

No. 3

TUESDAY

Second Session

19th February 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 THIRD 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.

TENTH SITTING

19th February 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 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 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
Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday	Member for Northern Grenadines
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

Minister of National Security, the Public Service and Airport Development Honourable Vincent Beache	Member for South Windward
Minister of Health and the Environment Honourable Dr. Douglas Slater	Member for South Leeward

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY 19TH FEBRUARY, 2002

PRAYERS

The Hon. Speaker Hendrick Alexander read the Prayers of the House.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Before we take the Obituaries I would want Honourable Members to extend a welcome to students from the Petit Bordel Secondary School who are here with us this morning observing the proceedings of Parliament. We want you to know that you are welcome. Thank you.

OBITUARIES

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like to join you with the welcome of the students of the Petit Bordel Secondary School. We are always very, very pleased to have young people come to the House. We are also happy to have within the precincts of the House, I believe that an attempt is being made by the Minister of Works to see if some additional chairs can be secured for the students from the North Union Secondary School and the Girls' High School. I understand that the students from the North Union Secondary School, the staff and the students are involved in an exercise relating to the prevention and the fight against HIV/AIDS and when we came in this morning Mr. Speaker, they pinned these red ribbons on us and we are very, very grateful to be involved in this symbolic fight against HIV/AIDS and I want to commend very much the teachers and the students, the parents at the North Union Secondary School for being involved in this particular exercise [applause]. It is unfortunate that the Opposition Members have seen it fit not to accept the ribbon and I have.., because the colour is red [applause] Mr. Speaker, this is what I mean, partisanship has reached such a stage among some that they do not recognize that this colour is an international colour for the fight against AIDS. It is not a National colour. Presumably, those who do not like the colour red would cease eating red meat, do not wear red dresses, do not associate themselves with the colour red in any simple way that they will seek to change their blood from red to green or blue or yellow. It is politics taken to its absurdity; it is the absurdity of politics. And just as I commend those who have been involved in the exercise of pinning these ribbons and being associated with the symbolism of today's activity it is unfortunate that there are persons who would not want to wear it because the colour of the ribbon is red. I want to say that there was a particular activity in which I was involved not too long ago where I was given a something which was yellow or gold. I didn't think that it was an

N.D.P because I have items in my wardrobe which are green and gold and blue and it's really we are going to ridiculous with this nonsense. Anyway the public will make their own judgments. We have to go beyond the narrowness of tribe and look to the larger issues of nation and international community.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I thank you very much for permitting me to make the preliminary remarks relating to the students and the activity and I want under the rubric obituaries briefly to pay tribute to Her Royal Highness, to the Princess Margaret who died recently. As we know Her Royal Highness was the sister of Her Majesty, the Queen who is the Head of State of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. And it is quite proper that we pay a tribute to her sister. His Excellency the Governor General had hitherto transmitted on the behalf of the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on behalf of himself the condolences to Her Majesty and I also on behalf of the Government and people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines had done likewise. And Mr. Speaker that we also were among the first to sign the book of condolences which is still available at the British High Commission, His Excellency signed first, I signed second and the other Members of the Cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, Her Royal Highness has been very much association with Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and more particularly, Mustique. Whether or not one supports the Monarchical System of Government as we do have in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines or whether one is a republican does not mean that in circumstances like these where someone who is the sister of sovereign that we ought to pay tribute here in this House and to extend to Her Royal Highnesses immediate family, her children, to Her Majesty herself, the Queen's mother who is the mother of Princess Margaret and to all her friends and all the other relatives. May she rest in peace and may light perpetual shine upon her. I'm obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I too join with the Honourable Prime Minister in welcoming the three schools, the young people from those schools and their teachers who are present in this Honourable House today to hear the day's proceedings. I wish to say however, that as Leader of the Opposition and as President of the New Democratic Party, we will determine for ourselves what is absurd and what is not absurd and we will decide when we wear, what we wear at any time [applause].

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I would ask members of the gallery please to desist from participating in the proceedings of the House. You will sit, you listen and you would do so quietly for me please. Okay, thank you.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I wish also to join in the tribute to Her Royal Highness Princess Margaret who passed away Friday before last. As indicated by the Prime Minister, she is the sister of the Head of State for our country and in a sense she has been associated with Saint Vincent in a very direct way. Being very often present on the island of

Mustique. So I believe we seen her and felt her presence more than any other member of the Royal Family. I believe it is also true to say Mr. Speaker, that her presence here may have had the impact of attracting other residence to Mustique and therefore contributing to the Tourism Sector in our country. She has, as all of us would have to do, she has gone on to another place and I simply wish on behalf of Member on this side of the House to indicate our deepest condolences to Her Majesty and the rest of the Royal family. May she rest in peace.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to pay respect to two outstanding Vincentians who have departed this life. A Ms. Rita Hinds from the constituency of Central Kingstown, a popular fish vendor, businesswoman in her right who apart from her own personal contribution to the economic and cultural life of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has through her children and grandchildren made a very significant contribution to education, agriculture and electricity in this blessed land of ours. May she Mr. Speaker, rest in peace.

I also Mr. Speaker, pay tribute to the departed Owen Regisford of Biabou, a member of the well known Regisford family from that part of our beautiful country, who also in a very quiet but efficacious way made a significant contribution to the economic and social life of that rural community and who no doubt would be sadly missed by his relatives and friends. May he Mr. Speaker, rest in peace.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: With you indulgence, I was unaware that both Rita Hinds and Owen Regisford had passed away. I knew them and their families, I naturally know their families and I would like to join Senator Leacock for bringing it to our attention and we are associated with his remarks in that regard.

CONGRATULATORY REMARKS

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of State in the Ministry of Education.

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like to congratulate the National Sports Council on a magnificent award ceremony for the year 2001, which was held on February the 2nd 2002 at the Methodist Church Hall.

Mr. Speaker, the organizational aspect of this ceremony was something that has never been seen the like of before. The entire arrangement shows that some real dedicated plan went into that activity. Mr. Speaker all those who contributed to the tremendous success of the event must be commended. We did not hear a murmur of dissatisfaction and all the critics who had predicted a flop had to burry their heads in shame.

Mr. Speaker, leading up to the ceremony, both Ministers of Education, youth and Sports were very much involved in the process and initiated a meeting with all the sporting bodies to discuss plans relating to the awards among other matters.

Mr. Speaker, many individuals and associations received awards. The association of the year went to the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Cricket Association. Congratulations are in order to that body.

Congratulations to Mr. Scott Hadley who received the award for Coach of the year. He represented the Rugby Association. Mr. Speaker, I must here say that the sport of Rugby is fast becoming a very popular sport within Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

I think on a previous occasion I congratulated the under 16 Rugby team that participated in the West Indies or Caribbean Tournament sometime last year.

I must congratulate Mr. Kenroy Peters of Cricket fame, as Junior Sportsman for the year, 2001.

Congratulation to Ms. Gailene Gordon of Netball fame, as Junior Sportswoman of the year, 2001.

Congratulation is in order for a Ms. Halimah Deshong also of Netball, a Senior Sportswoman of the year.

And Mr. Speaker, there is not much we can say about the sportsman and the Sports Personality of the year Mr. Pamenos Ballantyne. He has been spoken highly [applause] of in many regards. Being our premier long distance runner at the premier long distance runner maybe in the western part of this world [applause].

Mr. Speaker, these persons have contributed in one way or the other towards our development. I want to wish them continued success in their future endeavours.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to congratulate the Technical College for winning the 2002 Secondary School Cricket competition yesterday at the Arnos Vale Playing Field. They made a total of some 227 runs and dismissed the Emmanuel Mesopotamia team for just about 160 or there about. After the Mesopotamia team defeated them in the preliminary round, they came back into the final and changed the result there and they played unbeaten up to that point in their previous nine encounters. So we want to congratulate both of the teams for their contributions [applause] and for reaching thus far. With that I want to thank you Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Senator Terrence Ollivierre.

HONOURABLE TERENCE OLLIVIERRE: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I too would like to join in the congratulatory remarks to the National Sports Council for having done a good job in presenting the awards to the Sports winners for 2001. Congratulations are also in line for the Cricket Association for the good work that they have been doing to develop the Sport throughout the nation. You know it is also good to see when young people excel that they are

justly rewarded and given the sort of acknowledgement that they need in order for them to perform at a higher level. And so I would also like to congratulate Mr. Kenroy Peters and Ms. Gailene Gordon for receiving the Junior Sportsman and woman of the year respectively. I have had the pleasure of meeting Ms. Gordon and seeing her perform and would like to wish these two young people all the best in their future endeavours. I would also like to congratulate the coach of the year, Mr. Scott Hadley for bringing that Sport of Rugby, I think which is relatively new, to our country and for having one such an award within the first few years of the development of that Sport in Saint Vincent is quite an achievement. What can I say about the Sportsman and Sports Personality of the year? You know everywhere you travel throughout the Caribbean his name is mentioned and indeed he is doing a great job as an Ambassador for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and no amount of praise that we offer here in Parliament I think is sufficient for what he is doing for this country. And last but not least, I would like to congratulate Ms. Halimah Deshong for winning the Sportswoman of the year as you, she has led this country in Netball team in the last Caribbean Netball Championship and was credited for doing a fine job.

So Mr. Speaker, I would like to say congratulations to all these people and to the other Associations and Sportsmen and women throughout this country. We hope that you would continue to raise the good name of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Thank you.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Senator Leacock.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, continuing in the vein of Sports and Sporting contribution, I wish to add Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members my warmest congratulations to Mr. Keith Joseph of the Athletics Association for his magnanimous act and sterling contribution as a fitting complement to the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. When recently he had to our shores, three very important visitors in the persons of representative of the IAF, Mondo Sports. I suspect I should not call names of firms but of two other important manufacturers. The joint contributions of which would see the realization of a National Stadium for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, which the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines I must say to their credit is pursuing today. And in that regard Mr. Speaker; you would pardon me if I said how much it warms my heart to see in the gallery this morning Mr. Louis Jones who had done so much preparing the ground work for what is now being continued quite rightfully by the Government of the day and I applaud Mr. Jones in the Gallery and I wish the Government well as I do Mr. Keith Joseph in pursuing this vision for the young people and all of us indeed Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Much-obliged Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Minister of State.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMEY DANIEL: Mr. Speaker, I too would like to join in the congratulatory remarks. I join my colleague on this side, Honourable Clayton Burgin, for those who has made congratulatory remarks in congratulating Pamenos Ballantyne for yet again

another outstanding achievement obtaining the National Awards Sports Personality of the year. Mr. Speaker, Pamenos for several years has been dominating the field of Athletics, not only here in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, but also in the wider Caribbean. He has maintained the number one position for several years as the premier long distant runner here in Saint Vincent and the Caribbean. Pamenos really hails from the constituency of North Windward. He is a son and is a descendant of my ancestors including Joseph Chatoyer. Pamenos has over the years exhibited strong personalities of which many of us should emulate. I want to join again in congratulating Pamenos and could he continue the good works. Thank you very much Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank very much, Senator Leacock for being fulsome in his congratulation of the Government in moving towards the construction of a National Stadium. And I agree with him and congratulations are in order for the former Member for East St. George and also for the..., and he is Minister of Sports, Mr. Louis Jones who is in the audience, but I think that Mr. Jones must certainly be wondering how is it that he had been Minister for so many years fighting to get this stadium and successive Minister of Finance would pay him no attention and that in ten months the current Minister of Finance has been able to organize, start up financing and see the way forward to begin the process for the commencement of the National Stadium [applause]. And I think in this regard the Chairman of the National Sports Council, Mr. Garth Saunders to whom this Government has given ownership of the project. I said to him, “you organize the matters relating getting the project on the way, I will organize the money and with the community, I will deal with the squatters.” And I’m hoping that Jones would still have some influence among some of those squatters, would join me [interception] no I don’t think that he sent them there. Will join me in this issue of showing to the squatters that it is in their interest that they should move and in the national interest and Senator Leacock has already given to me personally that commitment and I repeat here the commitment, which he has given to me. I will put it in the Hansard so that when we are addressing the squatters I don’t want that we shouldn’t be moving the squatters because he was the spokesperson on Sports for the N.D.P has already given his full assurance and full support on that question. We will of course address the matter of the squatters with sensitivity and as is well known a matter which Mr. Jones, who was also Minister of Housing was fighting for long time to get specific low income houses built. Again, he must be very pleased to see that in ten months that such a project is on the way to becoming a reality because today we are going to pass the Bill here to raise the monies, some of which will go towards the building of the low income housing. Because I know he often express frustration to me with successive Ministers of Finance who were always saying, not only the Ministers of Finance but with the Fiscal Adviser of the Minister of Finance who was always very parsimonious in dealing with housing for poor people. So that I am very, very grateful for this warm committee of spirit coming from Senator Leacock on the matter of the Stadium. And I also join him in thanking Keith Joseph for his role and of course as you know, we asked and I in particular asked that Mr. Keith Joseph be put on the Stadium Committee. Also that Mr.

Leacock be put on the Stadium Committee despite the fact that Mr. Leacock is an Opposition Parliamentarian and despite the fact Mr. Joseph from time to time gives me hell on his radio programme. It just shows the spirit of magnanimity and together now, which we on the side of the Unity Labour Party embrace most fulsomely in carrying forward the national interest. I'm obliged Mr. Speaker.

APOLOGIES

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members let me apologize for the absence of the Honourable Minister for National Security and the Minister of Health who are out the State on official business and Senator Andrea Young who would be here a little later. Thank you.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker may I just indicate in the continuing openness of this Administration and your own very wise leadership as the presiding officer of the House to report that Cable Television Channel 45 is carrying these proceedings live today. We are hoping that they will carry them live at every sitting. As you know that they started to carry the proceedings live during the Budget Speech and on the opening day of the Budget, they had some technical problems. I was not carried live. But I agreed that the Leader of the Opposition should be carried live. When the technical problems were sorted out indicating yet again the indication of this Government to fulsome expression of views including the fulsome expression of views by Members of the Opposition. This I know is a revolutionary departure from the way things were hitherto, but it is in the spirit of the good Governance, which is the hallmark of the U.L.P Administration [applause].

