to say that they should themselves get training, what is wrong with that. You know Mr. Speaker, I have always found that those who least need training are those who are most enthused about proposing it and those who require it most have an in build instinctive Opposition to it. You can call that Gonsalves Law number 1, but that is born of experience. Mr. Speaker, in my reflections on this issue of Local Government I had occasion to read and study a book by an American Sociologist called Emitie Edziony who is a passionate advocate of community based philosophy in a book called 'The Spirit of Community', in fact he calls his doctrine that one of communitarianism. I have to be careful because you have people out there who will say because I talking about communism, I am talking about communitarianism, that is a philosophy out of the community. I have to be careful how I talk you know because I tell you it is a hell of a thing in communicating with some people who just want to be malicious and mischievous. Incidentally I may say this and I am proud to say this, my friend Keith, I come back to this point, I had forgotten to say this to show the difference between this Government and the predecessor Government. He could be banging us nightly on his radio, but when he wants to see me I allow him to come to see me and talk for hours about different subjects, he brought Dr. Bertha. Sometimes you will even get information and twist it around but I will still see him because he is a child of the Caribbean. Mr. Speaker, I have enquired about his employment status at the Community College. I believe that he is paid in parts by the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, is he not. Minister of Education indicates that it is 'so'. If he wishes to be a high priest of negativism, well this is the point I am going to make, I

don't even know for instance, Senator Leacock, what is his employment status or who pays. (interjection) No! No! No! I am coming to the other point.

The teachers college and the community college invited me on several occasions when I was in Opposition just to go and give addresses to them and on every occasion. Ralph Gonsalves was blocked, my voice must not be heard on Government property as though I was an alien who come here from Mars and me navel string ain't bury here. That is what happened under the NDP. I don't want to harp on it I just simply want to point the contrast.

But I return to the philosophy of communitarianism which is an element of the consideration when we are looking at Local Government. And Edziony said this “ communitarianism called to restore civic virtues for people to live up to their responsibilities and not merely focus on their entitlements and to store up the moral foundations of society. Communities are social webs of people who know one another as persons and have a moral voice. Communities draw an impersonal bond to encourage members to abide by shared values. Communities gently chastise those who violate shared moral norms and express approbation for those who abide by them. They turn to the state, the courts, and the police only when all else fails. Hence the more viable communities are the less need for policing. (Unquote) I think that is a truism.

So we have to get this web of communities involved in the new structure of Local Government which we are talking about without creating the divisions at the Local Government level, to shake this solidarity of the shared values between the people on the ground. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members in a speech which I delivered on July 4<sup>th</sup> 2000 entitled, in Jamaica I delivered this to the rotary club, entitled “The Caribbean On The Quest For Good Governance”.

I made some suggestions. I said first; the communities themselves must be viable in terms of a core of shared values and a noble in stock of social capital and appropriately organised community systems. The partisan competitive politics which has been shown to be necessary for the maintenance of democracy and individual liberties in our region ought not to be sent into political tribalism and so called garrison constituencies of the Jamaica type, such a dissent would undermine communitarianism. The competitive politics can be mature and tolerant and can properly co-exist with community centered consensualism on practical issues such as jobs, crime, corruption, education, health, the environment, culture, sports, gender concerns and so forth which mattered dearly to the people. Therefore we have to fashion the Local Government apparatus, which does not seek to undermine and introduce even through the back door the extreme partisanship at that local level and that is why I began by suggesting a particular model for the structure of the Local Government.

Secondly the state structures must be profoundly democratised at the center and very importantly too at the decentralised levels of effective Local Government. And I went on to speak about the communities to be organised with the recognised social partners and non-governmental groups and to be allocated important roles and voices in the formal apparatus of Government. And this could be done both centrally and locally, but we are concentrating here

locally now because that is the focus of this particular motion for Local Government reinstatement.

And thirdly and this is important for our context here; an appropriate conceptual and functional demarcation should be drawn up to manage efficaciously the relationship between the reformed democratic state and viable communities. The state naturally in such a model will focus its attention on the following: (1) a cluster of subjects such as law and order and national security, foreign affairs, international trade, economic development, the administration of the state bureaucracy. (2) Matters, which presents a clear and present danger for example the AIDS epidemic. (3) Areas of activity in which there are no better full-scale alternatives available to state involvement such as public education, public health services and state social security arrangements.

I went on to say even in these three broad categories the communities will work closely with the state and private entities may supplement the efforts of the state in the domestic polity society and economy. But in a wide range of activities, which touch and concern the people practically at the community or local level the viable communities and the democratic Local Government bodies will carry the burden principally.

So I am seeking for us to construct on this discussion and the debate which will follow fulsomely and this debate will run parallel with that for constitutional reform though it will be a shorter debate since we are of the view we can establish the Local Government model, even one which is an interim model until it is fleshed out fulsomely when constitutional reform is concluded. In other words constitutional reform may take three years, three and half years because we have to embark on the most comprehensive political education ever in the history of this country, on this matter of constitutional reform and then of course too very important Local Government. So that vision of this Government is to have these two projects connecting, interfacing, but we can fast track Local Government even though it may not be the most fine-tuned arrangement because we do not know what the entire end product of the constitutional reform would bring. But in the mean time we can fashion something and can learn from experiences as we re-introduce democratic Local Government in the way, which I have, been discussing and defining it. I know that the model, which I am suggesting, is an exciting one. I am with doubt that it grabs the attention of all the members on that side of the house. But to carry on and effect these fundamental reforms, I am not talking here about radical departure, fundamental reforms because there is much that is good in our existing constitutional apparatus.

So I am talking about major reforms not a radical departure. And yet we have to manage those things simultaneously while we are conducting governance and dealing with the day-to-day problems with the people in an increasingly hostile environment. We have taken on a task in this Parliament of historical and monumental proportions and we who are in this Parliament are living in a truly historic age. Now it is left to us, as Leaders in communion with the people, at home and in the diaspora, and I see who came in just now, a brilliant young professional in the

diaspora a Vincentian, Jomo Thomas and they will have their contribution also to make in the diaspora because we are one.

Now on this venture, some may even say adventure, it is something never seen in the history of politics in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The people sensed it and that is what they voted for and it is within this context all of us in the various categories, including the journalists, need profound training. There is a matter which we are dealing with, external environment, Cable and Wireless, liberalism of telecoms. The News editorial last week had a very interesting editorial: that we must come in the open and say everything and I agree with that. And we are the only Government which published one week after we got into office, and signed the agreement on telecoms. We are the only Government, which published it, the agreement between the OECS countries and Cable and Wireless. But you know, you won't believe it, because there is not one single article in the newspaper and that was done in April last year. They themselves need to acquire the technical skills, or to be advised by those who are expert in the field of telecommunications, on the issues involved that calls for training and education. And if we don't have a press which is educated and a people who are knowledgeable, how are we going to confront the challenges? Because Cable and Wireless is going to be able to manipulate us with paid journalist, many who sing for their supper, irrespective of the patriotism, and what are the issues involved, and try to divide us. And of course in a Westminster system and competitive party system, even some of the Opposition persons may even degenerate into demagoguery knowing that what is being done is completely anti-national, but they are doing it because they feel it is now bugging turn, their turn next time to take the creese. Can't go on like that.

That is why the dialogue I am carrying here; the discussion, which I am seeking to initiate here, is of such profound importance. In fact if I did not have a particular past, I would have declared that the exercise in which we are involved, though not a radical departure, is in fundamental ways, revolutionary. Mr. Speaker, we are a multi-island nation and clearly in any project for Local Government we said we can use the constituencies except those in Kingstown as the basis. The three Kingstown constituencies can be lumped as one for Local Government purposes and you can have a mayor, you may well have a different Local Government arrangement for the city as from the countryside, you may well. The people may decide that, they may put forward those ideas and similarly, it is clear to me, that there ought to be a little more autonomy to the Grenadines Islands in respect to certain Local Government matters, that seems clear to me.

You take for instance in Canouan, the developers are now engaged in discussions with the Trump organisation, for further development of the area for which they have ninety-nine years lease. They want to put down among other things Mustique's styles homes and by Mustique's styles homes I mean homes between \$3, 000, 000 to \$5, 000, 000 US dollars; they will be sold before they are built. To put down an exclusive smaller hotel and to put down some marina facilities of some kind or fishing village. And of course they have the casino which Trump will run. The figures which they are talking about are so mind boggling that I hardly want to

contemplate them until I see them happening real terms. They are talking between \$500, 000, 000 dollars and \$1 billion US dollars.

Already the villages in Canouan is a dump compared to what you have in the developed area. You leave the airport and you go into the resort, you pass through; the garbage is not properly collected, houses are not planned, you have old and broken down buildings, including an ugly one, I gave instructions for it to be demolished, the old Police station. There is no landscaping, there are people who insist that they have to let go, there is a let go season, you have to let go your goat and your sheep which in the aggregate we can collect among here, among poor Parliamentarians today enough money to buy the entire livestock in Canouan. But you can't plant anything to make the place green. That enterprise, the development of the village of Canouan has to be done between Canouan, the people of Canouan, the Central Government and the Developers. There is no other way you can do it and people there have to be involved in the Local Government Authority, which has, I am suggesting some more formal authority than say Local Government authority may have in the constituency of North Central Windward. Not that you are making it special. I am taking account of the separation the same thing in relation to Bequia and so on and so forth, Union Island. Of course I would want to repeat what I am saying in this regard; is not Government policy explicitly about the form. But the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines represented in the political form, the ULP, had pointed out in the manifesto that we will go for some effective Local Government Authority down in the Grenadines and anything you see we write inside our manifesto believe it, we are implementing it.

There are some people who write manifestos and think that they are pieces of papers just to get votes. It is just something as if you put on a T-shirt, not with us. Manifesto making for us is a serious exercise, a serious democratic exercise involving all the people through radio, through television for community groups, the party organisation. And then, came with a final product and put it to the people and that is what they voted for. So when anybody complains to me about anything I say, 'but it is in the manifesto'. Some people troops their teeth, 'but why bother about manifesto'. I say, 'but I bother about manifesto' because that is my bond ideationally, programmatically with the people. That is what I said that I would do. That is what the party said that it would do. It is not a piece of paper to be thrown aside. The Leader of the Opposition who knows the office of the Prime Minister, the top drawer on the right side of where you use to sit down, I have the 100 days program there and I have my manifesto there and practically everyday I take them out. Although I was one of the authors of that manifesto I still read it because I have to refresh myself with what I said to the people. And that is why the programmes of the party, this Government has a certain aliveness and connection with the electorate.