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I think the students from North Union are now coming in [applause].

MINUTES

The Minutes of the Sittings of the House of Assembly held on 10th, 11th, and 17th January 2002 copies of which had been circulated previously, were taken as read and were confirmed.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, there are few matters upon which I would like to make brief statements. The first concerns, the current market situation, the market regime for bananas in Europe. Mr. Speaker as is well known, there was a battle over the banana regime where the United States of America and Ecuador were contending that the regime was antithetical and subversive of the WTO in consistent with..., and a compromise was struck between the European Union and Ecuador and the United States of America and this compromise involved the transfer of a hundred thousand tonnes of Quota C

bananas to Quota B at the beginning of 2002 to satisfy the condition, which the European Commission had negotiated with Ecuador and the United States. Well since then Mr. Speaker and though we accepted that as something, which we could live with until the extant banana regime comes to an end in 2005. Well from 2006 the regime would be fully liberalized.

Unfortunately Mr. Speaker, there has been a further assault being made on the banana regime at a time when we are seeking to restructure and have been restructuring our industry here in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and in the Windward Islands. And the additional challenge, which is coming is for a diminution of the Quota C. Some interest was seeking to have it peck back by a further 17% and there are forces within the European Commission around whom there seem to be a settle view that it should have a diminution by 11% and we have been seeking to hold the line and to attempt to have a diminution of no further than 6%. And on Monday the 11th just after 5:00 O'clock in the evening, I received a fax out of Brussels that on Wednesday morning the issue of a diminution of 11% would be going to decision and of course because you know we are some..., when it's 5:00 O'clock in Saint Vincent, it's close to midnight in Brussels. So I had to set about immediately to have letters to Romano Prodie, the President of the European Commission, that's the former Italian Prime Minister and His Excellency Jose` Maria Asnah, the Prime Minister of the Government of Spain and President of the European Council. Because as you know I am the person with spokesperson responsibilities in the CARICOM Quasi Cabinet on the issue of bananas and I didn't have time obviously to consult in any detail with my CARICOM colleagues and therefore had to send off letters within the framework of the general understanding of our policy. That is to say, the policy of the banana producers in CARICOM and I think it's important that these letters be read into the record.

Mr. Speaker, as it has transpired, decision day did not come on Wednesday the 13th because of among other things, a co-challenge. And these two letters, which I have sent off, as I have always done, on the issue of bananas when there are new developments, I provided a courtesy to the Leader of the Opposition, which I may say, it has never been accorded to me nor to my predecessor. I make sure that copies of these letters were sent to him. The emissary chosen on this occasion was Senator Leacock whom I have been informed delivered dutifully the letters to his Leader.

The letters are self explanatory Mr. Speaker, and I would read them, the first to His Excellency Jose` Maria Asnah, Prime Minister of Spain and President of the European Council.

Dear Prime Minister,

“I write you in my capacity as the Caribbean Community's Prime Minister with responsibility for the critical Banana Industry and in advance of the meeting between yourself and the Caribbean Community, CARICOM Heads of Government in May 2002.

We will be meeting the Spanish Prime Minister in Madrid in May 2002. So I am writing him this letter in advance of that meeting, but on the particular issue to which I have just adverted.

Prime Minister, as the current President of the Council of the European Union, my fellow Prime Ministers of the CARICOM have requested that I bring to your attention a matter of grave concern to us. We understand that, in addition to the African, Caribbean and Pacific Banana Exporting Countries losing 100 thousand tonnes of licences for the exports of bananas into the European market from the beginning of January 2002, there are new proposals before the European Commission to reduce their access by a further 11%.

Caribbean Leaders understand that the re-allocation of the 100 thousand tonnes in January was the result of the compromise agreement negotiated by the European Union with the United States of America and with Ecuador to settle the long-standing banana dispute. The 11% allocation to non-traditional operators would however, be a unilateral imposition by the European Commission. This would be a major departure from the understanding between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries that traditional ACP banana exporting countries and their operators, would not be further disadvantaged in the establishing of the rules of phase II of the New Banana Import Regime. It would significantly undermine traditional ACP bananas and operators in the market. It would further threaten the ability of the industry to improve its competitiveness, to maintain a place in the fully liberalized market after 2006.

Prime Minister, I urge you to use your good offices to intercede with the Commission, to ensure that it does not place the ACP and the Caribbean Banana Industry at a further disadvantage.”

And the letter to the President of the European Commission, Mr. Romano Prodie, is in the following terms.

“I write you in my capacity as the Caribbean Community’s Prime Minister with responsibility for the critical Banana Industry.

Mr. President, CARICOM Heads of Government are dismayed that after 10 years of collaborative efforts by the European Union, and the African Caribbean and Pacific ACP States, against the assaults of the United States of America and the Latin American Banana Exporting Countries on the European Union Banana Import Regime. The European Commission is itself now considering a measure, which would further undermine the ACP Bananas in the European Union market. I refer to the proposal emanating from the Commission to reserve 11% of Quota C licences for non-traditional operators. This is in the context of an additional to the 100 thousand tonnes, which was transferred from Quota C to Quota B at the beginning of 2002 to satisfy the condition, which the Commission negotiated with Ecuador and the United States.

Mr. President, ACP and the Caribbean Traditional Banana Exporting countries and operators cannot bear this further loss in market share and the increased pressure on market prices. They will not be able under these circumstances to reorganize and upgrade their industry to command the continuing place in the market when it is fully liberalized in 2006.

Mr. President, the Caribbean understands the need to facilitate newcomers. In those circumstances, the Caribbean would be prepared to accept a 6% of the Quota C licences to non-traditional operators. It cannot accept any higher allocation, since it will undermine the predictability of the marketing of their bananas. The ACP producers will be the ultimate losers.

The Caribbean therefore, urges European Union to ensure that the arrangements for the management of Quota C do not create any further difficulty for its fragile banana industry and the economies, which depend on it.

Mr. President, I urge you to use your good offices to ensure a satisfactory solution to this situation.”

I want to ensure this Parliament, the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the banana farmers here in this country and throughout the Caribbean that I have been in touch subsequently with CARICOM on this matter. These letters have been circulated to all Heads of Government in the region and I have also been in contact with the Brussels Office.

I want to assure the farmers that we are doing everything we possibly can do to bring some measure of pressure, lobbying on the European Union so that if there is any diminution on the Quota C volume that it be no more than a 6% diminution, which we may just be able to accommodate. We are seeking to be reasonable in the circumstances. I want to assure the farmers that there is still a viable market for quality fruit produced at reasonable prices. Which means that we have to continue our quest for the restructuring of the industry, to cut out all the wastage with unnecessary middlemen, to improve our yield, to improve our quality for our workers and farmers to be more productive and for the refashioned Bananas Growers Association to move to higher levels of efficiency. I think the industry, it is sufficiently important that I draw this matter to the attention of the general public and more particularly to the banana farmers.

Mr. Speaker, I want to report that in late January and early February I was in the region for about two weeks on regional work. The Government of Saint Vincent and the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines were accorded the respect and the privilege to be one of the two members of the delegation in addition to the Secretary General for CARICOM. Two Prime Ministers, Prime Minister Ingraham of the Bahamas was the outgoing Chairperson of CARICOM and myself for us to journey to Trinidad to seek to put our own views to those of Prime Minister Patrick Manning, the Leader of the United National Congress, former Prime Minister Basdeo Panday and His Excellency President Robinson. We held two meetings each with those distinguished gentlemen in an attempt to interpose ourselves between the current situations and to facilitate a possible solution. I am being very careful with my words because we didn't go to mediate; we went to put ourselves in our situation to facilitate the possible solution. From there I went to Anguilla and in Anguilla for the O.E.C.S Heads of Government Meeting, which I would report perhaps more fulsomely on when the issue of freedom of

movement arises on the Order paper in the form of the Bill, the Immigration (Restriction) Amendment Bill.

And Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, there was a lengthy discussion there with the Chief Justice at a caucus on matters relating to the judiciary, the Magistracy and the judiciary itself. The staffing of the judiciary, not individuals obviously, in terms of numbers and structures and systems. And also as you know I have been arguing very strongly, before I came to office, and since I have been in office as Prime Minister, for the regionalization of the Magistracy and the enhancement of its quality. There were also very important matters dealing with a development strategy for the O.E.C.S, a coordinated development strategy. Consideration further for a possible amendment of the Treaty of Basseterre, which brought the O.E.C.S into being, to see if we can deepen the integration process. And extensive discussions on matters of trading arrangements, W.T.O, the Post Cotonou negotiations and the negotiations for the three trade area of the Americas. Those were among the central matters, which were discussed at the O.E.C.S. Some of this ground was covered over in CARICOM when we went to Belize, particularly on the matters relating to trade. And as is perhaps known already, as a consequence of this Government's desire to see and increase an enhancement in the education of our public servants and training in a number of areas, that we have requested that the University of the West Indies be here where tomorrow and the day following there will be seminars on matters of international trade involving the public sector and the private sector. And if I may say parenthetically Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the Members of Parliament are invited to these sessions and certainly the Members of the Cabinet have been asked to go tomorrow morning to the session. We will have an abbreviated Cabinet meeting tomorrow afternoon, because at 4:30 Sir Shridath Ramphal, the Chancellor at the university and immediate past chief negotiator for the R.N.M would be launching here at 4:30, and all Members of Parliament are invited at: 4:30, where the Chancellor's Forum would be launched, here in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. And I think this again is of tremendous credit to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and to the Government and people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines that such an important initiative as a Chancellor's Forum would be launched here. Increasingly, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is being seen as the Mecca of the unification movement in the Caribbean [applause] and the Government and its leadership are held in the highest regard by important institutions and if this were no so, the Chancellor himself would not be here tomorrow to launch the Chancellor's Forum at 4:30.

Mr. Speaker, if I may still, whilst I'm reporting on Belize, but still parenthetically, since I am addressing the issues of training, rather than to do so separately in my statement to the House, that in my New Year's message to the Nation, I pointed out that we need to improve the training of Parliamentarians, those involved in public enterprises and public servants. I know that some persons found it very strange that we say that Parliamentarians need further training. Well you know I have had four university degrees including two post-graduate ones and including one of them is a doctorate. And I need further training and knowledge. Is only somebody who is in the cemetery, who cannot learn and don't want to learn. So those who believe that they know everything they don't have to attend any of these things. And I come

from the vantage point where I used to supervise students at the university. Graduate students in the writing of their theses and I myself feel that I need more training and more education and more skills. It's a daily exercise for me.

Mr. Speaker, once we have decided to do something we move expeditiously. Mr. Gordon Japer who is an expert in the field of public administration, public policy, training, is out of the Commonwealth Secretariat, is Trinidadian, and is a former lecturer at the University of the West Indies, a former Parliamentarian himself, and a former Cabinet Member in Trinidad and Tobago. He is coming down on Friday; he is doing all day seminar training for persons in the public enterprises, the senior management. On Saturday and Sunday, he was to do with us in the Cabinet but it finally came down to Saturday alone because the Sunday we had a function which had already been arranged. But Saturday is not a good because we have to recognize the religious sensibilities of the two Seventh Day Adventists who are in the Cabinet. So that would be held at some other time and on Monday we are having training for the public servants, Monday the 25th. On the 28th and 29th the Tripartite Committee which has been established by this Government and chaired by Joel Huggins, they are holding a two-day seminar on productivity and wages, a national productivity seminar. And that involves the private sector and the public sector. The training for Parliamentarians as a whole outside of the Cabinet, I have spoken to the Speaker on this matter and I am asking that such training exercises properly be done through the initiative of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the branch of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. So that the module, which will be arranged for us on both sides of the House would be something in which both of us would have an input. Obviously that for the Cabinet would involve the input of the Cabinet and I hope that the Opposition supports us in these particular exercises and particularly the one, which would be air mark for Parliamentarians. Because the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association throughout the world has training sessions for Parliamentarians all the time, but is only a backward place like Saint Vincent, backward in, I am not using it here in a pejorative sense, backward in the sense that from the time people were educated, want for more training they said, you see, they not even trained, the not even educated. We have to get past these very narrow backward ideas and what I have found is that persons who more need training tend to oppose getting it and those who least need it welcome it with arms wide.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to say further that all this effort is to improve the efficiency and quality of services and leadership in all the different areas deliver to the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and to enhance good governance. In CARICOM this matter was also addressed and I myself raised the issue as something, which CARICOM has to put on its agenda in an on-going manner. One final matter upon which I must report Mr. Speaker, I must make a statement concerning the establishment of pre-clearance hub at Hewanorra International Airport in St. Lucia that facilitate passenger traffic to and from Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. This was signed yesterday. Prime Minister Anthony came over to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines with a full delegation and the discussions has taken place before and I will submit a copy of that accord to this Honourable House so that Members can get copies of the accord. I want to say Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members that on the 22nd, on

Friday, the Foreign Minister of Barbados, the Deputy Prime Minister is leading a delegation here to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to discuss bi-lateral arrangements between our two countries; and one of the central issues would be a pre-clearance hub in Barbados so that we can seek to enhance air access to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines through the use of these pre-clearance hubs. What it would involve, is that we will put customs and immigration officials at Hewanorra in St. Lucia and when you coming to Saint Vincent, rather being cleared there and cleared here, you would be cleared there one time as though you are clearing in Saint Vincent. And we want to do the same thing in Barbados. For ten, twelve, fifteen years people have been talking about these pre-clearance hubs and no body has ever had the will or the inclination to do that. You see in this country, a lot of people run off their mouth but only few persons are prepared to take the bull by their horns and do things. It is to the credit of this Government that we have taken the bulls by their horns and we are doing things. And we have put in this pre-clearance hub, which should start on the 1st of March. There would be teething problems but it has immense potential for growth. And I am sure that all right thinking persons in Saint and the Grenadines will commend the Government on this particular measure and the initiatives, which we have for Friday the 22nd at the table when the Barbadian Deputy Prime Minister comes. It may well be that the Prime Minister himself may come but we are not yet sure about that. But certainly the delegation will at the highest level include the Deputy Prime Minister. Naturally if the Prime Minister comes I would lead that delegation on our side. If the Deputy Prime Minister heads the delegation, well her counter- part our Deputy Prime Minister would head the delegations too. Of course I will make a visit and intervene at particular points during the day since they will be here. So I want to commend all those who have been involved in this accord with St. Lucia and to thank Prime Minister Anthony for his cooperation and his statesmanship in helping to bring this accord to a successful conclusion. I'm obliged Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I too must make a report to this Parliament and this country with regards to a very significant meeting that I have had the pleasure to attend with other Foreign Ministers from CARICOM, meeting with the United States Secretary of State Colin Powell.