You know Mr. Speaker, I have said many times before, Honourable members that the management of political change and we are involved in the exercise of the management of political change, it is a contradictory process. It is even more so in the case of a broad based party, which subscribes to the principles of social democracy. The ULP is not a Leninist party

and therefore does not have a centralised organisational direction though it has leadership and it does not have one truth, it has a philosophy and it has policies and it has programmes. But in the nature of mass parties, managing change with a mass party is not easy. But you cannot do it with a Leninist type organisation as Bernard Coward discovered in Grenada. It may be difficult but it is the only way to do it in a progressive manner. And then you are doing it in a competitive political system where the Opposition is not only on Opposition, but also to a large degree and the first set of letters of the word Opposition connects with opportunism because some Opposition parties have been principled. And I have worked consistently on principles whereas for others, have no core philosophy, nothing and they are moving all about and they are just going hither and thither, and looking for every little opportunity. And they are being egged on by modern radio by a convicted felon. When you have...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** You have eight minutes.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I am obliged Mr. Speaker. When you have the Opposition following the opportunism because I will tell you, you know Mr. Speaker, convicted felons who have not appropriately reformed are by definition opportunistic. In fact this particular convicted felon say that he will say anything for a dollar, who ever pays him. And if you provide him with a four-wheel jeep which you got duty free and you give him money from what we give the Opposition, well what the Government gives the Opposition. (Interjection) Ahh! You see Senator Leacock, I have always said that I, when I leave this office the office will be left with it's dignity intact but I will continue to speak out against an Opposition which is irresponsible in the sense that it is being led by the utterances of a convicted felon. And that is a germane issue for the people of the country to reflect on. There is no way given the philosophical position, which I have articulated. And the changes, which I envisioned for this country that I could permit a convicted felon to be my principal spokes person. Never. I would find my moral authority, not a private moral authority you know. I am talking about the public moral authority compromised. (Interjection) No. No. No. No.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Let us continue the debate.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Well you see Mr. Speaker, I understand, I am not making the point here Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members from a partisan political stand point you know. I am taking it from the standpoint of whether we are going to allow the lowest common denominator to set an agenda, and that is the point I am making. I know it is very troubling to Senator Leacock and the Opposition. And I know that the Leader of the Opposition, I know of his upbringing, I knew him at the Grammar School, I have known him since, that he would be most uncomfortable in taking the directions in which he would have to take. Perforce-through necessity from convicted felon. And I know for instance if a person has to be my spokes person, I would want to be able to have him at my house for breakfast, any day of the week for lunch and dinner and to have him sleep off in the bedroom next to me. I must have that confidence I must have that confidence but you know there are some people Mr. Speaker, like to take the high road but they are structurally engrossed in low road business, structurally

engrossed in low road business. Now that is a fundamental contradiction which is difficult to resolve, but that is your conundrum but it infects the body polity to the extent that the NDP is one of the two great parties of state.

There are two great parties of state the ULP and NDP and these must be treasured. It is true as mass parties you have members whom you wish would not be members because by and large you wash your foot, you say you support the principles and you come. That is how it happens in mass parties. But we have to have an internal mechanism to cleanse because that is important to the discussion in which we are engaged. It is important in the discussion in which we are engaged of providing good governance. To provide a political framework, which will redound to the effectiveness of the governance to the strengthening of individual's rights and freedoms, beefing up accountability all those are elements and limits. And leadership in this exercise is critical; never forget that. And that is where the point arises; leadership is critical. Leadership in ideas, leadership in organisation, leadership in articulation and leadership in how you conduct yourself publicly.

But Mr. Speaker, I remember the last time the motion on constitutional reform came, and we are, I should point that we are in the process of finalizing, and I had indicated this in the last time, the terms of reference on the Motion for Constitutional Reform and very soon we will hold a Select Committee on that. But I am Mr. Speaker, prepared, in the same spirit in which I had entertained an amendment to the Motion on Constitutional Reform, to entertain an amendment motion in this regard that rather than this Honourable House direct the Government to set up promptly a Commission of Inquiry to inquire and publicly report on the most appropriate forms of Local Government, that I am prepared for us to have a Select Committee to set up the Local Government Commission, in the same way I agreed upon that for a Select Committee to set up the Constitutional Reform Commission. So if the Leader of the Opposition wishes to propose such an amendment I will entertain it and I will second it, because that is in keeping with the way in which we conduct Government. We will make mistakes and sometimes declared policy may not be carried out as speedily or as well as you may wish, but that is part of the task of managing the change and to get the institutions rolling to effect the change. The process of change is a wash with contradictions and there will be set backs and those set backs we must turn into advances, defeats we must turn into triumphs, limitations into possibilities, weaknesses into strength. The shortest distance between two points is a straight line geometrically, but politics alas is not neatly geometric, so that in the management of the change sometimes in order to manage the contradictions you have to take zigzags. And in taking the zigzags you keep the strategic objective in mind and work in an organised manner, in a democratic manner, in a transparent and honest manner to that particular strategic objective. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I commend this motion to you.

I could have involved in a great deal of recriminations from the past. I only mentioned briefly as to who shut down Local Government in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I do not need to go there because in any detail, because as I quoted in my speech in the ... as I quoted Vaclack

Havel, the playwright on “This Edent” who became the first president of the free Czechoslovakia in 1990 on New Years day.

The fact that the NDP had done away with Local Government it is not their fault alone, not their fault alone. They did away with Local Government before the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Labour Party was returned to office in 1974. Well the NDP came in 1975, but everybody knows that the NDP belongs to Sir James. He has proprietary ownership of it. Let us not dispute that. But the point is this Mr. Speaker, the Labour Party came after independence 1979, 1984 too, did not bring back Local Government and for seventeen years the NDP remained there and did not bring back Local Government. I will not blame the former St. Vincent and the Grenadines Labour Party for not bringing it back, nor am I going to blame the NDP alone for not bringing it back.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** You are winding up right...

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I am winding up Mr. Speaker. I am obliged. It is the blame and the shame of every single one of us to have sat back and allow Governments elected in our name to proceed and rule as modern day Leviathans without even as much as genuflecting to the people in Local Government institutions. Now in this new period, this Government is taking the state off the backs of the people helping to guide the people and saying to the people, ‘it is now your turn, let us see what you can do’. We will provide the leadership, we will provide the guidance but it is up to you for us to deepen good governance in St. Vincent and the Grenadines to have Constitutional reform and to re-institute Local Government. I am obliged.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Further debate on the motion; member for the Southern Grenadines.

**HONOURABLE TERRANCE OLLIVIERRE:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable. I rise to make my contribution to the debate on this motion, which seeks to ascertain the appropriate form of Local Government to be implemented in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, so as to ensure that we continue our progress through the new century by giving greater political autonomy to the people in the Local communities.

Indeed the implementation of bold and positive initiative throughout the country is essential to good governance since it will give greater participation to the people. Somewhere indeed support this motion because as we said it offers greater participation in the political milieu of the people as we move or as we seek to move from a system that is centralised to one that is decentralised; therefore allowing some form of devolution of political power to people in the Local communities. As a result you will have greater participation, and consultation by the people; therefore aiding progress, aiding development. Because of the greater consultation and participation we would have a wider knowledge so that we will be able effectively to meet the demands and challenges of this new century. In modern management terms this sort of initiative

is deemed to be progressive in that in a way, you sort of use it to motivate those involved, to higher performance thereby they will be able to gain ownership towards their community, thereby they will be able to, sort of, motivate or stimulate that sort of community spirit, they would have been able to motivate people to work harder in order to achieve a better community, henceforth a better quality of life and a better nation for us all. But we must be mindful at what level that this form of decentralisation would occur so that the people would truly feel that they are making a meaningful contribution to national development, they are making meaningful contribution to the development of their communities.

Mr. Speaker, I say this because if we look back in the past I realise that we in the Grenadines, our experience has been one of fluctuating fortunes, depending on which political party was in power. I have no fear, absolutely no fear, if I can speak frankly that under past Labour Party Government that the people of the Grenadines were neglected. And somehow I am yet to be convinced that this administrative would be different but I am hoping that history would prove me wrong. For we have seen that the people of the Grenadines would have gained some form of progress, some form of stability under the New Democratic Party, hence the need for the political directorate of the country should not dictate the well being, the progress of the citizens because of their political persuasion and that is one of the reasons why I applaud the implementation of Local Government provided that the right structures are put in place to ensure that it is free, that it is fair and that it is reflective of the people's will.

Indeed Mr. Speaker, the situation that I spoke about before, it brings uncertainty in the minds of the people and if we are to progress smoothly through this new century, there is the need to put certain structures in place that will, sort of, alleviate these sort of uncertainty in the minds of people. Therefore Mr. Speaker, it is incumbent on the right of our leaders to chart the course forward so that each of our citizens, regardless of their political persuasion, would realise that each of us must play a meaningful role in the development of this country, regardless of whether you are a convicted felon or not. And I say this Mr. Speaker because if we look at it from a biblical perspective, Paul who was later called Saul who had described himself as a chief sinner, when he went through that reformation process he was one of the leaders, the chief leaders who was able to bring people to Christianity. Therefore Mr. Speaker, I say this in relation to whether we are felons and we have truly served and we have truly paid for our deeds and we have been reformed then we too, felons or not, have a role, and should have a role to play in the development of this country.

Mr. Speaker, because if we take that line are we saying that our penal system is not serving us well because if it is serving us well then everybody who end up over there should be properly reformed and be back in society to play a meaningful role in the development of their country  
Mr. Speaker.

Therefore Mr. Speaker, there is a need to put visible structures in place so that our people would be provided with the mechanism to make meaningful contribution to the development of this country.

Mr. Speaker, if we look at, for example in Canouan, you have a local group there which is called the Canouan Island Council that is made up of people of different political persuasions who are working together for the development of that island. Mr. Speaker, and is something of that we need, regardless of their political persuasion Mr. Speaker, they are working together to ensure a better quality of life for the people of that island. And Mr. Speaker, with the implementation of Local Government this should be the main objective. As the Prime Minister said to get rid of a political division among us and motivating our people to work together for the common good, to work together for the development of a country which all of us whether ULP, whether NDP or whether PPM can be justly proud. Mr. Speaker, indeed we are a multi-island state, and I when I look at the Grenadines and some of the rural areas we have seen that over the past years that it would have been hard for us to travel to the main administrative area in order to get certain basic services.

And generally with the implementation of Local Government once it is properly instituted we hope that some of these problems can be addressed and some of these problems can be alleviated both as I said in the Grenadines and the rural areas providing our people with the opportunity to manage, to organise their communities in order to aid proper development. So as when you go to Kingstown, whether you go to Canouan, whether you go to Petit Bordel Mr. Speaker, certain basic services would be provided for citizens throughout this country.

Hence I recognised the need for some form of decentralisation and as I said the establishment of an organisation that would better serve the interest of the people. Mr. Speaker, because if our people, as I said before, if they are to meaningfully participate, if they are to grasp the opportunity to participate in a community development, in national development, then they must be given that platform, they must be given that mechanism in order to so do Mr. Speaker. And you know sometimes when we look at problems that are being faced in local communities, some of these problems can be solved right in the communities by people who experience them on a daily basis, and will be able to offer solutions to these problems because their lives are being affected by these problems instead of people who are far removed from the problems and sometimes don't know the basic things about it. Instead they are going in to investigate and find out when that information from the beginning can be passed on or can be worked on by the people in the local communities who know these problems and can best solve them Mr. Speaker.