Mr. Speaker these high level meetings have grown out of the meetings by the Heads of States in CARICOM and United States President Clinton at the Barbados Summit. In that meeting it was decided that the United States would maintain high-level consultations. The meeting I attended on the 7th February was an outcome of that decision.

The United States is seeking to deepen and strengthen its relationship with CARICOM. The U.S has now recognized CARICOM as a unified region and a relationship has now been placed in a more predictable footing. In addition, we have stronger working relationship at the official level and at the level of experts.

Mr. Speaker, the items that were discussed in Nassau on the 7th of February with Secretary of State Powell are items that previously were discussed in Barbados. And are entailed in the document "The partnership for prosperity and security". Nevertheless, we have to make sure

that we position ourselves and speak to the issues, which are of greatest importance to us in the region. President Bush has expressed his desire that there should be a deepening and a strengthening of relationship between the United States and the Nations of the Caribbean. Heretofore the United States seem to have been focusing on its borders Canada and Mexico and those two countries are part of the economic block that is known as NAFTA (The North American Free Trade Agreement). The islands of the Caribbean and CARICOM as a whole have been somewhat neglected but President Bush has indicated that he wants to use these islands as the third border and has indicated a number of initiatives that he would like to engage in, in order to make sure that the relationship and this third border of the United States, that they become initiatives on the border that they join the United States in the same way that Canada and Mexico had relationships with the United States.

Mr. Speaker, the United States position is that they are more inclined to favour the region in matters pertaining to trade. They are not very forth coming when it comes to aid. And of course trade has been the mechanism that has bound us together for a number of years. We have had the enterprise of the America initiative. We have had the Caribbean Basin initiative and more recently the Caribbean Basin Partnership Agreement Act and to come the Free Trade Area of the Americas. But apart from our relationship in trade we are bound by the United States by the movement of people. Through migrant workers, skilled workers, students, tourist and these are connecting factors between us and our big neighbour to the North. The grant by the United States are preferential access to its markets through the Caribbean Basin Initiative (The CBI) was an important development. But unfounded fears and regulations and strong pressures from ambient groups particularly the textile and the garment lobbies have led to critical design flaws which have excluded, a number of vital products from the list that should have included many of the products of the Caribbean. Since the CBI (The Caribbean Basin Initiative) the United States seem to have benefitted far greater than the Caribbean region, than CARICOM. In 1980, the United States enjoyed a negative balance of \$1.2 billion. In 1984 and there on the United States has enjoyed a positive trade balance with the exception of 1985. In the year 2000 that positive trade balance grow to \$1.4 billion. Cumulatively through the years 1982 too the year 2000 the United States has enjoyed a positive trade balance of over \$19 billion. Now the increasing trade balance that the United States has enjoyed was not commensurate with the aid that we have been receiving from the United States. There has been a spectacular decline in aid from the United States to CARICOM. U.S aid to the region in 1984 was \$217 million. In 1995 that dwindled to \$33 million, it recovered somewhat in 1996 to \$55 million, but it has been falling since. And most of the aid in recent years has not been for development activities but for drug related security. Now there was an enhance trade agreement called, "The Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act", which was won after 13 years of struggle and lobbying of the U.S Administration and Congress. And the Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act was supposed to restore some of the ground lost with the institution of NAFTA, particularly for textiles and apparel. As well as provide investors in the region with assurances preferential access to the U.S. marker at least until the FTAA comes into force. But almost simultaneously with the Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act, the Unites States Congress in the process of providing a fast tract authority to the United States President, introduced a

condition, which if adopted would vitiate the benefits to the region of the Trade Partnership Act. And we refer to the amendment aimed at eliminating certain preferences favouring Caribbean textile and apparel producers, such as relating to the regional finishing and dying operation. Even if this were reversed by the congress, it has sent mixed signals to investors that the United States is willing to sacrifice the Caribbean and of course, in an age where you have competitive global economy, these actions tend to give fear to investors that the United States would not sustain its commitment to the region.

So Mr. Speaker, when we look at some of the things that the United States has done in order to vitiate the trade arrangements with the region, we have had serious doubts and we have to bring them to the attention of the United States that they do not board well for our region. There is a special agreement between the United States and CARICOM dealing with preferences given in certain industries. Take for example, the one with the rum industry, that is being watered down by attempts to give preferential treatment to the Philippines and not only the Philippines but in the renewal of the Ambient Trade Preferences Act, they are seeking a carve out whereby the Ambient countries would be able to bring their spirits unto the market of the United States thereby affecting the industry in CARICOM. The region has put forth certain suggestions, whereby we hope that the United States would be able to stimulate the private sector in the United States and CARICOM by developing mechanisms to facilitate business to business contacts as a means of promoting joint venture investment activity and enhancing productive capacity of firms in the region. We hope that the United States would be able to provide regional and national investment on trade promotion agencies from both..., provide training for them in order to support activities undertaken overseas, target markets, and to provide technical assistance facilities that can be use to bolster the institutions providing development, business development and credit facilities to small, medium and micro enterprises. We hope that the United States would be able to continue its efforts to the banana producing countries of the region and to assist in helping the region as they go from the adverse changes that would take place in the preferential trading arrangement between the European Union and the Banana Import Regime.

In the area of Tourism, we are hoping that the United States would not do anything to further affect the Tourism Industry in the area. We are hoping that by April we will be able to launch a \$16 million advertising campaign on the American market in order to help promote Tourism in the area. And we are asking the United States whether they could extend the tax incentive programme given to the United States citizens, for those citizens who travel, take vacations in various points in the United States that they would do that for the Caribbean region so that Tourism would be promoted in our region or at the very least to do it for Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, because Puerto Rico is an important airline hub and a cruise ship port for the Southern Caribbean. We are also hoping that the United States would not do anything to affect the airline industry within CARICOM. The Federal Aviation Authority has been seeking to place some aviation jurisdictions within CARICOM under category 2 and thus affect the points at which we are able to do business in the United States and certain code sharing alliances, which their alliance would be able to make with airlines of the United States even where the

particular code sharing arrangement does not affect traffic to the United States. We have also brought to the attention of the United States the negative impact of the Patriot Act. And we have indicated to the Secretary of State that this might well be death by unintended friendly fire because the requirements that that Act place on U.S banks in relationship with correspondence banks, particularly, the indigenous commercial banks in CARICOM, they are so restrictive that the banks in the United States are saying that it is not worth the while for the them to continue their correspondent relationship with certain indigenous banks in CARICOM. The Secretary of State has indicated that most of these points that he would convey to his counterparts in the United States and see what redress can be effected. Of course, the United States is very much interested in anti terrorism measures, security measures, money laundering, drug trafficking and other forms of crime. And we have indicated to the Secretary of State some of the things that we are doing in order to prevent our institutions and our region from becoming havens or facilitating in any way money laundering or supporting terrorist or terrorist organisations. We have indicated that most member of States have enacted legislation to implement the benchmarks established in the forty FATC, that's the forty FATC recommendations and the nineteen CFATC recommendations as the United States is aware, it was the FATF and the NCCF which established a list in 1998 on which some Caribbean countries have been placed, putting a stigma on them as non-cooperating countries. We have indicated that the region is currently in the process of concluding a regional mutual legal assistance treaty and a regional Maritime Corporation Agreement, which inter alia, provide for cooperation among States in money laundering and asset forfeiture cases. The region has also established what goes under the acronym of CARIB (The Caribbean Association of Regulators of International Business). Several jurisdictions established National Financial Intelligence Units and a feasibility study on the establishment of a Regional Financial Intelligence Unit is currently being undertaken by the CFATF, the United Nations Drug Control Programme and Caribbean Development Bank. Member States have been extending the money laundering framework to comply with the United Nations Resolution 1373 and in 1999 International Convention for the suppression of the financing of terrorism. Most Member States have already signed the United Nations Convention against trans national organized crime, which also addresses the issues of money laundering and asset forfeiture.

The issue of Haiti as a regional problem has come up and the United States has expressed in no uncertain terms that it would rather see greater progress in the political settlement and the electoral problems in Haiti before some \$5 hundred million would be released by the United States and the European Union for Haiti and to finance the pillars of democratic institutions there. We have asked the United States to do its best to release these funds so that President Jean Bertrand Aristide would be able to carry on the process of democratization, but the United States seems to be standing firm in this regard. We are hoping that that matter can be resolved. We have also brought up the problem with the OECD and its harmful tax competition report. A revised list is likely to be published by the end of February and we have indicated that as long as one Caribbean Member State is on that list, we would be very unhappy about that situation. In order to work with the United States as a third border, we have asked that the United States work with us in providing the appropriate technical and financial assistance as we seek to

strengthen our legal supervisory and regulatory arrangements. To seek to help us in training in critical areas of regulation and the supervision of the industry and 2(3)

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Louis, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, would like to say something.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: I rise on a point of order. I wish to refer Mr. Speaker to 33(9), a Member shall not read his speech but he may read extracts from books or papers in support of his argument.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: My friend is mistaken about that. That is what is referred to if you are delivering a speech on a motion or on a bill. For instance, when you are delivering a [interruption] no, this is not a debate this is a ministerial statement.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes, this is what I wanted to say; it is not a debate that refers to debate, rules of debate, time and manner of speaking and the rules makes provision for statement by Ministers and he is making a statement. Yes he can read his statement, Honourable Minister.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: thank you Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the Leader of the Opposition has been in the House for so long and he doesn't know the rules. Mr. Speaker, the third point I was raising is for the two-way exchange of information between us and the United States. Mr. Speaker, the third border initiative is one in which the United States is seeking to focus its cooperation between the United States and the region in terms of programmatic initiatives whereby we are able to have concrete programmes to have the United States put specific funds into specific areas of development. Unfortunately, we have said to the Secretary of State that the funds that are to be allocated are far from adequate. What we have seen is that the United States has changed or lessens the amount of contribution that it has been making to the region in focusing on other areas of the globe. When the countries of the Eastern European Union of the Soviet Union and the Eastern block became independent States, we suffered as a consequence. And now that the focus is on Afghanistan where billions of dollars are being poured into that country we are hoping that the United States would not neglect its third border and would not neglect its smaller brothers South of the border [applause]. And so the sums that the United States has provided, we thought were far from adequate, they are totally inadequate and we have so indicated under the third border initiative. The President has planned to give \$20 million dollars for the Financial Year 02 to the Caribbean Region US\$20 million and that would go to Haiti, Bahamas, Guyana, the Dominican Republic and all the countries in the region. In addition, it has planned to give, to establish a Teacher's Training Centre for excellence for the English Speaking Caribbean for regional public school teachers and they have allocated \$2 million. The programme will provide trained teachers' courses, a clearing house of teacher training materials, and an internet portal linking teacher training institutions, with THINKTHANK and universities. It will also provide \$1 million under a three-year programme supported by USAID and the Department of Labour and managed by a

foundation, which will seek supplemental private sector and university contributions to promote entrepreneurship among Caribbean youths. There would be \$9 hundred thousand, \$4 hundred thousand of which will go through the Federal Aviation Administration to provide technical advice on enhancing airport safety and \$5 hundred million to provide training on the strengthening airport security for officials for the English Speaking Caribbean. \$6 hundred thousand will be provided for natural disasters such as the frequently occurring hurricanes and \$54 thousand for environmental management to maintain tourist interests in the region and to promote sustainable development.

Mr. Speaker, we are facing a very hostile environment with globalization, both in economic and financial terms. We are under the gun to maintain certain security measures and we are being offered less aid and at the same time we are being asked to use the resources that we have that can go for developmental purposes in order to provide security initiatives both under the United Nations 1373 resolution and at the request of the United States. We cannot afford all these initiatives and therefore, we have impressed upon the United States that they should assist us in meeting all these needs because security initiatives are very important to us but they are also very important to the United States.

And so Mr. Speaker, we've had very little commitment from the Secretary of State. The meeting was for two hours. But we have outlined our programme with regard to where the United States is concerned and I must say that Jamaica was very firm with regard to the deportee question where you have people being deported, not citizens. These are people either..., undocumented aliens or those with green card who have committed criminal offences. We have asked that the United States be little bit more sympathetic, having full discussion with us rather than notification. And whether they could ease the transition by providing some sort of fund whereby we would be able to make the transition for those who have been deported, providing them with necessary training that they should be able to live productive lives rather than coming here and creating further criminal activities that would affect us.

Mr. Speaker, these are some of the things that we have discussed with the Secretary of State and the Secretary of State has given his undertaking that he fully understands our plight and our problems and that he would convey these to the Administration and the Congress of the United States. I am sure that on-going discussions would be held with the ambassadors in Washington and their counter-parts of the United States, but hopefully, we can continue this dialogue and we can see greater initiatives and programmes coming out of the third border initiative that would benefit us and we hope the United States would be far more sympathetic to our needs here in the Caribbean.

REPORTS FROM SELECT COMMITTEES

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Honourable members, it gives me great pleasure to lay on the table the reports from two Select Committees, which had been appointed on the 10th of January. The Select Committee addressing the Immigration (Restriction) Amendment Bill 2002 and the report from the Select Committee addressing the Order of National Heroes Bill 2002. Mr. Speaker, if I may just say in relation to the Select Committee on the Immigration (Restriction) Amendment Bill, I have had to write in ink something relating to a particular clause which had been omitted from the report which had been typed up. That is to say that the names of the O.E.C.S countries have been listed to which the Bill applies. It's a question just a spelling out for ease of reference. They are there in a separate law already but we just spell them out for the purposes of the application to the law. I therefore seek your leave Mr. Speaker to have these two reports laid on the table.

I would like to thank the work of all Honourable Members, both on the side of the Government and the Opposition in assisting with the deliberations in the Select Committee.

PETITIONS

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: Honourable Members, I would like to lay before this House the Humble Petition of the Trustees of the Gospel Pavilion Tabernacle Church, The Humble Petition of the Trustees of Evangel Temple Incorporated, The Humble Petition of the Members of the Kingstown International Church of Christ, The Humble Petition of the Trustees of the Gospel Chapels of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and The Humble Petition of the Trustees of the Association of Evangelical Churches of Saint Vincent.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I so order.

PAPERS

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg formerly to lay on the table the report of the Director of Audit on the Public Accounts of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for the period 1st January, 1998 to 31st December, 1999.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, this report has already been circulated in the documents for this meeting so we now just formerly lay this particular report of the Director of Audit.

Mr. Speaker, I think it important for me as Minister of Finance to congratulate the Director of Audit and her hard-working staff. We are now just simply one year behind time with the preparation of the report of the Director of Audit for the Public Account of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. And I think the citizens of this country would be very pleased to know that they accounts hitherto which would be in arrears for four years, five years, reports of the Director of Audit had always been a constant complaint and the new Director of Audit, Mrs. Saunders, she has been doing a very good job and her hard-working staff. We only now have

the year outstanding for 2000 and the reason she called me to indicate to me, that the reason why she has not been able to present that to me as Minister of Finance as yet for it to be laid in the House is because some of the documentation..., because we have just finished 2001. So we have 2002 and she and her staff are working on it. I think we owe them a tremendous debt of gratitude and we must congratulate them [applause].

QUESTIONS FOR ORAL ANSWERS

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question number 1, Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

1. *The Honourable Arnhim Eustace (Leader of the Opposition) to ask the Honourable Minister of National Security to please outline the circumstances (described by the Honourable Prime Minister at the last sitting of this House as a “monumental incompetence” and “in need of an inquiry”) which led to the release by the Police of an escaped convict from the British Virgin Islands.*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister is not here the Honourable Prime Minister will answer the question.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I am obliged Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the sitting of the House of Assembly on the 17th of January, 2002 during the debate on the Proceeds of (Crime Money Laundering) Regulations 2002, the Honourable Minister of National Security gave a full explanation and outlined the circumstances relating to this matter. The details can be obtained from Hansard on the 17th of January, 2002. Let me further state Mr. Speaker, that I in accordance with the comments I made in the House during the lunch period on that very day of the 17th requested of the Commissioner of Police that he conduct an examination and an inquiry into the facts and to provide me with a report. The Commissioner of Police gave me the report and I am satisfied about the accuracy of the report and all requisite corrective measures to be taken administratively have been taken and this matter has even redounded to the advantage of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, because I should report that because of the strong position that was taken by the Government on this matter that the Chief Minister of the British Virgin Islands, the Honourable Ralph O’Neil telephoned me to commend the Government on the strong position it has taken and for the re-arrest of the escaped convict. It must be remembered Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, that the suggestion was made by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition when the issue was raised in this House. There was the implication that this person hails from South Rivers which is a stronghold of the Prime Minister, that somehow he had some special privilege or protection; well the conduct of this Government shows the falsity of that assumption and that particular implication and I did not want to address the issue then,

but the Honourable Leader of the Opposition once held the Office of Prime Minister and I do not know how he conducted himself when he sat in the Office, but I can say this to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines the issue of the national security of this country and I have repeated it already, is accorded the highest priority by this Prime Minister. And the manner in which we have acted on national security questions should leave no one in any doubt as to our determination in addressing these issues of national security in a full and proper way.

Mr. Speaker, in Anguilla I held several discussions at the meeting of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States Heads of Government. I had breakfast with the Chief Minister of the BVI, I had lunch with him. We spoke about this matter in detail over and over and he was pleased when he got back to telephone me in the dead of night. In fact, I was not there I had to return his call about 10:00 in the night when I got in from work. When I called him at his home he said that the decisions which we had taken, -- the statements which I had made in the House and the sending back of the escaped convict, though he is a Vincentian, convinced his Executive Council that this Government in St. Vincent and the Grenadines is serious in stamping out crime and in building up strong security measures with the BVI, and as a consequence he said that the Executive Council has taken the decision that when he called me not to require any visa from any Vincentian who wants to enter the British Virgin Islands. As a symbol of the strengthening links between the two Governments he issued a formal invitation to me as Prime Minister to pay an official visit to the British Virgin Islands on the 7th of March this year.

Mr. Speaker, this is a Government which is disciplined; it has a leadership which is disciplined and we do not operate on matters of national security by guess, we know what we are doing.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased with the response from the Prime Minister. And I am pleased that the Opposition was able to raise the matter so he can take action on it.

2. *The Honourable Arnhim Eustace (Leader of the Opposition) to ask the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Planning and Development to please indicate:*

(a) How many times he has left the State on Government business between April 1st and December 31st 2001.

(b) What was the total cost of such travel.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I must express my profound disappointment at a former Prime Minister in asking this question. And all I can say this is a question inspired by his principal advisor Dr. John who has been writing on this subject for several weeks. Unless Dr. John calls Ralph Gonsalves' name every week in his column, he does not seem to be able to eat breakfast anytime during that week. And it is also a preoccupation of the convicted felon who speaks on behalf of the New Democratic Party on a radio programme, if the Leader of the Opposition chose to follow the advice of Kenneth John,

and I do not know who follows his advice other than the Leader of the Opposition, and that of the convicted felon, well that is the reason why they are in the Opposition and I am in Government.

Mr. Speaker, I must say that when the issue of travel comes up, and I want to deal with this fulsomely, hopefully, once and for all. St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a very small country, and as you have heard recently just a short while ago from the Deputy Prime and Minister of Foreign Affairs this country in order to maximise its benefits of independence, of having control over its foreign affairs and foreign economic affairs, it is necessary for it to interface with the external environment at the political level, at the administrative level on an on going basis. This necessarily requires travel. I do not like to ride planes, because there is some feeling that when I go I like to ride planes. Before I became Prime Minister I visited every single continent except the Arctic and the Antarctic. I went all about on my own money. There are some for whom travel they may feel as though they are getting travel, they are getting to know somewhere and they hurry come up. That is not the case with me. Travelling is an extremely tiring business for the Prime Minister. When I go anywhere, I go from the plane to the hotel or the meeting hall, and when the meetings are finished, I have a very tight schedule before I go back invariably to the airport.

In fact, I am considering, given what happened to Rosie Douglas and Tom Adams that anytime I take a very long flight, if I go outside of the time zone, I should take at least a 24 hours to recover before I make the trip back home. Because I do not want to drop down with a heart attack. So I want to say that even though I have to take an extra day, because that is how Rosie Douglas died, coming back from a trip to the Far East, and Tom Adams too, in Barbados, it is not easy pressure on you. I want to say this also, and I know people outside there will say that when the Prime Minister goes away he makes a lot of money in travelling. Well I lose money. When I travel through the Caribbean, do you know what is my daily subsistence, you all do not laugh please; the people who are viewing on television or listening on radio or who listening to me here, when I travel in the Caribbean I get \$60.00 EC dollars a day, \$60.00. 6-0. That is my subsistence. When I travel outside of the Caribbean, if I go to the US, I get \$60 US dollars a day. I understand under the NDP administration the per diem allowance for the people at the National Lottery was either \$200.00 or \$250.00 US dollars a day. I just want to tell you that I get \$60 a day. Anyway.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, that you have to make an assessment of the trips to what is brought back. What representation is made and what results from the trips overseas. And I am going to take my time on it, and I am going to compare for you to understand, the Honourable Members in this House and for the public, I am going to compare the position the first of April last year to December 31st with the NDP Prime Minister 1st of April 2000 to December 31st 2000. So you want me to give my months from April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December, that is nine months, I am going to give you the last NDP nine months too. And I am going to say this, that I am only giving the NDP nine months in 2001; I do not want to embarrass them more than they should be

embarrassed because that nine months was a slow period for them, because they could have hardly travelled because they were tied up here with politics coming up to election. That was their slow period.

Mr. Speaker, I have been out of the State on official business on 22 occasions in the period under question. On 16 of those occasions I travelled in the Caribbean region. It is important. Sixteen times in the Caribbean and most of them are nearby ones, St. Lucia, Grenada, Dominica, Barbados. Two occasions I went to the USA, once with a matter relating to the University of the West Indies and once in relation to attending to speak at the United Nations and the Organisation of American States. I passed through the United States on two other occasions, once on the way to Canada to the Summit of the Americas that was three weeks after I got in and once on the way to the Republic of China, Taiwan, and I rode by the way of New York and Los Angeles to go over to Taiwan. And then I travelled once to London and Italy and then I travelled once to London and Libya. I have been outside of the hemisphere on the trip to Taiwan, on the trip to Libya, and the trip to Italy.

Mr. Speaker, as regards the trip to Taiwan, I said it in the House here when I reported back and I will say it again. The airfares to go to Taiwan were paid for by the Government of the Republic of China. It did not cost St. Vincent and the Grenadines one cent. We were put up in that country at the expense of the Republic of China. Those tickets were bought here by the Embassy of the Republic of China. When we went to Libya, and I should point out that four of us went to the Republic of China and three of us including Leroy Rose of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce and the other person being the Director General of Finance and Planning and myself went to Libya, the Government of St. Vincent paid for the passage to go to Libya from St. Vincent through London to Libya and back, and when we were in Libya the refund was given; it was put in the hands of the Director of Finance and Planning and it was paid back into the Treasury, so that trip also did not cost any money. Yet, from the Libya trip among other things I got a grant of one and half million US dollars, that is \$4 million. That is what we are using to start the stadium about which Senator Leacock spoke so approvingly this morning. We received that already.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you because of the role I played there, we got a million and a half US and the other monies which came in, like the million for Antigua, the million for St. Kitts, the million for the OECS Secretariat, they were paid here to our National Commercial Bank and I call them and told them that we are going to pay them the money not in US, but in EC so that our Foreign Reserves here will look good, so I make an extra benefit of that, because I have to look everywhere to make a piece of change. You have to keep your head on with these things. Mr. Speaker, we also have a loan which we are negotiating with them for 3 million US dollars, a low interest rate loan. That is as a consequence of that trip directly and on the way from Libya I stopped in London to have two meetings, one of them with Sache and West LB, the state agency from Italy and also West LB the bank from which the money for Ottley Hall we owe them. I made arrangements for them to come over from Europe to meet me in London to take advantage of that free trip to hold discussions with them about Ottley Hall;

and I organised a meeting with the Secretary of State, a member of the British Cabinet for the Department for International Development, and at that meeting St. Vincent and the Grenadines was given debt relief, the government was thirteen and a half million dollars in debt, we got the first year's debt relief on the basis of our good governance where we are weighing down on corruption and that we have a focused approach to poverty reduction, all that happened on that free trip. That is what they are asking me about.

Now, the trip to the Republic of China on Taiwan, not only did the Prime Minister get the free trip, so did Minister Francis, so did Minister Beache and so did the Fiscal Advisor, Mr. Cims Martin and accommodation was provided. You had to pay for incidentals like telephone and things like that, because when I am away every single day I call home once, twice to speak to various persons in Government, because even while I am away I am still Prime Minister, even though somebody is acting here, I have to know what is going on. I have to give directions as to what is going on so that it is not a matter of just looking at the Prime Minister travelling, what is he travelling for and what is it costing. From the Republic of China we were able to have forty and half million dollars of old monies, retrieve monies and new monies, it is on that trip also that I negotiated and got the three new school buses which some of these school children using. The two ambulances which some people in here already ride in when they were sick, and a fire-tender, which for years the NDP could not get cost eight hundred and something thousand dollars, get that also for nothing, for free. Then sixty motor cycles to help the policemen and I got further cheques of eighty odd thousand dollars which has followed as a result for the telephonic equipment to go between the motor cycles and the police headquarters. It is on that trip that I was given in my hand for the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines \$1 million US to start the library. Now, you know, I am glad that they asked me this question. I am really, really, very glad that they asked me this question.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I have visited practically every single Caribbean country including Cuba since I have been Prime Minister. In Cuba, we have 20 doctors and nurses as a consequence of the visit, there are additional scholarships. The teachers, the three engineers who have come already and two more coming, one plus an architect, all the technical assistance which we have received and as I said additional scholarships. That is as a result of the Cuban visit. Then every single trip to every other English speaking Caribbean country is in relation to matters concerning the deepening of integration, the welfare of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and a continued addition to the prestige of this country. When I go to Barbados, when I was invited by the University of the West Indies by the OAS, the Organisation of the American States and by the United Nations Development Programme to deliver the key note address, in Barbados at a Caribbean conference on constitutional reform, that is not something to the credit of Ralph Gonsalves, that is to the credit of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. When I attended the Association of Caribbean States Summit in Margarita, the Venezuelan Government put on a plane, I want you to hear this, the Venezuelan Government put on a plane to take me and my delegation from Barbados to Margarita, and when I am coming back they put on a special jet which took 35 minutes from Margarita to St. Vincent to take my delegation including Ken Isles and his son from Margarita to St. Vincent and the Grenadines. We gave Ken Isles and his son

an exposure down there as in keeping with our promotions of Vincentian culture, that again was something which did not cost this Government any money for the travel and the hotel, and down there we signed the agreement to get the oil cheaper from Venezuela which is now being followed up by Vinlec. That is what the work of this Prime Minister involves, and that is how we try to save money.