I mentioned that there is a need for a well structured organisation whether it be in form of Local Government, because I realise that sometime before we would have had Parliamentary Control Council which had failed. And Mr. Speaker, bluntly these failed because of certain structures or mechanism were not in place and also because the lack of certain resources that were available to the people in the Parliamentary Control Council in order to carry out their functions properly and effectively. Thus Mr. Speaker, I agree that St. Vincent and the Grenadines must become abreast of modern political trends. And I was pleased to hear that the Government had invited Mr. Ragonath, I hope I got that name correctly, who would have had some experience in that

field, in order to you know offer some guidance to us in helping us to set up a model that will suit the needs of the people of the Grenadines not only of the Grenadines. But throughout the nation of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and I believe this structure should be void as much as possible of all political influences so that truly we can say that we have set up something that is national and will suit the national purpose.

Mr. Speaker, when we move forward in terms of Local Government and we have what we call the decentralisation process taking place. We should have set mechanisms in place that would sort of alleviate the burden, sort of solve some of the problems of the Central Government whereby taking some of the burdens from them and placing it at a Local level. The basic problems at a community level that could be solved there should no longer be a burden to Central Government but should be problems that would be handled at the Local Government level. That is why the people who would be whether it's an elective process; these people should have the capacity in order to solve some of the basic problems at the local level.

Indeed internationally, regionally and to some extent locally, management practices have changed in order to allow for, should I say better governance or good governance of the country. In any organisation Mr. Speaker, once that organisation wants to get ahead there is the need to involve the people more in order to motivate them to hold ownership toward that organisation. And the same thing can be done in terms of the country where people would be motivated to work towards the development of their community, thereby not only working for their community but on a whole once the community develops then the country will develop on a whole. And that is why I say that I would hope that in the Local Government when it is implemented that it will rid us of the political divisions, which is now throughout the country. And instead of the people being politically divided that we can motivate them to come together to work together as a group in order to better develop the society, the community and the country in which they live. And that is why I mentioned for example Mr. Speaker, the work of the Canouan Island Council and I am sure that there are many other groups throughout this country who have been doing similar work in order to make sure that our country progressed in the right way.

I will also hope Mr. Speaker, that in the process of Local Government when it is implemented one of the main aims would be to mobilise the local initiative. We need to get people to start to say that in order for our country to improve, in order for the community to improve that the work to be done is not only that of the Government, it is not only that of the Opposition but it is the responsibility of all of us to come together to ensure that our country is stable, it is progressive and that it is productive.

Despite all these benefits Mr. Speaker, there are certain concerns that I will have to mention and those are the boundaries; how are they to be instituted. Will the Local Government be organised along the same lines of the constituency boundaries or are we going to have districts. For example in the Grenadines, are we going to give, is that situation different or unique to main land St. Vincent. Are we going to give Local Government to say let's perhaps the Island of

Canouan different from Union Island or different from Mayreau, are we going to link Union Island and Mayreau together. And when we look at some of the problems that had been expounded by the Prime Minister just now in terms of the development that is taking place in Canouan how are all these problems going to be solved. When you look at Kingstown, the town areas on mainland St. Vincent; is Layou going to be separate, is Barrouallie going to be separate, are we going to group the towns together apart from the different community areas so that we can have a more effective process being implemented. Would it be sensible in some instances to leave certain parts of the country for example because if you take Calliaqua area separately what are we going to do with the surrounding areas, would they be implemented with that township or would they have to join another area, and these are some of the things we have to look at. The size of the Local Government organisation, how big would it be in terms of the boundaries and what will be the life span of the Local Government in terms of how long will the people be in office whether they will be nominated or elected. I would suggest a period of two years to allow for transparency and good governance.

Mr. Speaker, the next question that arise, who would be in charge, are we going to have for example mayors and councilmen. We have seen that has worked well in some areas, are we going to look at that, see the advantages, see the disadvantages and decide on a process like that. Or are we going to look at another structure such as the one which was suggested by the Honourable Prime Minister when he look at doing it from a Parliamentary the constituency prospective and nominating people to that institution.

Mr. Speaker, I believe if the process is an elective one then there should not be any nominative person on the body and the board or what you call it Local Government because that would sort of frustrate the process if the aspirations of the nominated persons are not the same as the elective one. So we have to be very careful what sort of members constitutes Local Government whether you are going to have a mixture elective and nominative because that can pose a big problem. So it should either be normative or elective.

Mr. Speaker, another question that we need to look at is that of adequate financing. How would Local Government bodies be financed? Would it be a gift? Would the financing to each Local Government authority, would it be a gift from the Central Government or would Local Government authorities be allowed to raise funds for themselves in order to carry out the functions effectively? These are just some of the questions that I am asking Sir. And I would recommend that if they are to raise taxes for themselves then maybe we should consider the land and house tax which are being collected in the different areas then maybe that should go to the Local Government authorities. These are some of the points that we need to look at in order to adequately finance the process because we don't want a situation where the funds coming from Central Government and that Government that is in charge dictates the process of the Local Government. So you will find that where it is not being controlled by that Government then the people in that area will ultimately suffer. These are some of the things which we need to look at Mr. Speaker, in order to create a system that will ensure that development takes place freely, it takes place progressively and it takes place in a positive way throughout St. Vincent

and the Grenadines. Mr. Speaker, for example in the Grenadines, if we are to raise tax well maybe we would say that maybe we should be given the 7% tax hotel tax and these are some of the things we need to look at, because funding is very crucial to the success of Local Government. Funding is crucial; these are just some of the points I am raising, I am not saying that this is what should be implemented. But Mr. Speaker, we need to look at adequate financing and how we are going to finance the process of Local Government. Generally it is hoped as we said the process is to bring about good governance in a country. And once you are talking good governance Mr. Speaker, then all people of whatever political persuasion should be involved. And the process, the Government that is involved that is in power should not sort of dictate what happens at the Local level but the Local Government authority should be independent in order to carry certain functions such as fixing drains, fixing roads, looking after schools and things like these because we all agree that the major projects would have to be done by the Government, the building of the roads, the construction of schools and things like these but the Local Government can oversee the maintenance of some of these structure. Mr. Speaker, I would hope indeed that whatever form is implemented that the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines on a whole will benefit and therefore I hope that when we come to the level of deciding what is implemented that the wishes of the people would be served. I am much obliged Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Minister for Social Development.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members. I am excited about the discussion here this afternoon because I can remember when we sat on the opposite side there was lot of debate about this very motion. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, in the ULP Manifesto there is a page, which is marked power to the communities. And it says, “Our system of Government is far too centralised and inappropriate to the demands and circumstances of the new century”. The ULP strongly believes that the country will not progress unless real political power resides in the people and the local communities. The ULP Government will set a commission to inquire and report upon the most appropriate forms of Government for St. Vincent and the Grenadines with a view to establishing genuine democratic Local Government for St. Vincent and the Grenadines within 12 months of taking office ensuring that viable Local Government communities and non-governmental organisations be built to sustain effective democratic Local Government.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable members, it was appalling to me to find out that many persons in St. Vincent and the Grenadines do not know what holds in our local communities. Mr. Speaker, since the inception of Universal suffrage in 1951 in St. Vincent and the Grenadines there has been some form of Local Government administration. It was envisaged then that the local communities ought to make an input into the running of things within these communities thus taking much of the burdens from the shoulders of Central Government. History tells us Mr. Speaker, that in our country there were two political parties: 1 the PPP and the other one the Labour Government, and Local Government existed then. But when the ‘Junta’ Government was formed, something special happened in Local Government in that commissioners were

elected. And I can remember in the constituency of Marriagua where one man was elected commissioner and he tried to be partisan I recalled with joy Levi Calvert Latham fighting and calling the people of Marriagua together and explaining to us for Local Government can serve our needs, at least help serve our needs.

Mr. Speaker, in those days there were elections and well fought elections. There were persons named from the various villages. I can remember well we had person like Mr. Alonzo Drayton. We had persons like Mr. Envil Clarke. I can remember well there was a well-constructed boardroom in which there were regular meetings. We had a meat market, we had a fish market and as soon as work was done there was someone ready to go and clean. You never in those days found a dead dog on the road because there was someone responsible. What is really necessary to make, whatever form of Local Government we have workable is that you have people who are non-partisan in their approach. You would have persons who would believe in building community who would believe that everybody in that community who has a place to play, but partisan politics has made things so bad.

Mr. Speaker, Local Government in St. Vincent and the Grenadines took the following forms under Sir James Mitchell: You had district councils, you had town boards and you had village councils. And the places that had these districts councils were Bequia, Biabou, Lowmans Windward, Park hill, Union Island; they are still the same today. The places with town boards; you have Barroualie, Calliaqua, Chateaubelair, Layou and Georgetown and in Marriagua and Troumaca you have village councils. Each one of these Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members is managed by a Clerk and in some instances we have got an assistance Clerk. But what is really bad about what is happening Mr. Speaker is that people have become partisan. Whichever Government there is you elect one of your acolytes and they are there to make sure that you win votes and you maintain votes while persons who may not have supported your party may suffer.

Mr. Speaker, it has never worked, it cannot work and I want to compliment this Government for having the foresight to know that if we are striving towards good governance and poverty alleviation we need to look to our ways as to how conduct ourselves locally.

Mr. Speaker, at the present time these are services that are provided and I don't want to be misunderstood Mr. Speaker. I don't want us to feel that whatever is happening now that there is no merit and that there is no good, of course there is good. At the moment there is maintenance of our public facilities, our cemeteries and our roads, sanitation as it were, the upkeep of property, employment of some persons, payments of wages and salaries for those persons who would clean the drains and look after the cemeteries, doing the vote and reconciliation of the books, writing up of the time and wages vouchers.

Mr. Speaker, at the moment each Local Government authority falls under the Ministry of Social Development, Gender, the Family and Ecclesiastical Affairs. Funds are allocated to all of these offices wherever they may be and that comes from Central Government. Mr. Speaker, we know for a fact that Central Government cannot do everything. Local Government is democracy at

work. Mr. Speaker, I look back again and I look back on the days when Local Government did work in a place called Marriaqua. One may wonder how is it that we are so well advanced in the way we live and it is because we had men of vision, men of foresight, men who had the trust of the community, men who were deeply involved, men who were able to reach everybody in the society. At the moment we have got three secondary schools. Mr. Speaker, not one was built by Central Government.

We have a Credit Union, Marriaqua Credit Union. We have got a health center and Mr. Speaker, I am saying this to say that Local Government operations can be quite beneficial to our communities. All we need to do is to have singleness of purposes that is to build the Local Community .

Mr. Speaker, I remember that as we tried to put our community center and I believe it is one of those first centers that was built in our country. The land was acquired by Mr. Joshua because he approached the grounds to sell the land for us to have a clinic and Mr. Eardley Browne it was at that time he said that he was not able to do so and so the land was acquired, and then we got our clinic. And after a while he said, “look people we need to do something better than this we are living far from Kingstown and we need to do something in our community and so what he did he went to the Boxing plant where persons were working and he asked everybody to give \$0.50 cents in order that we can get blocks and other material help in constructing that community center.

Mr. Speaker, on weekends people made it their business to go down to Marriaqua and you had the mason and the carpenters and others who were doing their work and you had the ladies who cooked and after a while the center became reality and upon the center becoming a reality Mr. Speaker, we had the Emmanuel High School beginning in Marriaqua. Downstairs we have the Principal of the Community College, Mr. Marcus Cain was one of our first students from there and that was all because of good Local Government in our community. We did not wait, we did not want everybody to come to town but we had the persons who led and we had no nonsense persons, we had persons who did not discriminate against anyone and whatever form of Local Government we may choose, we have to choose the right people. And more than that we have to choose people who believe in training. There were times when training sessions were organised Mr. Speaker, wherever we saw potential young people they were trained and they were given the expertise with which they could help to take over in Local Government.

Mr. Speaker, Local Government as I said before is democracy at work and at the moment there is urgent need to change what now exists. It was only last year that I had to be quarrelling because the way in which work was given it is not the way in which it should be given, it should not be given to friends while other people suffer. I passed by and saw children working on the road; I had to pick up the telephone and call and asked, “What is happening, child labour has long ceased, what is happening”? Instead of giving work to persons who need the work it was given to one family and then the parents dragged along the children there they were doing the work under a proper organised system of Local Government we will not have all of this Mr.

Speaker if we are to speak of poverty alleviation and this is one of the focuses this present Government is that we have to organise and organise well at the Local level.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want at this time to suggest any form of Local Government at this time. I am glad today that the debate has begun and we want all of our people to make an input, we want to see that which is workable within our society. For those of us who know how Local Government would have worked in the past, we have something to draw from. And I am proud to come from a constituency that was able to draw from the good workings of Local Government. Mr. Speaker, in the Ministry of Social Development we know that no one knows it all. Mr. Speaker, it was only just recently that someone from our department went to Trinidad for a seminar that Calgar had organised Caribbean Association of Local Government Authorities and we know that there are many models that we can follow. But we in St. Vincent and the Grenadines we want to follow the one that is best suited to our Local. And so we have undertaken the task on inviting Dr. Ragonath who would come and he would enlighten us, because Mr. Speaker, as I said to you before I was really appalled that people in our country do not even know what exists. How are we managing, people would come to the office with all kinds of stories because they do not understand. And so at this time Mr. Speaker, we have to endeavour, to educate, to eradicate poverty. We have to let our people know that it is not by coming to a constituency clinic that is run by a politician that we must get something from our Local Government or our Government.

Mr. Speaker, Local Government is democracy at work. Everyone has a contribution to make within the Local community. I remember that the community center was used by our village council especially on New Years day, there was a fund raising venture there and those funds were used for work in the local community. After 1984 the community center was given to party acolytes, they were the ones who went into the community center held their fetes and their dances, mashed up the windows, did whatever they could and put the money in their pockets and they went away. Mr. Speaker, it grieves my heart when I look back and see how much effort we would have put into those buildings and to see what a misunderstanding of the role of Local Government would have caused our people to do. Even now there is something on the ground, as we would have heard the Senator say, "All yo take over the community center." No, the community center is for the youths of the community and it is not for individuals to go and make money and after that they put that money in their pockets and they leave the center there to be repaired. Mr. Speaker, we all remember the issue of our community center in Marriaqua being used as a courtroom. We have a station that was built since 1912 Mr. Speaker, and we were beginning to see the steel because the concrete part of it had eroded and I made representation here and I said, "look we need to do something about that station or else it is going to crumble."

Mr. Speaker, on looking at what was supposed to be done; dorms were put upstairs and downstairs was the place for the officers. The officers needs something good, they are our brothers, they are our sons and our nephews and our nieces we have to make them comfortable. But you cannot tell me that you have a community center where the community should meet for

their weddings and other things and the NDP Government took it and made it into a courtroom and more than that the bar where we used to sell our food they blocked it up to make a jail. Mr. Speaker, that was quite an insult to our community. And here is where we do show that we do not understand the workings of Local Government. What belongs to the people must remain the property of the people and the people must have a say in it, rather than you have one commissioner or one person working on behalf of his Government. Too one-sided Mr. Speaker, far from democracy. And I say again Local Government must be democracy at work giving everybody a say into the affairs of what is happening in the local community.

Mr. Speaker, I remember too when discussions were held about the way we should go in terms of education. The Catholics were saying, “we need a Catholic school,” and so they teamed up and went about and got land. Today we have the valleys: number one (1) the Marriaqua Convent and it was all because there was proper Local Government in place where everybody had a say into what was needed. We have the Cane End School because all that land was acquired and there was a school nearer to our people. Mr. Speaker, I am overjoyed today because I feel that this is a step in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, I want, through this medium, to call on the persons through out this country that whenever we are called upon to come together to have discussions that we would not stay back and think about our partisan politics. But that we will come together now that we would come and put our ideas together and that we will say that which is best for our community.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to ask us at this time to remember that as we try to put the machinery in place we must be able to evaluate it that which we have and this is why I have gone over it in a small way to let us know how these councils are run. The machinery must be able to evaluate what we have now. We must look at the strengths and the weaknesses of what exists now, our successes and our failures here, our ambitions and our frustrations. People who are working now, I know that they are happy they are having a bread on their table. But had Local Government been better organised we would have more people participating and we would have less poor people in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I pray for success for this debate and that we would have the co-operation of all the persons throughout St. Vincent and the Grenadines, so that the models that we use would bring benefits to our local community. I am much obliged Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Further debate on this motion. Honourable Senator Shallow.

**HONOURABLE GERARD SHALLOW:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members. I rise to make my contribution to this motion, very important motion of the re-introduction of Local Government. A motion, which seeks to direct this Honourable House to set up promptly a commission to inquire publicly into and report upon the appropriate forms of Local Government for St.

Vincent and the Grenadines with a view to establishing genuine democratic Local Government for St. Vincent and the Grenadines within 12 months of the passage of this motion.

Mr. Speaker, St. Vincent and the Grenadines in 1948 would have seen the origin of an act that had given rise to the formation of Local Government in St. Vincent and that time the classic rationale was primarily to decentralise the administration of governance in the country. That is to ensure that the peoples in the various communities of St. Vincent and the Grenadines were given the privileges to participate in charting the course for the development for their own future. Secondly Mr. Speaker, it was also conceived to be a nursery for democracy at a lower level. That is it would have ensured that democratic practices are given exposure to the people in the various communities. And thirdly it offered the opportunity for young aspiring politicians who are aspiring for national office. But Mr. Speaker, the whole concept of Local Government and its implementation experienced serious problems. Why did it experience serious problems? First and foremost all finances were controlled by the Central Government. And as a result you would have found that some Local Government bodies in various areas were, if I should say, treated like disgusting poor relatives. They were not given the finances that they need to carry on the work in administering projects and the policies of the Government of the day. Also Local Government bodies reflected the power relations at the center; that is they would oppose unnecessarily if their parties are in national opposition or you may find that victimisation and vindictiveness be exhibited if their party are in national Government, and this Mr. Speaker, had very serious consequence. Also patronage was the order of the day and that is victimisation were played to the finger art simply because people who were elected to Local Government bodies wheeled the iron fists simply because their party held the national power strings and as a result Mr. Speaker, it fell through. Because coming out of all this was a divisive, destructive type of practice that caused the downfall of Local Government bodies.

Mr. Speaker, in charting the course for the present and the future it is imperative that we draw upon the experiences of our past failures. And I say that to say this Mr. Speaker, if we in this re-introduction of Local Government cannot arrive at a form that would eliminate the elements that foster divisiveness and partisanship in politics then it would simply be a completion or a repetition of the same cycle it could have gone through. Nobody wants to do the same thing again and fail.

Mr. Speaker, it is also mindful that we at this point in time consider that the re-introduction of Local Government must be done in the context of contingencies for OECS unity if it is not going to be paid the cycle of lip service it was paid as in the case of the past and it must relate to the constitution. Obviously if you are going to have a re-introduction of Local Government and you are not going to have regulations enshrined in our constitution, governing the operations and administrative practices of these Local Government bodies then Mr. Speaker, we are going to leave it in the hands of the people who think they can do as they like and knowing the nature of our Vincentians we are likely to run into serious problems. It is therefore Mr. Speaker, that close attention be paid to the framework, the structure by which we will formulate our Local

Government bodies and the responsibilities allocated to these bodies in the administration of governance in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, obviously we are all aware of the economic climate in which we now exist and we must not for one moment conceive the idea that it is going to be an easy task. Obviously having Local Government instituted in St. Vincent and the Grenadines means that you are going to have several Local Government bodies functioning which is going to be cost effective. It therefore means Mr. Speaker, that in a hard democratic climate that prevails, we have to ensure that adequate financing is going to be made available to these Local Government bodies if they are to execute the responsibilities for which they were elected or nominated.

Now Mr. Speaker, obviously we are going to have to ensure that there is a home for each Local Government body in whichever district they be placed. They are going to be given certain responsibilities, which would indicate that they are going to have certain, equipments, tools, tables, chairs, offices where they could reside during their working hours and this Mr. Speaker, is going to require financing. Where do we, from which source do we allocate these funds. And are we as a Government going to empower Local Government bodies with the power to implement certain revenue collections. Do we allow the Local Government bodies to take up funds into certain areas be it lands and house tax or whatever so that they could execute their responsibilities or do they depend directly on the national power strings. Now if they have to depend on the national power strings Mr. Speaker, there are going to be some advantages and there are going to be some disadvantages cause obviously if we consider the areas that fall under the Opposition, constituencies elected representatives are on the Opposition it is highly likely that these representatives are going to be marginalised. Already we are beginning to see the problems developing where Opposition constituencies are being marginalized. And if we are talking genuine democracy we will give unto Caesar what is Caesar's and ensure that each Local Government body be given the same quantum of funds so that he or that body will be able to execute the responsibilities for which it has been elected to do.

Mr. Speaker, it is also vitally important that we give serious consideration to the method embarked upon in electing or nominating these Local Government bodies. As we have heard from several of our speakers before; partisan politics seems to be the major contributing factors towards the failure of Local Government. And if we cannot devise a method that would eliminate partisanship then simply Mr. Speaker, you are going to have Local Government bodies reflecting the party that is responsible for the national purse and in so doing Mr. Speaker, we should ensure that democracy is the hall mark of every process, of every method used in the setting up of these Local Government bodies. We should also ensure Mr. Speaker, that each community be given access to the consultative mechanism, they be given the privilege to voice their views, they be given the privilege to participate in a discussion so that at the end of it all the Local Government body would not be an institution derived from the Government but something that has been duly elected by the people. And Mr. Speaker, we would realise that since 1994 when Local Government bodies and their duties went rather dormant that we have lost an entire generation. It therefore means that the Government has to embark on a very

serious, serious course of educating the people as to what Local Government body is all about, as to what responsibilities would be given to Local Government bodies and this is to be done in an efficient and effective way in such a way that there will be no political bias and that at the end of it all it would be seen as genuine and not something that has been orchestrated to facilitate a certain political party of a certain political ideology or a certain political philosophy. We are supposed to ensure that it is seen in the context of genuine democracy.