Mr. Speaker, let me say this to you, though the question did not ask, the Governor of the Central Bank asked me to come to a meeting of the monetary counsel of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank just last week because I had been two weeks out in the region doing Caribbean work. I told him I cannot afford three days, a day to travel, a day for the meeting and a day to come back. He said Prime Minister your counsel is so important, your presence is so important he said. I know, those who are listening, who were brought here for a particular purpose I know they are 'streupsing' their teeth, but they must listen to the winds of democracy. I am not allowing the lowest denominator to rule me, you know. I am not allowing also the uncultured and the untutored according to Mr. Errol Clynton Mounsey to rule the cultured and the tutored. I will not have that happen. Now, I told him that, he said Prime Minister your counsel and your presence are so important. He said the Bank will charter a plane to pick you up on the Thursday evening so that you do not have to waste a day travelling, pick me up Thursday night and that he will bring me back Friday afternoon, I left the meeting at 3:00 p.m. jumped on the plane at 4:00 p.m. and came back here. That is the respect this Government has in the councils of the region, and it is only ten months you know.

Mr. Speaker, one of these visits was to Belize where I think that I am the only Prime Minister since Independence in this country, which another Government in the region has asked to come and deliver the feature address at their Independence, Belize asked this Prime Minister to do it; that is not to my credit and glory but to the credit and glory of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the ancestors who have been thrown away from here, the Caribs to Belize, what is now Belize. The Garafuna people were so happy to see the leader of the country from which their fore parents came.

Mr. Speaker, so every single one of these visits has been dealing with matters like that. In the case of the trip to London and Italy, I, Mr. Speaker, took the Director General of Finance which was part of the official delegation and we discussed in detail the same Ottley Hall problem, in Rome and when I went back to London I went up to Coventry to meet Vincentians and spend time with them. That is how we do our work. In fact everywhere I go and the Ministers have instructions everywhere they go they must find out about the Vincentian community and meet them. In Anguilla I met over 50 Vincentians and held a discussion with them for two hours, making me half an hour late for the Chief Minister's dinner, but I had to go and speak to the Vincentians. That is the way in which this Government does its work.

So Mr. Speaker, when you are dealing with the issue of expenses and the question which is asked, there are expenses are of three kinds, one, what you pay for the ticket, the transport, what you pay for the hotel accommodation and the food and what you are paid for your per diem,

your \$60 US expenses when you travel say to the US or outside of the region, or your \$60 EC inside of the region. Mr. Speaker, and I want to say this, the records show that on four of those visits where I was entitled to subsistence and expenses I did not claim, because there were sometimes, I come back and I am busy, I even forget the matter in my bag, I did not take any money from the Government before I go and when I come back I just leave it so. Sometimes I claim. On four occasions, and I am not bothering with that. If I go away for three days and I do not get \$180.00 from the Government that is not any big thing. Or I spend \$200.00 or \$250.00 additionally I do not get it, it is not going to kill me, it is not going to send me to the poor home. This kind of low down question which you are asking me, about how much money I spend.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I went out on 22 occasions in that period, similarly in the year 2000 which was a slow period for the NDP their Prime Minister went out on 15 occasions. However, the expenditure by the NDP Prime Minister was \$120,778.31, the expenditure by this Prime Minister is \$88,783.03. I want to repeat them. Their slow period where they went out less times than I went out, they had an expenditure of \$120,778.31; well I do not know what they brought back I did not hear anything, and I on the other hand, the expenditure for the tickets and for expenses as I have indicated is \$88,783.03. Well, any Vincentian who sees the figures which I talk about and what benefits I have brought back, will say Comrade spend more time on the plane. So I wonder why they asked the question.

You know, on one occasion when I was in the Opposition I asked Prime Minister Sir James one question, not how many times he went out, I asked how much money has been spent on official travel by all the Ministers and by the public servants and so on and his answer to me was he got up and said, if you want the answer look in the Estimates and you will see the amount which was allocated. But I did not ask him how many times he went out and how much it cost him. I asked how much for the whole government, because that is a question I wanted to see how much was spent in the preceding year compared to certain other items of expenditure. It was not to embarrass him, but they have it out there and this was supposed to be one of the big questions which is going to shake the Government. Well you get the answer now, I went out a few more times than you all did in all you slow period, but you all spend far more money than I spend and you all brought back little or nothing for St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

3. *Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday (Northern Grenadines) to ask the Honourable Minister of National Security to please confirm whether a report of sexual harassment has been made against a Senior Officer of the Royal St. Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force and if in the affirmative what action has been taken in this matter.*

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I will read the answer which I have been supplied to read in relation to this matter.

There has not been any report of sexual harassment made against any police officer of the Royal St. Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force. Although we live in this society and we hear

unsubstantiated rumours about sexual harassment by police officers. If the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines has any evidence or if he knows any man or woman who has been sexually harassed by a policeman or policewoman I think as a responsible member of this House he can draw it to the attention of the Commissioner of Police, whom I am quite sure will carry out the requisite inquiry and provide the results.

4 *The Honourable Terrence Ollivierre (Southern Grenadines) to ask the Honourable Minister of National Security to please state whether in fact the Amerijet has given notice of its intention to pull out its 727-freight plane from the E.T. Joshua Airport and the reason(s) advanced for such a decision.*

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, again this is for the Minister of National Security and Airport, the Honourable Vincent Beache. I will read what has been given to me by the officials and I will expand upon it.

So far Amerijet has not given notice of any intension to discontinue its 727-freight plane service from ET Joshua Airport. As a matter of fact, St. Vincent and the Grenadines Amerijet has confirmed the airlines intension of continuing the service and possibly even amending or extending the service.

As is well known Mr. Speaker, the airport at ET Joshua has certain problems; Amerijet has been operating there for ten years without any serious problems. One time during the last administration Amerijet discontinued their operations and that was a shuttle service out of Grenada for cargo. In fact, I have been advised that Amerijet was considering as a business proposition not to use the same aircraft to come to St. Vincent but to use a different kind of aircraft, but the Civil Aviation Authorities in Antigua, had reported that the Civil Aviation Authorities internationally and out of the US had raised questions about the safety in relation to the 727 at that particular airport. That report was communicated to us but there has not been any notice of any intention to discontinue the service.

This question raises the larger issue Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, about air access to St. Vincent and the Grenadines. As you know, we are seeking to increase air access through the hub in St. Lucia and the pre-clearance hub which we are hoping to negotiate on Friday with Barbados. Then we have invested substantial sums of money in LIAT; \$2 million which was owed to us by LIAT that has been converted into preference shares so that LIAT's balance sheet could look good so that they can go on the market for money for bonds, to raise money by way of bonds and also to increase the number of shares by issue, a rights issue of \$40 million. The Chairman of VINLEC requested of me permission for VINLEC to give consideration actively to the purchase of \$2 million in bonds, I give such permission. And the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines has bought \$2.98 million in shares in LIAT, that sum was paid in January and contributed immensely to LIAT remaining afloat. We now have a member on the

board in LIAT, Mr. Isaac Solomon the Budget Director, he is the point man in our administration in the Ministry of Finance of matters relating to air transport. He is doing an excellent job.

I want to say this Mr. Speaker, last week the Chairman of LIAT came down to thank me for my own personal and that of the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, in keeping LIAT going and to improve the service. You would notice that LIAT is now going through TIA, Trans Island Airways comes through the Grenadines from Barbados and that is because of what we in St. Vincent and the Grenadines have been investing in LIAT. Similarly, they are prepared to put on connecting flights out of Grenada for the monarch charter out of London and equally they have agreed to put on the particular flights to connect with the hub out of St. Lucia. So we are improving the air access. Late last month, early this month we signed an \$8.1 US million dollar loan agreement with the Kuwaiti Fund for Arab Economic Development to improve the ET Joshua Airport. To fix up the terminal, the apron, what we would normally see as the affordable option for ET Joshua. The experts in the Ministries in the administration has indicated that we ought not to proceed with an original plan of Sir James to spend about \$80 million US dollars on the ET Joshua Airport. We know that many members of the NDP cabinet then did not want to go along with Sir James idea. That is because, even though you extend the ET Joshua runway it does not alter the nature of the airport because of the wind factor.

We are looking at airport development actively elsewhere. There is Argyle and we may well even consider seriously, and in fact it is under study, of extending the Airport in Canouan to make it a jet airport and do the shuttle from Canouan; because we – you go to Hewanorra in St. Lucia you have to shuttle to come up to Castries, for an extra \$25.00 or you have to take a vehicle and hour and half two hours to get into Castries from Hewanorra. Or if you land in Piarco you have to travel an hour and half to go down San Fernando. So what is the problem if we were to extend the facility down in Canouan and you have to travel ten more minutes by air to get into Arnos Vale? I noticed the Honourable Member for the Southern Grenadines smiling. The NDP could not have extended Canouan to a jet airport because they would have said they are selling out; Grenadines' people want to sell out mainland St. Vincent. But I am a countryman I could do that. My navel string bury here in the mainland. So those are all the options we are looking at with the issue of the air access and if the Honourable Member for the Southern Grenadines, if he wants to find out more information about these matters he can come in, I can let him speak to the persons in the Ministry personally. We have nothing to hide, you know, this is the people's business. I am obliged.

5 *The Honourable Senator Gerard Shallow (Opposition Senator) to ask the Honourable Minister of Social Development, Co-operatives, Family and Gender Affairs:*

(a) *Is the Honourable Minister aware that large sections of the Vincentian populace who are members of the "Bun Pan" Marriaqua Friendly Society have been vocally expressing their dissatisfaction with the financial affairs of the Society.*

- (b) *Is the Honourable Minister further aware that these members are making allegations of serious improprieties in the way the Society is managed.*
- (c) *Would the Honourable Minister be prepared to call for an investigation into the operations of the said Society to assure the members that the original philosophy of “Mr. Bun Pan Guy” is still valid such that current members, in particular long standing members will not be deprived of the material benefits to which they believe they are entitled.*
- (d) *Does the Honourable Minister consider her own position as a Director of “Bun Pan” Marriagua Friendly Society and at the same time the Minister in charge of the sector one of conflict of interest.*

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, it is sad to note that Senator Shallow persistently asks question on matters which he is not sufficiently informed to be accurate. There is no basis for the “awareness” of which he speaks in fiction or reality. Rather, the vast majority of members of the Marriagua Friendly Society have been expressing at our meetings their praise and approval of the visionary, compassionate and transparent leadership of the Board of Directors – men and women of integrity, deep spirituality and sterling character, qualities which inspire trust and which have been largely responsible for the rapid and sustained growth of the society over the years.

There is no empirical evidence of dissatisfaction which the management of the financial affairs of the Society which is a model institution in transparency and dynamic leadership.

Mr. Speaker, its audited accounts are published annually for public scrutiny, and Senator Shallow will do well to acquaint himself with the most recent report.

(b) This question lacks specificity and a factual basis. It is vague and nebulous with no bearing on reality. It is more in the nature of a meandering excursion into the realm of fantasy.

The thousands of members of the “Bun Pan” Society cannot be easily fooled and will not entrust the leadership of our society to untrustworthy persons.

This explains why at the last annual general meeting held on Sunday 20th May, 2001, the present serving Board of Directors received an overwhelmingly massive mandate to continue to manage the financial and other affairs of the society which pays out annually a sum of \$1.5 million in death benefits. No organization, and Mr. Speaker, I wish to repeat, no organisation in the history of this country with similar objectives has come even remotely close to “Bun Pan” in quantum and speed when it comes to honouring its obligations. Mr. Speaker, the Society has never failed or even hesitated, upon proper proof to honour a debt benefit. It continues to be a

significant source of employment and helps to educate our children and to offer compassionate help to members.

(c) With respect to question “c” Senator Shallow did not disclose what he calls “the Original Bun Pan Philosophy”. He acts on the assumption that I can unscramble the unuttered and apparently cluttered thoughts of his mind. Anyone who knew the late Nathaniel “Bun Pan” Guy of blessed memory would know that he had several philosophical positions which motivated him to promote the best interest of our Vincentian people. Unfortunately, the Senator’s question is inviting me to speculate – to shoot in the dark – or to respond to a philosophy which is not stated or which is perhaps not even known to him, Mr. Speaker. What is quite clear to interested and active members of the society, is the fact that the present administration has extended the services hitherto offered.

(d) Mr. Speaker with respect to question “d” a fundamental distinction must be made between conflict and co-operation, conflict and harmony, conflict and motivation, conflict and promotion. Within this context, conflict suggests any activity which is opposed to the objectives of the Friendly Societies Act, involvement in activities which hinder and retard the welfare of the Society, taking part in exercises which undermine the society – like – spreading baseless gossip and scandal about the Society in order to destroy public confidence in its operations.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, to take this question to its ridiculous extreme, should I as Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs cease to be a member of the Roman Catholic Church because I am Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs? As a Minister vested with the responsibility for Social Development in a most progressive and people oriented Government, I must ensure that the best interest of the people is promoted at all levels in accordance with the relevant law and in harmony with the policies of the Government for the maximum development of the people of this State.

Being a trustee, provides me with an opportunity to arrest at its source the development of any matter which will not give priority to the best interest of members.