Mr. Speaker, bearing in mind the quantum of funds that would have to go or be spent on the maintenance, salaries and other amenities of these Local Government bodies it would mean therefore that there are certain responsibilities that would have to be carried out by these Local Government bodies. It is true that in the past the responsibilities would have been to clean the drains, to trim the cemeteries and to ensure that the local little bits and pieces are done, but is that sufficient Mr. Speaker for the quantum of funds expected to be spent on Local Government. Is that sufficient a responsibility to these Local Government bodies? They can do much more. If we are seriously talking about the decentralisation of governance of a country we are supposed to ensure that they be given greater responsibilities. (Interjection). In my simple response it would be the same thing the Labour Party proposed between 1974 and 1984. (Interjection).

Mr. Speaker (Interjection). It is vitally important Mr. Speaker, that we consider these responsibilities of the Local Government bodies. After all they are going to be taking substantial amount of funds to keep them operational and as a result their responsibilities will certainly have to go beyond the simple trimming of the roads and the trimming of the cemeteries and things of that nature. Mr. Speaker, if you are going to have Local Government bodies that do not have the responsibility to facilitate road improvement and lighting and stuff of that nature, then you need to give it second thought. If you are going to have Local Government bodies that are not going to be assisting in the provision of housing and ancillary services like sanitary facilities in the rural areas then you have to give it second thought. Mr. Speaker, if these bodies are not going to be able to provide assistance to small farmers in agriculture and in investment and in training, then you need to give it second thought.

Mr. Speaker, if you are not going to give these Local Government bodies the responsibilities to ensure that cottage industries are developed in the rural areas and that they be given the help and the assistance needed then we need to think again because Mr. Speaker, substantial amount of monies would have to be allocated to the maintenance of these Local Government bodies. Mr. Speaker, I only say this by way of suggestion and I hope that due consideration would be given. It is not my duty to dictate to the Government what they should do; their work shall manifest itself at the poles.

Now Mr. Speaker, there is also a likely problem of how we prioritise our needs as these responsibilities are attributed to the Local Government bodies. And I have a slight fear that we could run into some problems here; the question of who needs what more. If we are going to have the Local Government bodies dependant on the national purse it means that the most

influential individuals in Government can have the best of the crop. Now there should be some standardised structure that would ensure that equal quantum of money be allocated to each Local Government body whether they be demarcated by boundary or whether we do it by constituencies. (Interjection).

Mr. Speaker, there must be clearly set criteria for the distribution of funds by Local Government bodies. After all already the Government who I would consider rather young would have been crying foul play in some instances, simply because they did not recognise the nature of people and what they can do. So it is incumbent on the Government to ensure that when funds are allocated to Local Government bodies to execute their responsibilities that proper auditing, proper accounting, proper reporting and recording should be done. And this should be done and table on an annual basis so that the Parliament would be fully informed as to how the national resources are being distributed and that account be given where malpractices may occur. And Mr. Speaker, it is also vitally important you know for us to give some consideration to the protection of these people who are going to take control of the Local Government bodies because after all they are human beings who would have to do a job perhaps in some areas where people may not be as kind, and they are going to need some sort of protection.

I would want to suggest Mr. Speaker, that certain legislation be put in place to offer protection to these individuals that they be made free of or immune to being sued or prosecuted for any act that they may do in the execution of their duties otherwise Mr. Speaker, we may find ourselves in a position where some of these individuals cannot just do their work because people may not allow them to. We are in a very volatile situation where people are beginning to be very responsive and reactive to simple things and we need to have some security measure placed on these individuals. Also Mr. Speaker, we are supposed to ensure that the salaries of these individuals be given close consideration in the event ... you are talking about community volunteer work... in 2002. We are supposed to ensure that these people and I want to assume in some instances there may be made some transfers from jobs that are pensionable as so on that there are some standardise structure by which these people will be paid their salaries and that they may in the end after working for very long period of time expect to be justly compensated. You see Mr. Speaker, sometimes we refer to these issues as if it is something to be treated with little or not respect, but I am confident Mr. Speaker, and I am convinced that the issue of Local Government is vitally important, so important that it must be given very, very serious consideration in every aspect of the concept of it and in the implementation of its policies.

Mr. Speaker, we have to ensure that certain establishments, certain boundaries be made between the work of the Local Government bodies and the elected representatives or Ministers maybe in some cases. Because we have to hope you know Mr. Speaker, that we do not end up in a situation where conflict results especially if you are in an area where the constituency or the area in which that Local Government body in functioning is in Opposition, because say what you like Mr. Speaker, I am fully aware as to the nature of the way things go in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. And we need to have clearly defined guidelines as to the responsibilities of the Minister as it relates to the duties and functions of Local Government bodies.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that due consideration may be given to what I have delivered here this evening. I hope that the education process may be fair, unbiased, clean and that may be efficient and effective because we know Mr. Speaker, it would have been twenty eight (28) years ago since we would have seen the enactment of Local Government. And our generation as we are now currently is pretty young and would need to be properly informed and educated under issue. So if you want to have a warm welcome in response Mr. Speaker, let them know what it is all about, let them know what they are expected to do and give them a just, fair and unbiased education on the issue of Local Government. With that Mr. Speaker, I hope that the Honourable House may give due considerations to the likely problems that can result and that they move in a manner that would yield nothing more than success. Keep it clean, keep it free of political partisanship and let us move on in an atmosphere that would foster positive development upward mobility for our people. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Minister of Tourism.

**HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE:** Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. I rise Mr. Speaker to support the motion that is before this Honourable House for the introduction of Local Government in St. Vincent and the Grenadines again. And particularly Mr. Speaker, to just endorse the views of the Honourable Minister of Local Government in respect of what she feels is that we open the debate and carry the debate to the people and we come back through the commission and in this Honourable House enact the appropriate laws to give life to the wishes of the people.

Mr. Speaker, I recall when Local Government you had an elected Kingstown Town Board. I remember when Gail DeShong now deceased, Alphius King now deceased and Vilna Cox were members of the Kingstown Town Board. It was a vibrant time when Local Government held sway. I recall when Mr. Ballah, Mr. Clem Ballah's father was in Local Government in Biabou. I remember Local Government in the Town of Calliaqua and the amount of work that was undertaken in those two areas by the Local Government of the day that in a large measure John Dougan was so responsible for many things, which today you have seen, built up in the town of Calliaqua.

Mr. Speaker, it is an era where many of our young people know nothing about especially if they were born twenty (20) years ago. Mr. Speaker, it is the intendment of this Government that we take the debate after the motion is passed today and we formulate how the commission would be established, what would be the terms of reference for that commission and reporting back to this Honourable House that we look at a few of the models that are out there.

In 1999 when I had the good fortune to attend the centenary convention of the British Labour Party that I sought to acquaint myself with some of the issues of Local Government in the United Kingdom to see what areas would be of relevance in our new governance in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, because we were assured since 1999 Mr. Speaker, it was just a matter of

time before we took office. And the U.K. Government in 1999 were revising their Local Government structures to modernise Local Government to ensure that it reflected the new vision of what they termed new Labour and new Britain because they too having had very much longer history themselves in Local Government felt that the time had come to look at the important roles of scrutiny, transparency, responsibility, expectations of conduct and the implementation of the local labour policies and programmes through Local Government. They wanted to know what would be the new executive functions and scrutiny; what sort of model would you put for various areas, would you continue with the boroughs, the town councils, village councils, district councils, how would the roles change? I was fortunate also to receive a copy of the speech of Hilary Armstrong M.P. who was then Minister of Local Government and realize that we were not too far in some of the thinking when we held our discussion in our various caucuses that they were looking at issues relating to community safety and crime prevention, environmental health. What would be now the public services and the primary responsibility of Local Government and how they can extend and empower the local communities basing it on democracy and decentralisation. And that is what we are attempting today in taking the first step when we table this motion to decentralise the power of the people and give it back to them in the communities. That they were looking at what were the best patterns of the delivery of what is known as public services. How they would further clarify Local Government powers to promote economic well being of the people in the Local communities and bringing new people into local public service and making local politics clearly relevant, but more responsive to the local people and their local needs. They were looking at innovative services Mr. Speaker, and as well how do you deal with the question of a proper separation of powers, how you will make decisions.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at Kingstown today and you see the extent and the size of the population particularly that of voting age and new areas having been opened to housing, that there are massive areas that the town of Kingstown has been extended that areas that were wards have been extended, the population is even greater. But what I believe would help us in our determination, when the commission is established, is a boundaries commission, and the question of having local boundaries commission to look at the extent to which you would have the city of Kingstown be and perhaps have a city council with city counselors. So that is being put in the public domain for debate that there may the possibility of areas such as Lowmans Leeward being a distinct district council which in times past did not have the benefit of district council Government.

Mr. Speaker, I noted as well a document call, "how to run Local Policy forum" which is published also by the British Labour Party giving you directions as to how to set up policy forums so that you can take the issues of local governance to the people in plain recessions, workshops and in conferences and having them air their views and you collecting the views. What would be important for this commission that is to be established is that the people must respond. I know sometimes there is a tendency of saying they already know what we want so I don't have to go back and tell them, but it is important that the people participate in this public debate on the question of the reintroduction of Local Government.

Mr. Speaker, I wish at this time to draw the attention to this Honourable House to something called the “summit of the Americas” and the declaration and plan of action to strengthen democracy, create prosperity, and realise human potential. And it speaks about renewing the commitment to hemispheric integration and national and collective responsibility, for strengthening representative democracy and promoting good governance, protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms and expanding economic opportunities. The services which are usually delegated to Local Governments in my research deals with matters such as the Organisation of the Sporting facilities, community facilities, resource centers, libraries, cemeteries, a certain level of environmental services. These issues will be thrown out for the benefit of all our people to determine whether or not they believe that Local Government should undertake these services in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and whether or not it should remain with central Government. Whether or not they would have the sufficiency and capacity to undertake some of the road works in some of the schemes of Local Government that I have been able to obtain and to review at this stage.

Mr. Speaker, I know that by and large some of the people that worked with us coming up to this campaign of March 28<sup>th</sup> last year were anxious to get involved in their own governance in their communities and this is demonstrated by the fact that we now have so many areas wanting to work hand in hand with the police in setting up these neighbourhood crime watches. But in truth and in fact Mr. Speaker, good intentions are not sufficient there must be a legislative framework that would give good legal authority to enforce certain rights and to undertake certain responsibilities because being a volunteer is good to a large measure but we are living in a peculiar time and in a peculiar age and Mr. Speaker I know we are indeed a peculiar people. There are things which I would have thought always would be wrong, but which are applauded as being right, because like humpty dumpty if I say so is the meaning that I say so that is the meaning the words would have. When somebody says it there is a different meaning so we have to be mindful and I am trusting the commissioner would be mindful in putting together the plan of action for the implementation of Local Government of some of these views because we cannot afford in taking the views of the people to be shortsighted on what is required to implement meaningful Local Government. No doubt Mr. Speaker, in the debate, in the constitutional reform the question of Local Government will find its place. The question whether or not Local Government would find a section in the new constitution and what would be the functions within that new constitution and then the establishment of the Local Government authorities by individual statutes what would be required in that particular setting.

Mr. Speaker, we continue in this administration to not only seek the advice from the University of the West Indies and our distinguished and learned friend who is here today in this Honourable House witnessing this debate. We intend to go to a council called, “the world council of mayors, world conference of Mayors.” It is my understanding that the Mayor of Point Fortin is a board member of the world conference of Mayors and a board member of the international union of the local authorities so that we can avail ourselves of more learning and have a wider scope to make comparisons and ensure as far as possible that we get as much

information upon which to base sound decisions. The Mayor of Point Fortin has also indicated to me that he is the chairman of the association of Local Government of Trinidad and Tobago. And I have asked for some more information as to how the Local Government in truth and in fact is functioning, cause you do not dismiss Local Government format because in one country it may not have functioned in the way that most people would have had expectations for Local Government to function but, to avail yourself of the information and to study it and make comparisons bearing in mind of course your own indigenous circumstances and your own native politics.

Mr. Speaker, I have also seen where the possibility exists, as in the constitutional reform that is being debated at this time, that the office of the Ombudsman in the constitution, that there is room in some of the Local Government structures that I have had the fortune to read from Ombudsman in Local Government setting and also in United Kingdom, I have seen where there is an association of Local Government and I have also viewed documentations that indicate that there is what you call Parliamentary monitoring and an intelligence unit which will monitor the implementation of Local Government decisions, the work has oversight and when something is done in parliament and if affects Local Government authorities, if those decisions from Parliament, those decisions from Central Government if those are being implemented in the democratic fashion and without bruising the heel or rights of any citizen. So there are many formats and different formula for the establishing of Local Government and I believe we should avail ourselves of the opportunity at this time to study these. The reason I looked at the UK is the one that when you look at the jurisprudence that would give us relevant guidance and I see that Dr. Alexis has written some works on constitutional law and he had made some mention about certain Local Government structures and I think that we should also have a look at that as the House and also for the commission.

It is my hope Mr. Speaker, that when we have done doing these deals and having passed this motion in this Honourable House and established a broad based multi-focus commission taking into account all political reflections and persuasions including those that come and go and this commission is set up, I take note and I am going to be researching the last report of the last commission that was established to have a look at the political thoughts back then. Honourable Minister of National Security did not have his copies today and he was asking if I had mine. But I will search for them because it is always wise to look back and I am going to take a look at the flambeau. Because if I remember there was some writings back because so that it would be useful to see what progress we have made in thought bearing in mind this plan of action arising out of the summit of the Americas that is asking for structures that we put in place, to ensure that they reflect the democratic will of the people. And to ensure that we do not trample on the rights of the people by our own political shortsightedness or that we are politically blinded by our own opportunism. But that we do truly reflect genuine democratic processes in having perhaps structures that call not just for the introduction of Local Government, statutes governing Local Government, and town boundaries and the establishment of counsellors. Whether or not they would be elected or nominated, whether it will be first past the post or proportional representation. Whether or not the powers of the local counsellors would be

derived according to the proportion of votes gained by the constituency representative who would be represented upon a council. Whatever the format may be, that we pay special care and attention in the division of work, responsibility, labour and the appropriateness of what is devised in the new Local Government system, bearing in mind that sometimes a little time has to pass between when you speak the word and you implement the deed before you can actually see whether or not a particular format will bear that fruit which you expect it to bear.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I wish to congratulate the Unity Labour Party administration, for within 10 months this motion was already, it fell in the last parliament and it is back, that we have not waited on the OECS but, that we are taking the first step ourselves, that we are prepared to take the courage to take the first step ourselves and perhaps set the precedent in the OECS despite the fact that Dominica has Local Government but we know there are some problems that they are experiencing with certain of the formats there, so that we learn from their experience and we don't repeat it. Despite the fact, in other countries I know, St. Lucia also, is taking guidance from the world conference of mayors. That this Unity Labour Party administration, ought indeed we take these things for granted because we said it in our manifesto, we demonstrate the confidence of our decision. I am sure all of us would have heard in the last campaign and I am trusting that the people would understand that when we ask for their confidence that we have now demonstrated to the people of this country that we are worthy of their confidence Mr. Speaker and they in turn must now come and show that they are willing to take governance in their local communities, the governance that is given to them. Hopefully we would see coming out of this in the commission more women coming forward and not being afraid of the criticism that they would face be it constructive and adverse but to bear both imposters the same with fortitude because one thing you can trust Mr. Speaker I have learnt over the years is the ficklety of human nature and the fickleness of human nature. And therefore we should not allow the negativism that surrounds much of our political behaviour to disallow more young people and young women from coming to the fore front in the communities especially those who are in NGO's to become involved in the process. And in the process, which I trust will be the terms of reference, would be reflected in the commission to do an education a political education, for the people so that they really and truly understand what they are about to undertake. Because sometimes in this brief experience I have had, there is some difficulty in understanding the role of a Minister, role of a constituency representative and the role of a Parliamentarian. And that is why I am most grateful to our political leader and the rest of my colleagues who were in agreement that we should go through this process of education, Parliamentarians included because we are an emerging Parliament; we are in a different time. New hybrids are coming to the forefront particularly for some of the countries in the Americas who are not democratically focused, and some of those countries that have had an army of military Governments or have had civil disturbances for several years where now you will hear they have a democratically elected Government but, it bears no resemblance to what we understand democracy to be. But we must bear in mind when we are doing this exercise, that we are part of this Americas, that we are a part of this OECS, that we are a part of this CARICOM and we have to bear that solemnly in mind in going through this exercise because

we are not onto ourselves and onto our own. But we have the responsibility to take first steps and demonstrate by example that we are willing even to chart new waters in this millennium.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I wish to commend this motion and trust that we can have it passed today in this Honourable House and that the Government moves with due dispatch to the establishment of a commission and the inquiry will start as you see the inquiry has started today in the Commission of Inquiry into the infamous Colonial Homes, Gibson corner, the bottle and the Pembroke, not so Pem neither broke. Thank you very much Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Further debate on this motion. Honourable Minister for Transport, Housing. Honourable Minister before you debate I will just ask the Deputy Speaker to hold the chair here for me.

**HONOURABLE ANDREA YOUNG** (in the chair): Honourable Minister of Transport, Works and Housing.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Thank you very much madam deputy speaker. Let me be the first to congratulate you on the elevation to the high chair. It is very good to know that my colleague a senator could be filling in, in that position while I am speaking so I am sure that you will be fairly generous with your time if I so need overtime then you will.

**HONOURABLE ANDREA YOUNG:** You have 45 minutes.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** I have 45 minutes. Thank you. Madam Speaker, I rise to give my support to this motion that has been brought before this house. I listened to the Honourable Prime Minister in his presentation and indeed this country is fortunate to have once again a Government like the Unity Labour Party Government that lives up to its promises.

Madam Speaker, during the election campaign the re-introduction of Local Government was an integral part of our program. In fact the reintroduction of Local Government in St. Vincent I think is mentioned in every major publication that the Unity Labour Party brought out during the campaign, both for the 1998 elections and the 2001 elections.

Madam Speaker, Madam Speaker sorry, forgive me. The motion and we are having this debate basically so that this Government and this Honourable House can direct the Government or if the resolution is amended, if the motion is amended to direct the Government or establish a select committee. Well as of now, it speaks to directing the Government to set up promptly a commission to inquire publicly into and to report upon to the most appropriate forms of Local Government.

Madam Speaker, Local Government as the Honourable Senator from the Opposition, Senator Shallow indicated first established here in 1948 and it was abandoned somewhere within the

junta regime, the exact date is unknown. But we remember the political circumstances of the day when you had a six, six, one situation and the then Honourable James Mitchell was placed as premier. It obviously did not suit his political agenda to continue Local Government, somewhere between 72 and 73 and I stand corrected on the date. But the point I wish to make on this, is that this country has operated for more years without Local Government than with Local Government. Because if it was abandoned somewhere between 72, 73 we would have had 25 years of Local Government. And by the time Local Government is established one year from today the 17<sup>th</sup> the latest, the 17<sup>th</sup> January, 2003 it would be 30 years since we have not had Local Government. In fact Madam Speaker, we have had seven (7) national elections, general elections within the period we did not have Local Government, 1974, 1979, 1984, 1989, 1994, 1998, 2001. We made it a promise that we will reintroduce Local Government and we are here today debating this motion for the return of Local Government to the people.

I want to say Mr. Speaker that if this Unity Labour Party Government does not reintroduce Local Government in St. Vincent at this time I doubt that if there will ever be a second chance for Local Government to be reintroduced in this country.

I observe Madam Speaker and as usual when I stand to speak I always refer in some way to the Leader of the Opposition, I am never able to complete my presentation without reference to him. It is normal that when a motion is moved or an act is being debated after the move the Leader of the Opposition then speaks. I observe today that he did not speak second or first on the side of the Opposition. Well I know that it is not the first time but I was just saying that maybe these small matters do not really attract his attention maybe, I am just saying that, maybe. But I thought it of sufficient moment that I should mention it in my delivery this afternoon. I trust that before the end of this debate that the leader of the opposition would lend publicly his support on national radio for the reintroduction of Local Government.

Madam Speaker, Local Government is something that this country needs. Looking at it from the eyes particularly Madam Speaker of my Ministry it is very important we reintroduce Local Government. The priorities and I have this debate with my fellow colleagues all the time with regards to works, the program of works that comes out of the Ministry of Transport, Works and Housing. If I were to go into a constituency or a village today my priority for Works in that village would be different to if the Parliamentary representative goes in, or if the Prime Minister goes in, or the Leader of the Opposition goes in. So that most of the times Madam Speaker, the priorities of the people are not always addressed and I think the reintroduction of Local Government will help significantly in addressing the peoples' desires and wishes and needs. Too often parliamentary representatives both on the Government and Opposition side have to face matters that have been left outstanding for so long. Your constituents complain and you go in for a visit this month or this weekend and they complain to you about it. But there are something that took priority in the financial aspect and that does not get fixed. If we were to revert to the Local Government operation and allow the people within the constituencies or to carry on their debate or in their regions whatever they establish because Madam Speaker the forms of Local Government are wide. We do not have to depend on any model but we should

use the existing models as a guide, and to see where within this whole framework of Local Government both regionally and internationally and see how we could develop our own form of realistic democratic Local Government.

Madam Speaker, we have today as a member of the audience, very distinguished Caribbean national who Dr. Gonsalves referred to this morning and he prepared for us and circulated by Minister for Local Government some information on Local Government in the Caribbean and I want to use that document for the greater part of my delivery Madam Speaker, because I don't intend to spend too long on this.

Dr. Raganath who is here with us as I said, said by acts of Parliament Local Government operates in Belize, Dominica, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and in Guyana it is constitutionally entrenched. He has gone through his paper speaks up to the legislative structure of Local Government, the council structure, the functions of Local Government, how Local Governments are financed, the terms of office of Local Governments, payments of counselors, management of councils, political models as they exists and he highlighted these in four areas; deconcentration, delegation, devolution and divestment, and then did some general comments in his paper. And I will speak to this paper to some degree Madam Speaker, because I think it is very important and I want to thank Dr. Raganath publicly here for his contribution and his assistance in this regard, and I speak on behalf of the Minister of Local Government.