Mr. Speaker, also in response to “d” let me take this opportunity to inform this Honourable House that I have resigned as a member of the Credit Committee of the Marriaqua Co-operative Credit Union where I served for 26 years. I have done so, Mr. Speaker, because the organization falls within the ambit of the Co-operative Division of which I am the Minister responsible. It will be remiss of me as an educator if I do not use this occasion to inform the Honourable Senator that Bun Pan falls under the Ministry of Legal Affairs. All questions to be answered must be directed to the Board of Management at our annual general meeting. To our efficient manager and staff who work on a daily basis or to the Registrar. We are a friendly society.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members isn't it shameful that the Honourable Senator is a member and does not show that he is familiar with the workings of "Bun Pan"? Mr. Speaker, his wife has been a member of the Society and a member of staff for a long time. Interestingly, the Honourable Senator does not live very far from the Society's hall where we conduct the Society's business. I have never, and Mr. Speaker, I want to stress, that I have never in 14 years seen him attend one meeting. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the general membership, and I want to stress again, Mr. Speaker, because I sense mischief, and want to stress again, Mr. Speaker, that the general membership will judge the Honorable Senator's motives. I am much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

6 *The Honourable Senator Major St. Claire Leacock (Opposition Senator) to ask the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Planning and Development to please state in light of the adverse publicity given by the local, regional and international media to the offshore sector because of the Nano issue, why did the Offshore Finance Authority opt to put in a Manager to run the operations of New Bank Ltd and Nano and Sons 1146 Private Bankers Ltd, rather than again revoking the licenses and putting in a Receiver.*

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I think it is important in relation the New Bank Limited to point out certain basic facts. On October 26th 1990 the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the NDP Government then, granted a licence to the New Bank Limited under the provisions of the International Companies Act to carry out the business of international banking. On August 31st 1993, the NDP Government granted approval for the New Bank licence to be renewed for a period of 15 years. That is the source of the problem, you know. Because Mr. Speaker, when the new Act was passed they were saying that they have a licence for 15 years and therefore did not come under the provisions to submit certain returns since they have been given by the NDP administration licence for 15 years. I just want that fact to be known. I want also, Mr. Speaker, to note, and I want to state these facts also at the beginning, because I will revert to them, that on July 13th 2000, the Offshore Shore Finance Authority under the NDP administration informed the New Bank that its license were revoked pursuant to section 18 of the Bank's Act. I want also, Mr. Speaker, to note, look at this the 13th of July, 2000, the New Bank had its licence revoked but it was on the 9th of February that letters were sent to both New Bank and Nano and Sons purporting to appoint a person to assume control of the affairs of those banks. I want the dates to sink in. They revoked the licences on the 13th of July 2000, but several months passed, and then in 2001 they decided that they are going to put somebody in charge of the banks. Now, appointing a receiver, well there was a judgment of the Court because Mr. Nano is a fellow who likes the Court and he put the Offshore Finance Authority in Court both in relation to the revocation of the licence and in relation to the appointment of a receiver. I will come to the revocation shortly when I give the full explanation but the receiver who was purported to be appointed by the NDP Offshore Finance Authority when Nano put them in Court in relation to the receiver in Suit No 57 of 2001 before Justice Webster a decision which was handed down on the 19th of March that is just a few days before the elections last year. Justice Webster said

that his judgment was to grant the Nano banks an injunction restraining the Offshore Finance Authority, its servants or agents or how so otherwise from taking any further action on the letters which were sent by the Offshore Finance Authority to them on February 9th 2001, and to restrain them also from purporting to appoint a person to assume control of the affairs of the banks and to restrain the Offshore Finance Authority or any person appointed by it from acting in any manner whatsoever as a receiver of the Nano Banks until the trial of the action or until further order. In other words, the NDP Administration, what they are asking us to do, is to revoke the licenses of the bank and appoint a receiver. They did that and a judge handed down a decision on the 19th of March last year saying you all have no basis on which to appoint a receiver for the bank an issued and order restraining the Offshore Authority from doing anything further with the threatened letters to them purporting to appoint a receiver or anybody under the receiver. So they want us now to do something which the Courts told them they were wrong to do. What happen? They love the Nanos they want a lot of money to be given to the Nanos? Eh?

Now, on the other hand, we dealt with the issue a particular way and we expected the Nanos to go to Court. The Nanos went to Court last week Wednesday to stop this Government with the Offshore Finance Authority to appoint a manager to run the affairs of the bank and the Court told them that they cannot come for leave to get judicial review of that. The Court dismissed their case so, what we have done, have the imprint, the imprimatur of the Court, we are not a bunch of foolish people in this Government you know, and I want to tell you this, because of the way they approached the issue, and I am giving you the summary first and I am going through it in detail, because I want once and for all to have this matter, [Interruption] Oh, yes we will go through it in plenty detail today. We will go through it in plenty detail today. Now, Mr. Speaker, and I do not want to drag Bertram Commissiong's name into any matter because he is Esteemed Council, but the NDP administration hired Mr. Commissiong to do the legal work for them, the one which the Court threw out the case. Mr. Commissiong has sent us a bill for \$335,000.00. I want the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to see what it cost for the ill thought out approach by the NDP administration and to emphasis that when the Nano Bank last week Wednesday took us in Court to stop us appointing a manager, we did not spend one single cent on a lawyer. The Senior Crown Council Mr. Jaundy Martin in the Ministry of Legal Affairs, we let him go down and tangle with whoever Nano them bring because we know we have a strong case. We do our work properly so the tax payers would not have to pay any money. You see, there are a lot of things which are happening, sometimes I wait and let people talk and allow them to talk and make a fool of themselves. I want to say further, I want to make some preliminary points on this issue,

I want to say further, Mr. Speaker, that Senator Leacock does not appear as though he reads the newspapers. His leader had exactly what is put in this question, his leader has spoken repeatedly, had spoken about it with gravity, he knew what he was talking about, but he is smarter than you he would not ask me that question, he would run his mouth on Lynch programme on that, but he would not ask me that, so he leave it for you to ask. In the "Vincentian" of the 8th "Nano's Bank Under Further Investigation?" And the whole article, is

that that the “Vincentian Newspaper asks Ms. Louise Mitchell, (it just happens that she is the daughter of Sir James), who works at the Offshore Finance Authority as the Deputy Offshore Finance Inspector and she answered here the question which you are asking you know. And you would have read this, Ms. Mitchell, who is a very competent professional, very good woman, and that is why she got the job and no politics in it. She answered you here, you can read it but you have decided you are going to come for some spanking here today.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to say this, and I want to make this point abundantly clear yet again, because they seem not to understand when they ask questions about these matters and when they make their comments in public, the issue of dealing with the Nano Banks, the two banks, is in the hands at the Offshore Finance Authority, of the Board of the Offshore Finance Authority and Louise Mitchell, the Offshore Inspector Deputy, shortly after she came unto the staff, the Offshore Inspector acting, Colin Williams has had nothing to do with these banks. And I want to say further, under the Act when the Offshore Finance Authority discusses this matter with Ms. Mitchell as the leading professional and the issue comes to me for a determination under the law, under the International Bank’s Act either by way of giving approval to something or by way of giving advice on something. Because there are legal obligations in both respects this matter does not go to the Cabinet. There is no member on this side of the Government, none, except me who deals with issues concerning international banks. And it is so because the obligation is placed on me. The obligation is placed on me. [Interjection] You see, this is the point, you say I do not trust them. The obligation is placed on me. The Act says that I as Minister of Finance have to give approval to certain things or I as Minister of Finance have to give the Offshore Finance Authority advise on certain things, not Cabinet, and I request, and you can go there and ask them, you can ask Ms. Mitchell, when they send anything to me, they cannot send a summary and ask for my approval or advise, they have to give me every single thing. A transcript of all the proceedings. I send for all the files and after 6 o’clock after everybody leaves the office I sit down with me and God, and I read the law and I read the files and I come to a determination and where I have further questions to ask I put the questions on the file and first thing the next morning I call them to come up to my office to go through these questions before I finally give my approval or tender my advice as the case may be. Nobody, and do you know why I do that, why nobody else could interfere because those functions which I am performing in giving approval in relations to people’s property. Because bank is about property or tending advice in relation to banks and I want the international community to hear this Minister of Finance’s functions. I consider my role there under the law as a quasi-judicial function. So when I make my decision, it is a decision which I know under the law is subject to judicial review in the courts that I could be called to answer. And when I am called to answer, I do not want to be in the box and say I did talk to Louis Straker about it and I did talk to the Cabinet about it, no, that is not the way I function. [Interjection] I know. And I am answering the question and I am answering the question.

Mr. Speaker, I must say, again that I am very grateful that Senator Leacock has asked the question. Very grateful, you know when I am through here he would agree with me that the immediate revocation of the banks’ licenses and the appointment of a receiver that those were

not sensible options. That the only way to have proceeded was to have restored the licenses and to appoint immediately a manager to run the affairs. I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that the licenses were revoked capriciously, and we had to enter a consent judgment. First, in relation to information and then amended in relation to the issue of natural justice. The Offshore Finance Authority when they took away the licenses for the Nano Banks under the NDP administration, they did not give the people an opportunity to be heard, which is their natural right and because of that fact the revocation of the licenses would have been adjudged by the Court to be unlawfully done, that is something which we have received legal advise on, that is a matter which is clear in the same way that the appointment of the receiver in the circumstance was wrong.

I notice that in the question, Mr. Speaker, that Senator Leacock spoke about local and international media, well this Government does not dance to the sensational whims of the local or international media. Perhaps he should or he does. We, however, do take into consideration how our actions or our none actions are perceived by the international community, note, community, not media. As you are well aware Mr. Speaker, the NDP Government in the not too distant past, attempted to deal with the Nano issue by revoking their licenses of both banks and sent a letter appointing a receiver. Mr. Speaker, the result of that course of action is that the Nano issue did not go away. I want to repeat, they revoked the licenses, they appointed a receiver, the Nano issue did not go away because the revocation was unlawful because it did not comply with natural justice and give them an opportunity to be heard, and secondly, the Court restrained you from appointing a receiver, and we end up with a bill of \$335,000.00 for the folly which you did. Rather than the issue going away it was exacerbated. The faulty way in which the licenses were revoked and the receiver appointed led to protracted litigation in the Court and as I have said to thousands of dollars in legal fees which are still outstanding and nothing was accomplished. And I repeat, that the Court restrained you after you purportedly appointed a receiver, they say you cannot do it, until after the trial or the action or further order.

Mr. Speaker, in appointing a manager to assume control of the two banks the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines has taken the right course of action, in fact evidence of this Mr. Speaker, is that last week Wednesday 13th of this month in the High Court those two banks challenged the appointment of the manager, the Honourable Mr. Justice Bruce Lyle ruled in favour of the Offshore Finance Authority, our authority and the appointment of the manager now has the seal of the Court.

Mr. Speaker, I will go into details of the reasons, in fact Mr. Speaker, let me say something before I go into the reasons. Something came to my attention – the NDP administration went and they revoked the licenses, they appointed a receiver the Nano thing did not go away. They ended us up with \$335,000.00 in cost. That is on there side alone. We have to come and clean up the mess otherwise. But we have now proceeded and we have the imprimatur of the Court and in the meantime we got the FBI to come down here, we executed a search warrant under our law, got them to come down, they took away a lot of material. The Nanos have put us in Court, they say we are in contempt of Court. Well, that matter seems to be going the way of the

birds, saying that the Court had made an Order that we should not have taken away any material from there. Of course, nobody knew of that order because the material had gone by the time they had gotten the Order so nobody is in contempt of Court. Or at least so I have been advised. But you acted a particular way and the problem did not go away. We have acted certain ways and I want to read to the Members of Parliament a copy of a letter which I received today by fax; a faxed letter, you could not get the issue to go away, you could not get the Nano issue to go away but we have taken certain prudent actions and I will go through how we took the action. This letter written the 19th of February by Jonathan Staebler out of Miami, Florida, International Business Lawyer, and this letter is to the Board of Directors, the Offshore Finance Authority of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Kingstown, it is a fax, and it has here via hand delivery, because the local lawyers would have gotten the fax and delivered it by hand. To the Board of Directors of the Offshore Finance Authority of St. Vincent and the Grenadines; and a copy is sent to me in my capacity as Minister of Finance.

“ Subject New Bank Limited and Nano & Sons 1146 Private Bankers Limited. Dear Ladies and Gentlemen: I represented owners (the “Shareholders”) of all of the issued and outstanding shares of each of the two captioned banks (the “Banks”), each a Vincentian international business company. Each bank holds a valid and current Class 1 banking license (the “Licenses”).

Notice we are the ones who acted a particular way. Here this.

“The Shareholders have instructed me that in light of present circumstances and past events they have decided to withdraw from the banking business in St. Vincent. Therefore, on their behalf I hereby request that the Offshore Finance Authority accepts the surrender of the Licenses.

The way we have acted they now want to surrender the licenses. That is what they write the Offshore Authority and tell them today. I will go on. You see you all have to have nerve when you are in leadership position. You have to have nerve and you have to do things right. And you cannot act carelessly. You have to act prudently with firmness and direction. In exchange for the surrender of the licenses, this is what they propose and the Offshore Finance Authority would have to consider this.

“In the exchange for the surrendering of the licenses, the shareholders propose that the Offshore Authority do the following, (1) Refund to the Shareholders each of the two statutory deposits that it holds, one from New Bank Limited and the other from Nano & Sons; in each case together with the interest accrued thereon through the date of the Offshore Shore Authority receipt of the licences; (2) rescind the purported appointment of the manager with respect of each bank, on

the understanding that the Shareholders would forthwith place each bank in voluntary liquidation; (3) agree to take no further action against either bank provided that liquidation does proceed normally; and (4) cause an announcement to be published in the Government Gazette stating that the Shareholders have surrendered the licences and intend voluntarily to liquidate the banks. If the Offshore Authority accepts the proposals made by this letter please notify me immediately by fax.”

And they put the fax number.