Local Government Madam Speaker, can take various forms. You can have them...what has developed in St. Vincent here Madam Speaker with regards to Works have sort of been politicised. We have seen just about everything that happens in St. Vincent happens within the boundaries of political constituencies, this I think is a new a matter introduced under the previous administration where we have everything being decided on sort of within political boundaries and the existing political constituencies. We do not necessarily have to follow this format with Local Government although when you think about it, it could be considered useful and helpful because of the funding from the Ministry of Finance, the existing funding of the Ministry of Finance which could change, but it might be useful to consider Local Government by constituencies as well and we must bear this in mind. I don't think we should eliminate that aspect of it. In Belize councils are structured around the nine (9) major towns and urban centers. In Jamaica and Trinidad councils are structured according to parishes or regions. So like in Jamaica there are only thirteen (13) councils, while in Trinidad there are fourteen (14), in Dominica councils are developed around settlements and thus there are town councils and there are urban district councils and in Dominica you have over thirty-five (35) village councils.

Falling out of the Local Government that existed here previously Madam Speaker, we still have some remnants of Local Government. We still have the Kingstown Town Board and we still have what we call some village councils, they have no authority but we still appoint town clerks in certain areas. I don't know how those could still exist when there is no existing Local Government but they do exist.

The functions of Local Government Madam Speaker, they are wide, the purpose for putting Local Government in place would be to take care of local matters; road cleaning, drains, cleaning of road sides, garbage, street lighting and generally the public infrastructure within the area. And this Madam Speaker I think one of the more convincing aspects of this whole debate in that I have said before we need to put these things back into the peoples' hands in the existing villages and towns and councils to be able to address them in any order of significant priority, as I say priority varies from individuals to individuals. Our Local Government operations financed there are some areas where the taxes are collected by the Local Government operation.

The Prime Minister in his delivery this morning spoke of the inadequacies of this system and the inequity of this system where you could very well be taxed twice or there could be two levels of taxes and we should try to avoid that. In Jamaica recently this document states: Local Government collects 100% of all property taxes and 66.6% of all motor vehicle license. But these taxes and fees are collected by the Central Government and then passed on to the local authorities. The term of office Madam Speaker of Local Government, councils are normally elected for a period of three (3) years and you normally would select either a chairman, a mayor in certain areas and you have appointees. There are different ways in which you can establish the council in the individual areas. Like in Belize Mayors are elected directly by the citizenry, in other countries except Dominica counselors are elected either directly or by the elected counselors themselves, only in Dominica Government reserves the right to appoint five (5) counselors to sit along side the elected counselors and the document goes into the advantages, the pros and cons of the Dominica situation. And I think the Prime Minister spoke to that this morning so I need to not spend much time on that aspect of it. But we need to consider the presentation of the Prime Minister this morning when he said that regardless of what form of Local Government we put in place we must make it easier and more equitable so that you do not have one set of persons controlling the works and the finances of these Local Government operations.

Madam Speaker, one of the aspects of this that I think might be of interest to individuals who are listening to this broadcast in particular is remuneration for counselors and persons who are elected or nominated to these Local Government positions. The paper says that counselors do not receive salaries for they are deemed to be volunteers working in the service of their communities. Counsellors do receive stipends and stipends range from as low as sixty dollars \$60 per month for a village counselor in Dominica to a high of about six thousand \$6000 TT dollars per month in Trinidad. So we add that range within to... the major point here is that there are not normally salaries paid to the council members. You will have an individual or a group who will manage the council and you have town clerk or you may call him in some areas a mayor or a chief executive officer who will manage the operations of the Local Government operation and that person is normally paid a salary and there is a staff to carry out the works of the Local Government in that area. The paper goes into the political models and I will just highlight the four areas which I read out before; deconcentration, delegation, devolution, and divestment. I would not go into these individually but I would suggest that all members of

Parliament get a copy of this, Government and Opposition, and go into the different areas as presented here in this paper. The paper ends off by saying: the structure of Local Government vary from country to country. In the case of Belize, Trinidad, Guyana, and even in Jamaica Local Governments are headed by elected councils, which operates as a board of directors for the council.

It may be noted that in the case of Dominica part of the council is elected with the Government being able to nominate certain members. Thus, for instance in the case Roseau eight (8) members are elected while five (5) are nominated by the Central Government. In the village councils the Central Government also nominates up to five (5) members of the council. This mix system allows for significant Central Government influence in the operations and functioning of the council. It can also impact on who leads since a party with a minority of elected members may utilise the nominated members to cease control of the council. And I think the Prime Minister again in his delivery this morning refer to certain aspects of this. And the nominated members may utilise or elected members may utilise the nominated members and cease control of the council away from the majority elected group. Councils are normally elected for three (3) years, counselors do not normally receive a salary as full employees but receive stipends since it is presumed they are working in the service of their community, it may be noted that in Tobago counselors do in fact receive full salaries. The management and administration is conducted by staff normally under a chief executive officer, which gives some degree of permanency of the activities of the council. It may be noted that in cities and towns the chief officer is normally referred to as the city clerk or the town clerk. In the case of Belize the chief officer is referred to as the city manager. The chief officer is thus a public officer and acts as the accounting officer, he is also the manager of the entire work force. With reference to the smaller centers namely villages and this would more relate to us, as in the case of Dominica the councils activities fall under the direction of the clerk who is also deemed to be the accounting officer for the council. The village councils in the case of Dominica are responsible primarily for local infrastructural works as well as environmental works. It may be instructive to note that Dominica is the only Caribbean territory which has Local Government at the village level, put differently. In the case of Trinidad or Tobago villages are amalgamated into larger Local Government areas called regions or parishes. Thus depending on the depth of decentralisation a country is willing to accede to who will dictate the number of local authorities that will be established.

I think Madam Speaker that this paper is a document that we should utilise in the debate that we should use in our presentations that we should refer to from time to time. I know there might be other documents that would be written under subject matter that we can refer to but I thought it best to use this one.

So we may have various forms of Local Government Madam Speaker, and we as a people having had the desire for thirty (30) years to have the reintroduction of Local Government I want to ask the people of this country as the motion asks us to do here that we will go and inquire publicly into the appropriate forms of Local Government. I want to ask all members of

this House, I get the impression from the Opposition and they have stated clearly their support for the return of Local Government. They have raised certain concerns and we will have to look into these matters that were raised; some were raised by the Honourable representative for the Southern Grenadines and Senator Shallow but, I want to ask all members of this House to come out in full support so that when we have the public discussion there is no sense in us reintroducing Local Government as it will be in our debate and consultation on the constitutional reform that we play partisan politics with these two subject matters. It is easy for the Unity Labour Party to go out there and to preach Local Government and also easy for the Opposition to say well that is a ULP thing, all NDP people should vote against it and should not support it.

Madam Speaker, I am sure that persons across the political spectrum NDP and ULP and those of PPM persuasion will also fully support this matters. Yes there are still some people of PPM persuasion, maybe there are no leaders that can lead them any further but, there are still some of PPM persuasion; I met one or two just night before last. But I want to appeal to all members of the general public that when this debate gets going we will be having consultations in villages, towns and in Kingstown in the larger offices, in the larger halls we will go into schools and community centers and the different villages and each of us in our own way must promote the idea of the reintroduction of Local Government and support this Government in reintroducing Local Government in this country within the period of one (1) year.

Madam Speaker, I trust that this motion will have an easy passage through this House and I urge members of the Opposition to give full support to this motion. Thank you.

**HONOURABLE ANDREA YOUNG:** Honourable Member before we precede the speaker will resume his chair.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I see the Honourable Member could not get accustomed to a woman in the chair. He keeps saying madam so I have to come back.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Minister of Education.

**HONOURABLE MICHAEL BROWNE:** Thank you very much Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members. I think today is a glorious day in the political history and the annals of our country because we are laying the framework for the establishment of an expansion of popular democracy in this country.

One of the reasons why the Unity Labour Party is on this side of the Government of the House has to do with that clarion call of the masses, the oppressed masses and people of this country who had risen up and rebelled against the overrule of the New Democratic Party and that call as we recollect just about two years ago a little less said that the people wanted power, power to the people. That is why they resisted the greed of the New Democratic Party with the pensions and gratuities bill. But their uprising was calling for not simply a changing of the guards to

replace the current leader of the Opposition by the current Prime Minister or to replace the ex-Minister of Education by the current Minister of education; they wanted to go further than that. And for them the slogan that knitted together that inspired that uprising is now on the verge of taking institutional shape in the form of Local Government and for that reason today is a joyful day and a glorious day. Maybe not enough of our population might be listening but it does not reduce the political significance and the historical significance of what we are doing today and it is therefore incumbent upon us as we go into the highways and byways of this nation to ensure that those who are not listening and including those who are listening, engaged in this deeper exercise in political education as we hold our town meetings and our village meetings throughout the nation.

Mr. Speaker, I am indeed heartened further by the fact that the Opposition notwithstanding their concerns appears to have come around to an acceptance of Local Government. And as long as we have agreement on the broad frame on the principle of Local Government we can always discuss and ventilate our differences in relation to the forms and procedures. But it is indeed happy that the NDP has come around to this point. But we will not forget for one moment that the same NDP had seventeen (17) years in Government during which time they could have instituted Local Government and they failed to do that. And I will suggest to this Honourable House and indeed to the nation that notwithstanding the platitudes of the New Democratic Party opposition today it was philosophically impossible for them to implement Local Government. The New Democratic Party was in this parliament without an Opposition for five (5) 1989 to 1994. Prior to that they New Democratic Party had set up the Local Government committee led by my dearest uncle and they were soliciting the views of this nation and we were all excited because the New Democratic Party had come in on a wind of change in 1984 and we believe that something new is coming, the new dawn is coming, but alas the committee on Local Government turned out to be a facade we recognise that it was an attempt to lower us into complacency.

Many people including myself submitted ideas, memoranda to that committee; the report of that committee is yet to see the light of day. In the post 1994 period when we again had an Opposition in this Parliament then Opposition Unity Labour Party brought a motion on Local Government to this very House, the then New Democratic Party Government consistently resisted it and it had reached a point where it fell with the dissolution of Parliament. We brought it back, they had the period from 1994 to 2001 when there was the total unity of the House around this issue and they failed to bring back Local Government. And I am suggesting to you Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members that the philosophical shape of the New Democratic Party made it impossible for them to have implemented Local Government. Indeed the concept of Local Government as a dimension of popular and participatory democracy went counter to the philosophy and practice of the then New Democratic Party Government. But today it is possible to bring it here because we have had not simply a change of Government in the sense of change of faces but we have had what the scholars and intellectuals refer to as a paradigm shift; that is to say what took place on the 28<sup>th</sup> March was not simply a change of Government it was a complete change in direction and the change in direction is so profound that it could constitute a

paradigm shift, it is so fundamental. What we are talking about Mr. Speaker, is as significant as comparing day to night, comparing Mars to Earth, it is so profoundly different. We have seen a shift from the truncated democracy of the New Democratic Party to the popular participatory democracy of the Unity Labour Party and that is possible in practice because the philosophical underpinnings, the things, if we will say in this context, the ideology of the two parties are so different that the practices which would reflect that ideology and philosophy must of necessity be different. And not only is the philosophy different but the body of ideas that take inspiration and are grounded on that philosophy are also different. And it follows that the practices will be different and the institutions which will create and are creating and have created will also be different and that is why many of us believe that this new experience is such that it will be forever difficult for the New Democratic Party to ever get back in office, because people have tasted them for seventeen years; they know what they are made of. They have tasted us for not even ten (10) months, they know what we are made of and they therefore are not going to reject this new dawn, this new thing under the Unity Labour Party to return to the old oppressive overruled of the New Democratic Party.