“There are important mechanical details involved in the transaction proposed here, which would need to be worked out carefully. But this can be done after the Offshore Finance Authority accepts the proposal. I look forward to your prompt response.” Well I do not respond to things like these, this is to the Offshore Finance Authority, they will deal with this and under the law they would write me and seek my approval or my advice as the case may be, it is not – I just got this I cannot tell you how I am going to react until I have received a complete study of the matter. But you notice now they are reaching the stage now that they want to surrender their licences.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I will now go into the details of the reasons why in fact the Authority determined that a manager be appointed, and not at this stage a receiver. I will not consider the question of revocation, as the international community will tell you, revocation is a measure of last resort and in this case would have been premature and ill-advised as I would shortly show. What are the preconditions for taking action, the kind of action we took Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in order for the Authority to take certain actions against a bank the authority must be certain that certain specific conditions are met, these conditions point to certain wrong doings of the bank. The Authority after giving the bank opportunities to be heard, that is the authority appointed by this Government, we gave them opportunities to be heard, and we came to the conclusion that the banks had satisfied two conditions of the International Banks Act which will propel us to act. The two conditions that were met were Section 18.1 (e) and section 18.1 (f) of the International Banks Act. Section 18.1 (e) states that if the Authority is satisfied that the bank is acting against the public interest and Section 18.1 (f) states that the bank is in breach of a provision of this Act. And after we listen to them we gave them an opportunity to be heard. You do the things properly. The Offshore Authority was satisfied and on the evidence which came before me, I was satisfied that the bank was acting against the public interest under Section 18.1 (e) and that under Section 18.1 (f) the bank was in breach of a provision of the Banks Act. Based on the fact that New Bank and Nano & Sons were being investigated by the FBI in connection with money laundering charges against Thierry Nano, the Authorities were concerned that the Banks may not be operating in the public’s interest, Thierry Nano is still a director of Nano & Sons but he resigned as a director of

New Bank Limited in 1991. The Authority however has strong evidence to show that Thierry Nano continues to be intimately connected with New Bank Limited even though he has resigned as director of the bank. However, despite the connections of Mr. Thierry Nano on both banks the charges against Mr. Nano are still only charges at this stage. As you know a man is innocent until he is proven guilty. Also, these charges were against Thierry Nano and could not necessarily be directly imputed to the banks, they were enough however to raise a red flag to the Authority. The Authority was concerned that the banks may be operating against the public interest. The Authority felt that these concerns would merit certain precautionary measures but not draconian measures.

The second cause of concern was the fact that the banks had failed to provide up-to-date information on their shareholders and other information in breach of the Banking Act. The reason for the failure in providing information was that the information they said was not available because it had been taken by the FBI, but the Authority was not satisfied about that explanation as the names of the Shareholders can be in a variety of places and of course, this letter from Jonathan Staebler supports our position that you cannot say that you do not know the names of the directors to give us and other particular information, the names of the shareholders because the FBI has the documents, because Staebler is now writing us on behalf of the shareholders that means they know who they are.

Now, the Authority was not satisfied about the explanation that the banks gave as the names of the shareholders can be in a variety of places, plus the banks were in breach of their failure to provide that specific piece of information. The Authority therefore was entitled, based on the above reasons, to take certain measures against the bank in deliberating what actions should be taken against the bank, the authority was certain that whether a manager or a receiver was appointed, there would be a likely challenge in the Courts of either step as you noticed there was already a challenge to the receiver successfully. The Authority considers that it had stronger justification for an appointment of a manager and a receiver at the time when the decision was taken. Another reason why the Authority appointed a manager and not a receiver is in part because a receiver is usually appointed where there is some evidence that the company is insolvent. Appointment of receiver or liquidators are often challenged in Court and if there is insufficient evidence to establish that the bank is insolvent the challenge would succeed. In this case there was no such evidence of insolvency on the face of financial returns submitted to the Offshore Finance Authority by the Banks when this question was being considered. The prudent procedure at that point in time was to begin with the appointment of the manager. After an initial period of examination of the books and the financial integrity of the bank, the manager, Mr. Harold Russell whom we have appointed would produce a report on his findings. The Authority decided that the next step after the production of the report is to apply to the Court for direction on whether receiver powers should be added to the manager or a receiver to be appointed because the instrument which was published in the Gazette, pointed out that in addition to the manager we will seek further direction from the Court.

Mr. Speaker, I will not go at this stage into the details of the findings of Mr. Russell because I have been advised that very soon, perhaps within a week or two time such facts will be brought before a judge in the manner identified above. I have been advised by the Authority that it is highly likely that given the findings of the manager thus far the report of the manager will in all probability support more draconian measures being taken against the banks but that will be for the authority to determine in due course and for it to seek my approval or advice as the case may be, and then we will seek the Courts directions accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, it is worthy to note that the International Monetary Fund's coordinator Manuel Vasquez during the first IMF assisted self-assessment of St. Vincent and the Grenadines urged caution in dealing with what he called problem banks. He had recommended that a manager should be appointed first to examine the affairs of those banks. So the IMF itself advised us on the particular course which we have adopted in relation to the manager.

Mr. Speaker, I must take this opportunity to bring to the attention of this Honourable House that in determining what powers should be ascribed to the manager, the Authority encountered a shabby legislative framework bequeathed to us by the NDP administration. I want to repeat that. In going for the Authority for the manager, the Offshore Finance Authority had problems because of the shabby legislative framework which we have inherited. You see you give all the mess to clean up and I am doing it sensibly and you do it wrong and then you want to advise me on how to do it. I never see fellows like this. I mean Honourable Members like this.

The International Bank Act says, quote "the Authority may appoint a person to assume control of the bank's affairs who shall mutatis mutandis have the powers of the person appointed as a receiver or manager under the Company's Act." Mr. Speaker, if one turns to the Companies Act to determine what the powers of the manager can be the Companies Act is silent. I repeat, if you turn to the Companies Act the Companies Act is silent, the Authority therefore had to look at the plain and ordinary meaning of manager and use their common sense to determine what powers could fall within the framework of his appointment. And that is what we have done.

Mr. Speaker, I am convinced that the two step procedure decided by the Authority to appoint a manager who would produce a report and then seek directions of the Court is the best possible way of handling the situation. The fact that the appointment of the manager now has the sanction of the Court supports this conviction and vindicates the position of the Unity Labour Party administration on this matter. You see people could talk wild on radio, you know, talk is cheap. Fellows you cannot even read a section in the law, all of a sudden, bush lawyer are supposed to be QCs. And those of us who spend years studying this thing, deliberating properly on it. You see, I came to this issue with no malice against anybody you know. Because nobody has accused me of anything, so I do not have any accusation swirling around in my head, so I could come with a free and unfettered mind in addressing this issue as a responsible Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say, that not only the work, which we have been doing on this matter, has brought us tremendous commendations from international agencies all over the world. I have in my hand here the latest report from the FATF Financial Action Task Force about the 24 points. You see the Financial Action Task Force they assess you on the basis of 24 issues and we have made progress Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members on 21 of the 24 issues. I want to repeat. This administration has made progress on 21 of the 24 issues, the only 3, are recommendations 16, 20 and 22 which relate to certain matters in the old Confidentiality Act which was passed by the NDP administration and we are shortly going to address those also.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say this, there are 25 Mr. Speaker, not 24, 25. I want to say this No. 24 one of the Financial Action Task Force's criteria in assessing an Offshore Sector inadequate or corrupt professional staff, in either governmental, judicial, or supervisory authorities or among those responsible for money laundering compliance in the financial services industry. I want to read this. During the time when the NDP administration was there this was one of the factors you know, why St. Vincent and the Grenadines was blacklisted. Remember I now trying to take us off of all kind of blacklist you know. And I am doing it carefully, here now is one of the reasons why we were blacklisted. Inadequate or corrupt staff in either governmental, judicial or supervisory authorities or among those who were responsible for anti-money laundering compliance in the financial service industry; and the report on the previous assessment said that that criterion was met, that is to say, there was inadequate or corrupt professional staff in either governmental, judicial or supervisory authorities or among those who are responsible for anti-money laundering compliance in the financial service industry. Under the current assessment, under the heading progress made this criterion is not met. In other words, the Financial Action Task Force no longer considers that St. Vincent has inadequate or corrupt professional staff in either governmental, judicial or supervisory authorities or among those responsible for anti-money laundering compliance in the financial service industry. They are here.

Mr. Speaker, further to that I know that, the Leader of the Opposition said at a private strategy meeting of their candidates and caretakers that the Government is about to fall, that they must prepare for elections. He also told, -- yes that one took place at NDP Democrat House, and there was also a meeting where there were 80 persons, and you thought all of them belong to you up at Sharpes where you repeated the same things. I had the numbers counted and I had the names of the persons, because why do you think I am in power and you are in opposition, you ain't start learn politics yet.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, they are saying that the Government is about to fall, prepare yourself for fresh elections. Well, when I call elections in year 5, I wonder what he is going to tell his people, eh? He is like those fellows who, when they eat -- when they do all kinds of bad things and they eat too much food and they go to sleep at nights and they say they have a vision that the world is coming to an end the next day and they go about and ring bell, that is the same attitude. Elections coming fooling a lot of his supporters you know. And one of the things he said is that OECD is going to publish a list with St. Vincent blacklisted and St. Vincent cannot get off the OECD blacklist. Although it is them who put us on, you know, it is

during their watch. It is their watch we were on the blacklist you know. We are trying to fight to get it off and Mr. Speaker, I have here a document, twice within the last three weeks the OECD officials came here and I am working out the terms of a letter of commitment with them, so that by the 28th, before the 28th of February, to see if I could sign the letter of commitment with the OECD, because on this offshore matter, I am not talking FATF which is dealing with money laundering matters and I am going that in one way, and I am dealing with the OECD another way. That the OECD no longer has ring fencing and the issue of no tax, low tax on their agenda; they are dealing with issues of transparency and sharing of information, and we are working out the terms of a commitment letter. And once I get a call from the Chairman of the OECS authority on the 22nd I will sign on behalf of St. Vincent and the Grenadines the commitment letter, or cause the letter to be signed before the assessment for the OECD before the 28th of February. This country was threatened with a blacklist by ICAT, the threat is still there but muted because of legislative work and other practical work we have done. There was a threat for the IMO blacklist, International Maritime Organisation, I got this country off the blacklist, this Government, got this country off the blacklist, we are moving with the OECD, we are moving with OECD list and the FATF list and all the reasons why we are moving like this is because of the confidence, this administration has engendered in the regulatory authorities and governments overseas. But, Mr. Speaker, they do not want to believe that on the Opposition. They continue to fool themselves. They continue to believe – they said that the Government is racked with divisions, well I never so comfortable in all my life in politics, things going so sweet and I want to end by saying I wish the Leader of the Opposition and Senator Leacock and the others a long, long time in Opposition. Thank you, very much.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, Thank you, very much. Honourable Members, the Prime Minister is very familiar with a popular saying do web do weave and he will finish it. Mr. Speaker,

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental?

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: I am getting to my supplemental, Mr. Speaker, I simply could not help drawing reference to previous statements by the Prime Minister on the same question, as we all know there are many things that are legal but are wrong in your sight in this House and in the sight of the people. Anytime a man reaches the end of intellectual and moral tether to find a reference only in legalism, it is time for him to go. Mr. Speaker, may I continue with my supplemental

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker? Yes, I was just going to say that I am glad that Senator Leacock quotes me, and but I just going to say that he may have an opportunity other wise.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Just a minute. We have two members standing on the floor.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: Well, I did not give way, Mr. Speaker.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: No, once I raise a point of Order, you do not have to give way, you have to sit. But I will sit down and you and you will speak. You do not know the rules. I will teach you.

HONOURABLE MAJOR ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: I confess not knowing the rules, Mr. Speaker, so I will stand and stay on my feet.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Could you give us the supplementary question?

SUPPLEMENTARY

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: Thanks Mr. Speaker. In view, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Prime Minister, in view of your rather explicit admission that the banks and the Nanos have been in breach of the Laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the regulatory and operational authority of the Offshore sector, in more respects than one, to the extent that you have had to ask the FBI for intervention, can we anticipate that the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines like the US Government will take its own legal steps against Mr. Thierry Nano for the substantial breaches of the regulations under which he should have operated in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I understand that in his desire to ask a supplemental he has asked something which has really, again, exposes his lack of appreciation of the issues as I have just spelt them out. It is really saddening. No wonder there is so much confusion on this matter if leaders cannot understand. He begins by speaking about breaches by the banks and ends up taking actions as the United States Government has done against Mr. Nano. You can take action against the bank for matters done by the bank and you can take actions against Mr. Nano for any wrong he himself would have committed. They are two separate and distinct legal entities and personalities.

I mean the point is so elementary, that what the United States Government has done Mr. Speaker, is that they have a warrant for Mr. Nano, they have brought criminal charges against him, in Florida. Mr. Nano to the best of our information is now in France. The United States Government can seek the extradition of Mr. Nano from France and they have not done so at this point because I have been advised that they do not want to have the possibility of a trial in France and have to go there to France to present the evidence, whatever evidence they may have, so that there is an option open to the United States Government. What we have done Mr. Speaker, is that we have written to the FBI, and we have said to them that we have appointed a manager, and we want Mr. Russell to examine those documents which the FBI took away under the search warrant which we ourselves executed under our law and which documents they are holding for St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and of course any actions which they themselves can take out of those documents and we have informed them about Mr. Russell and that we want Mr. Russell to go there to examine those documents. In the same way, Mr. Speaker, that

we are in the process of examining matters concerning Ottley Hall, and I will be bringing shortly to this House an amendment to the Commission of Inquiries Act to strengthen the Commission of Inquiry, the legal provisions, so that when I am ready to move on Ottley Hall, but I do things at my pace. ULP pace is a different pace to NDP own. That is why you all, have been mired so long in corruption.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOTION

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I would now ask, -- there are two things; first of all I want to move that the Hours of Sitting under 12 (5), that today's sitting of the House be exempted from the provisions of the Standing Order Hours of sitting.

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

Question put and agreed to.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, it is now five minutes to 2 o'clock, we normally have two hour lunches. I want to suggest that we have an hour and half. I am doing so because the Leader of the Opposition has a motion down and if we take the usual two hours we will have just one hour for his presentation of the motion and no time for any reply of any kind. He will present his motions certainly if he wishes when he comes back which he has an hour and then there will be additional debate and we go up to 5 o'clock with private members business. But I want to say, Mr. Speaker, if the debate is not concluded by 5 o'clock, because I cannot predict what will happen this afternoon, I am prepared for consideration to be given for the continuation of the debate on another day which we could set aside parliamentary time. I know that we have a lot of work doing in Parliament and we will hear what the motion is. I know that the usual thing Mr. Speaker, when we in the Opposition then brought a motion, the Government side will simply listen to us and after they listen to us they would not debate they will either just let the time run out and do not do anything and the motion will fall. I do not want that to happen simply so. But we will also have Mr. Speaker, some contribution from this side and hopefully we can have some parliamentary time to put aside for the debate. We have two other motions on the Order Paper. One which has started already, the local government. We have also the one on official corruption, that is to say the convention against official corruption which we signed on behalf of this Government to strengthen measures against corruption.