Mr. Speaker, we are talking about that shift which is moving from the over centralisation of the New Democratic Party to the decentralisation under the Unity Labour Party. We are talking about moving from the elitism and the elitist approach of the New Democratic Party on one hand to the collective democratic style of the Unity Labour Party. In other words we are talking about movement from a circumscribed and truncated democracy under the New Democratic Party to a fuller growing democracy under the Unity Labour Party. And that is why I said it was impossible not withstanding platitudes you hear it, call it, time from them, not withstanding what they write in the manifesto it would have been impossible for them to institute Local Government precisely because it went counter to the fundamental beliefs of the New Democratic Party. But we have said in different forum that Local Government must be the cornerstone of participatory democracy. We will be making a mockery of the term and reducing it to a cliché meaningless when we talk about participatory democracy unless it is buttressed by Local Government, because Local Government by definition will give breadth and depth to democracy by definition. It will give breadth by virtue of involving all communities across the land, all people across the land and it will give depth by virtue of the kinds of debates, discussions and deliberations that will take place within the various local communities.

Mr. Speaker, internationally much is being said about the concept of distributed democracy. And the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association has commissioned the whole series of papers and lectures around this concept of distributed democracy. And one of the fundamental aspects of distributed democracy is the aspect of peoples' involvement via Local Government. And I will like to suggest Mr. Speaker that we are very much in that vein and therefore in tandem with the international arena by moving in this direction that we are moving in today.

Mr. Speaker, participatory democracy is an indispensable if we are to make proper decisions in this country, and the last speaker, the Honourable Minister of Transport, Works and Housing dealt with that quite forcibly and pointedly by drawing attention to the fact that the people

themselves on the ground understand better the issues and therefore are more appropriately placed for certain kinds of decisions which will inform Central Governments.

The question of Local Government also addresses the issue of continuous consultation and deliberation. One of the danger signs of any Government is when the ruling political party starts to run from the people, they are afraid to stand up on the corner, they are afraid to go in the rum shop, because they are not meeting the needs of the people; they are coming under a lot of criticism and licks and then they have to run. And I am suggesting Mr. Speaker that Local Government provides an institutional link, consultative link that will allow a party in Government to remain in constant communication, in a sense in an intimate communication with the people. But it goes beyond that too, it also becomes important in terms of what is referred to as citizen formation that is to say shaping of a citizenry because by virtue of being involved in these decision making processes they gain a certain ownership over their lives, their destinies, their communities and therefore feel more committed to the concept of nationhood and citizenship. So it goes beyond just dealing with the issues of keeping the drains clean and so on. There are a lot of very higher issues involved significant as those fairly important issues are, we also need to address the broader issues that arrive and derive.

Local Government is political participation and by definition it is the humanising of politics, politics have to do with power. Our resolution talks about political authority but we know we are talking also about raw power and because power tends to be abused unfortunately we have had too many cases historically in our own situation in a global human experience, and some of them are very graphic and very painful and indeed some are nauseating where politics dehumanises people. And by bringing people into the process, into the mix not in a opportunist way, not from the standpoint of political expediency but deriving from a philosophical outlook that they are brought in on an ongoing permanent consultative basis, and that must of necessity humanise them.

Mr. Speaker, one of the interesting aspects of Local Government is that it brings face to face the issue of private interest and concerns with the public agenda. Local Government allows us to develop not only a deeper appreciation of the national agenda and priorities and you will shape those and adjust those but also Local Government allows us to develop the skills of negotiating, so you are talking about in a sense of negotiated agendas. You are coming from a certain position maybe something right on your house in a particular community. You come to such a meeting and you discover that you have to now situate your own personal thing, a culvert to go into your yard, a wall by your land, you have to situate that now against the broader common collective communal good and interest and you have to negotiate that.

So the issue of Local Government goes beyond matters important as they are of financing and so on. I know I will get an opportunity to make some input into the forms that Local Government can make so I would not go into that aspect this evening because I know a number of parliamentary colleagues on both sides who will want to make an input on this. But I just want to say Mr. Speaker that since we have taken Government at the end of March I have

attempted in the constituency of West St. George which I have the honour of represent to put into place a number of people's structures a sort of informal Local Government if you will. It does not have the weight of law but the practice which has evolved since April when we set those up, some eight going in nine months, I believe is useful data and information and the Honourable Member for social development and Local Government has indicated that we must not negate the extant experiences, historical ones and those that exists now on this matter. And must not necessarily parachuting something that is completely new disconnective from our experiences. And the experiences of which I will speak very briefly in closing.

I believe that it is since April of last year I believe will redound to the benefit of the entire process. Mr. Speaker, one of the first things that emerged from that experience is the exuberance, the interest of people to become involved to take on responsibilities all on a voluntary basis. We had set up six areas called councils in the constituency covering all nine (9) polling stations. And it is amazing the people have come forward to be part of that process, we have had teachers, we have had masons, carpenters, labourers, priests, managers, head teachers, the whole spectrum in terms of social classes are being involved in this exercise and I don't mean just in the general but I mean on the executive of the various councils. And they have operated with enormous enthusiasm and it just demonstrates that once we give the people the opportunity and this is an exercise that did not have the law behind it, in the sense that we have the law in place and active because there is some law. Yet they were able to function and continue to function and they have carried out programs which the people in their particular areas defined for them to carry out and directed and all of this within the constraints of an absence of funds and their ways of dealing with that have been quite creative and indeed this is a lesson in creativity, the unleashing of the creativity of our people. Various ways have been utilised to raise funds to carry out the programmes whether it is from the Barbecue, to asking citizens for donations and so on. And the projects have ranged from removing derelict vehicles, putting down garbage bins, painting bus sheds, taking care of playing fields, taking care of community centers, educational programs and parenting, Christmas parties for the young and for the old, you name it, a whole range of programmes. But the bottom line of all of it is that the people came forward, continue to come forward and are working in the interest of their communal development and by extension the development of the nation.

We have Mr. Speaker, to join this issue with a number of other issues ranging from poverty reduction, stroke alleviation and we have to as I said earlier learnt how to synchronise as far as possible, the localised agenda and programmes with the national agendas and programmes and we know one of our major trusts is poverty alleviation. In our case we are developing what is called, 'the poorest of the poor programme' in the particular constituency that I represent. But one of the things that springs out at you Mr. Speaker, and I am concerned as an educator myself and indeed as an adult educator is the issue of illiteracy. And there are those from a rightist elitist perspective would try to exclude the illiterate, the under educated in a formal sense from these processes. But I want to suggest to this House and to this nation that, that is a colossal error because these are some of the more articulate people, these are some of the more willing people that we are finding. What we need to do is to make educational programmes part of the

whole exercise not only the mobilisation exercise around Local Government but after they have been established and I want to suggest that we put that into the configuration as we continue our deliberations towards the goal of Local Government.

Let me Mr. Speaker, just mention since I am on that note that I was saddened last night by a phone call around 9 o' clock that one of my adult educators who had worked with me for a long time Camalita "Camo" little Williams died yesterday and I am very saddened by that because she made a profound contribution to the development of women in this country. But she has gone but it is precisely this sort of exercise that she would have thrown her weight into; Local Government, the development of people at the community level.

So Mr. Speaker, we have noticed that history in a sense has condemned the New Democratic Party. They had an opportunity and they failed but we are happy that they are here today on board now. That what we are having in our country is not simply a change of guards but a profound shift and this has to be taken as part of the whole democratisation process, this broadcasting parliament which did not happen and could not happen under the New Democratic Party for example. So we are talking about a full shift and I think the caution of our last speaker the Honourable Minister of Transport, Works and Housing is relevant and indeed salient at this time because we do not want this issue to be put on a narrow partisan in a narrow partisan frame. But we have seen that the exercise in Local Government is much more than simply putting some people in some power positions or positions of authority and doing some mundane things in their area. It is a whole process of shaping individuals, shaping communities and shaping the nation and I have tried to indicate from our own experiences under the Unity Labour Party all be it in a particular constituency that I represent that it is not only possible even if we did it in an informal way, but is relevant and that the people are indeed ready. I think we are on the right track Mr. Speaker. I want to wish that this Bill has smooth passage through and that we will all continue to rally around it, the particular details, aspects we can debate in the upcoming months. Thank you very much Mr. Speaker.

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members. We are suggesting in view of the fact that at least half of a dozen Ministers have functions to go to at 6:30 and there after, official functions. And I have spoken to the Leader of the Opposition and perhaps it's a convenient time for us to wind up this evening and to continue to debate the debate on another day.

We have had seven speakers Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members and I think we have had a substantial amount of debate. I must apologise to the House for leaving for about 40 minutes or so. A matter came up at the office which I had to go and deal with, these things happen from time to time. So I did not hear the contributions of Minister Francis and the early part of Minister Browne.

Mr. Speaker, before I move the motion for the adjournment it is my duty as Leader of the House to inform the House that I have been advised that the Royal St. Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force have rearrested the fugitive from the British Virgin Islands about which there was discussion this morning. After I received that particular piece of information I have been in touch with persons in the Police Force in the British Virgin Islands and also with the administration in the British Virgin Islands and it is my understanding having spoken to them that certain arrangements are being made, I don't think that there is any necessity for me to speak of the arrangements only to inform the House that certain arrangements are being made. So I think that, that seems to have brought to a satisfactory conclusion a matter which emerged today, no it is not a question of thanking the Leader of the Opposition; as I indicated that I found out this morning on my way here as I indicated earlier, and the matters have been en train and the relevant as you would recall I said I gave certain instructions and those instructions which I had given had been followed. The issue of course of the security of the country is one we always have to be careful about how we speak in the House. It is a matter in which Honourable Members have always got to use good sense, judgment and discretion but that is a matter for individual members but I only say that as a caution.

Mr. Speaker, the next meeting of the House I am suggesting the 19<sup>th</sup> of February up to 5 o' clock on that day the Opposition business will have priority and therefore moving the adjournment of the House Mr. Speaker with your leave for Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> of February at 10:00 a.m.

**HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER:** I second the motion.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Members the question is that this Honourable House do now adjourn until Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> February at 10:00 a.m.

**Question put and agreed to.  
House adjourned accordingly at 5:40 p.m.**