Accordingly Mr. Speaker, I would like to move the adjournment of this House until 3:30 p.m.

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

Question put and agreed.

House suspended at 2:05 p.m. (Lunch)

House resumed at 3:30 p.m.

PRIVATE MEMBERS MOTION

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: I beg to move the motion standing in my name which calls for the resignation of the Honourable Minister of Tourism and Culture.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: I beg to second the motion Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I stand before this House today as Leader of the Opposition to call for the resignation of one in our midst, the Honourable Minister of Tourism and Culture.

Mr. Speaker I will not regard the task with any particular glee, I make this call Mr. Speaker after much discussion and reflection. And I am convinced Mr. Speaker, that the Honourable Minister's previous association and indeed her continued association with the fugitive Thierry Nano is not in the best interest of this young nation of ours.

Mr. Speaker, we have before us a very sour detail. That a family that came to this country over 25 years ago and as time progressed made investments in this country and also as time progressed Mr. Speaker, we began to get more and more information about that family. I refer Mr. Speaker, to the Nano family. And Mr. Speaker, as we examine the situation closely it is inappropriate for Members of the Government to have any continuing relationship with Thierry Nano and the Nano family.

Mr. Speaker, I am aware that the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has made efforts and continues to make efforts Mr. Speaker, to get off the FATF black list. And Mr. Speaker, I am of the view that to the extent that any Member of the Government has a continued relationship with the Nanos, it adversely affects the efforts of the Government in getting off the black list. We have set in this House Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House and we have recently supported all of the legislation that has been brought here in an effort to clean up the offshore sector. But before Mr. Speaker, I traced the continued link between the Honourable Minister and the Nanos. Let me recount for the benefit of all concerned a few things about the Nanos that we now know.

First of all Mr. Speaker, that family has been involved in several scandals of a high profile. And I want Mr. Speaker to refer at this time only to four of those scandals.

First of all, there was what is now refer to as the Egyptian tank purchase scandal of 1958, a long time ago in which former Egyptian President Nasser arranged with Armando Nano to purchase

a fleet of tanks. The President deposited \$150 billion lira into a bank called Bank of America City owned by Armando Nano and located in Tangiers, Morocco. After the tanks were not delivered and the President inquired about the deposit, only to be told that the bank no longer existed.

And Mr. Speaker, there is the Cancer Drug Scandal of the 1960's in which the Nano's Italian investment company borsa investment was involved and enticed investors to put their money for the development of a revolutionary Cancer Drug in which those investors will earn a return about 10%. The drug Mr. Speaker was never manufactured.

And Mr. Speaker there is the fraud of Rimini in which the Nanos were also involved and in which investors bought millions of dollars of shares through a company call (IMISSA) on the assurance Mr. Speaker that these shares could be resold at massive profits 6 – 10 times the amount. These funds Mr. Speaker were channelled to New Bank Ltd. to be invested in a black marble mine in Peru. Again the investors lost their money because the mine in Peru did not exist.

And Mr. Speaker, there is a sequel to this particular development which hit right home here in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in that a Director of the then Coopers and Lybrand Accounting Firm provided information and certification in relation to the prospectors for that particular fraud. And he was removed as Director and Coopers and Lybrand Mr. Speaker closed its doors in this country. This is one of the major factors leading to the closer of Coopers and Lybrand here in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

And Mr. Speaker, there is what you called the Bracco fraud scandal in which Owens Bank and we would have seen that name on the Blue Caribbean Building here, owned by the Nanos claimed that they have been defrauded of \$10 million Swiss Francs by an Italian Businessman Fluvio Bracco. But Bracco claimed that he was the victim of an elaborate swindle in which Owens Bank faked loan agreements by snipping his signature from one document and putting it onto another. In 1992 Mr. Speaker, the first Criminal Division of the Milan Court in Italy delivered a judgment convicting Nano and his co-defendant of fraud charges. We will recall Mr. Speaker, the celebrated case here in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines under Justice Singh of the High Court and the High Court here ruled in favour of the Nanos in the Bracco matter. The Nanos sought to register the Judgment of the Saint Vincent High Court in the Court in London, sought to register the judgment in London in order to collect their money from Bracco. Bracco however, objected to the registration claiming that the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Judgment was obtained by fraud and ought not to be registered in England. The Court of Appeal ordered that the issue of fraud must be tried before the Judgment could be registered. Mr. Speaker, the Nanos did not pursue that matter any further.

Mr. Speaker, we in this country had been trying to develop an offshore finance sector because we believe that the diversification of our economy, continued diversification is an important instrument of development. And the offshore business is one that we think has the necessary

potential. But I think it is important Mr. Speaker that we understand that this is not an easy sector and we have to be careful how we deal with it. And Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few things about New Bank. Because I want the public Mr. Speaker and Members of this House whom I believe already are familiar with a lot of this to understand a few things. Now if I look at the Certificate of Registration of New Bank dated March 22nd 1991 to which the Honourable Prime Minister referred this morning. You will see that New Bank was registered domicile in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, its Chambers are in the Blue Caribbean Building at South River Road. The authorize share capital is \$3 million and there are 3 million shares of \$1.00 each. And the purpose for which the bank was set up Mr. Speaker international banking as appears in the document next to the memorandum and signed by Rene N. Baptiste for the purpose of identification. What I find very interesting Mr. Speaker is that everybody knows that this company New Bank is owned by the Nanos. But how many of people know that Nano name is not listed here among the Directors. And in fact Mr. Speaker, how many people know whose names are listed here as the Directors of the bank at that time. Let me call them out because I want the public to understand Mr. Speaker what I am talking about. The first name on the list of Directors and Officers of the bank is Tyrone Crease, a Vincentian from Prospect. You know Tyrone Crease is the Chairman of New Bank. He is down here as the Chairman of New Bank, Chairman and Officer. Again at that time Roxanne Morris of Arnos Vale, she was the Managing Director and then Mr. Speaker you have Sylma Jacobs another Vincentian of Arnos Vale and she was Director and Manager. And all these people have authority to sign. But no Nano is listed here Mr. Speaker. And the other person here Mr. Speaker is Rene Baptiste, Vincentian, Kingstown whom we all know, she is the Legal Representative and Officer of the bank in accordance, according to this registration document.

But Mr. Speaker, what I want the public to understand is in a world where we dealing very seriously with questions of money laundering and crime and so forth. As the International Community closes in on these issues in the same way that a warrant was issued for Mr. Nano's arrest, we find local people who really don't have any power placed in positions in these institutions and therefore open to legal action against them. I don't believe that Tyrone Crease is really involved in chairing New Bank. The decisions by New Bank are not made under the chairmanship of Tyrone Crease, but his name is here and the Minister who is the legal adviser is also here and one would have thought that she would advise Mr. Nano to make sure that he is there too. Why leave only the locals. If you look at Mr. Speaker, at Nano and Sons the other institution, you see a different picture. And I want you to see the difference. Armando Nano is listed here as a Director, that is the father of Thierry Nano. Thierry Nano himself is listed as a Director. Obaldo Nano from Venezuela is also listed as a Director and Mr. Speaker again the common thread to all this Rene Baptiste is the other Director, legal representative, sorry.

So Mr. Speaker, the bank which is most in difficulty, which has a reputation for scandal and corruption much more so than Nano security bank, is New Bank. And there Mr. Speaker, we have our people being put in the front line to deal with matters, which they really are not in a position to deal with, they are not taking the decisions. And the public must understand this.

They must understand that the Honourable Minister played an advisory role in this whole exercise as the legal representative.

Mr. Speaker, you know people need jobs and they may be working with an institution and because of your dependence for a living on that institution, you are sometimes asked to do things as in this case, which you are really not well advised on and of the possible dangers that could come to you Mr. Speaker from such involvement.

Mr. Speaker, I remember not to long ago that Parnell Campbell former Attorney General was forced to resign Mr. Speaker because he was supposed to have borrowed money from New Bank. He admitted that he had borrowed money but up to now the sum has not yet been determined. I remember Mr. Speaker in this Honourable House that Carlyle Dougan had to resign because he carried somebody to the N.C.B who absconded with funds from the N.C.B. I remember Doctor Thomas Mr. Speaker also had to resign because he sublet a part of a building that he had rented to a Government institution.

So Mr. Speaker when I explained the involvement of the Honourable Minister in Nano activities coming up you will see what is significant, when I explain that you will what significant. You will see why she should resign also from this Honorable House.

Mr. Speaker, I want to at this point in time indicate that as Minister of Finance in the NDP administration I was involved in the revocation of the licenses of the Nano Bank. The decision Mr. Speaker, which I do not regret it has served more than anything else to bring to the fore in this country the corruption associated with that family. And a lot of what was emulated since Mr. Speaker is as a result of the revocation of those licenses.

Mr. Speaker, I remember very clearly you know, the Prime Minister made reference this morning to the fact that well I am new in politics in his usual dismissive style. But that's okay, I have no problem with that I am new in politics. It isn't even four years yet, but I have learned a few things in that time Mr. Speaker. And one of the things Mr. Speaker that I remember very clearly is that in 1998 when I became Minister of Finance sometime towards to middle of the year, I was asked to go and pay a visit to New Bank. And Mr. Speaker, I declined the invitation. I don't want to visit New Bank. If I visit New Bank, I have to visit all offshore banks in the country and I don't have any intention of visiting all offshore banks. I did not even at that time.., I have not seen Mr. Nano, I did not know him. So I went to a dinner held by the N.C.B and this gentleman came up to me and said, "I am Thierry Nano, why are you refusing my invitation to visit the Bank?" I said, "I have no desire to visit any of the offshore banks." And again I refused that is in December 1998. It wasn't long after Mr. Speaker, in April 1999 a mere four months later that I was to get the first concrete indication to me as a Minister of Government with something coming to my office which indicated that the Nanos were again involved in some kind of fraud.

And Mr. Speaker, this brings me to Zug Insurance, which I have mentioned Mr. Speaker in this Motion that is before this Honourable House. Mr. Speaker, the Government of Austria wrote a letter to the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines seeking assistance in tracing the relationship, commercial and otherwise, between New Bank Ltd. and Zug Insurance. Now Zug Insurance is an international business company, which is registered in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and it had advertised in Europe Mr. Speaker, in newspapers in journals in Europe. It advertised easy credit or credit on easy terms. In other words, they prepare to give loans but they had one condition. You must deposit 10% of the sum that you wish to borrow with them as a security deposit. A number of persons in Europe, in Austria did that Mr. Speaker. They deposited their 10% and Mr. Speaker those monies were paid into an Account of New Bank Ltd. in Austria and then New Bank decided to move the money out of Austria and the Austrian Government froze the Account. The Austrian Government froze the Account, which at that time contained just over \$7 hundred thousand US dollars. So they closed it and then they wrote us for the information trying to make the link between Zug Insurance and New Bank who were the commercial representative. Are the people the same?

Mr. Speaker, we enquired from New Bank, we couldn't get anywhere. I want to say that suddenly a number of persons who turned out to be staff members of the Honourable Ministers business resigned as Directors of Zug Insurance after the Austrian Government got involved. And I want to say Mr. Speaker that a local company called Ramerson Trust Corporation, was a local representative of Zug Insurance. And Mr. Speaker, the principal, the person in-charge, and the person who owns Ramerson Trust is the Honourable Minister of Tourism and Culture. So she is agent, legal representative for New Bank and her Ramerson Trust is also agent for Zug Insurance. Both of which are involved in that crime for which people was sent to jail including one Mr. Bupsa was sent to jail in Austria. That is the kind of involvement Mr. Speaker that she has had. And I am saying Mr. Speaker that as a representative, as an agent, as a lawyer being the local representative of the aforesaid Nano Bank's and Zug Insurance ought to have been aware of the conduct of those institutions. And if she was aware, could be deemed to be directly involved in Mr. Speaker, to have encouraged and condone Mr. Speaker the aforesaid money laundering and fraudulent activities.

Mr. Speaker, our country, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines all of us in this island profess to love our country and to operate only in the best interest of our country. But sometimes Mr. Speaker, we fall short. But the Honourable Minister Mr. Speaker is very proud of her association and I will tell you why I say so.

Mr. Speaker, I have here a writ of summons No.449 of the year 2000 in the High Court of Justice, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Where the Plaintiff Rene Baptiste of Kingstown Park is taking action against Glenford Steward, former Minister of Communications under the NDP Government who had made a statement in a Press Conference, which she was confessing as being applicable to her. And Mr. Speaker, in her statement of claim, this is what she has to say,

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Point of order. Mr. Speaker, I do not know precisely what my friend, the Leader of the Opposition is going to be doing with this, but I want to state the point of order that a matter, which is sub-judice, is improper to comment on it in this Honourable House [applause]. That is the point of order I wish to make. So I want early O'clock to put that on record for the ruling of the Speaker. I have seen the particulars of the Motion and there is nothing there which you know the Honourable Member can speak about but if he is going to comment on a matter which is in court, that is a matter which I must draw to the attention of the Honourable Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Well indeed the rules do state that you cannot comment on matters that are sub-judice or before the court. I am trying to find the particular rule where at this time..., a while ago but I am sure that the Honourable Leader would want to be guided by that rule. I am sure he is familiar with it.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, content of speeches 36(1). Reference shall not be made to any matter, which is sub-judice in such a way as it might in the opinion of the Speaker prejudice the interest of the parties.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Sure, well you see the thing about this is that I am not so sure what you would say, so I feel that you must adhere to this particular rule. Try not to make any comment.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, what I have to say does not prejudice the interest. All I wish to deal with Mr. Speaker is that aspect in which she identifies herself as the legal representative. That aspect of it is what I am dealing with. I just want to show Mr. Speaker, clearly the relationship that existed and continues Mr. Speaker to exist. And Mr. Speaker this is very important, because it says the plaintiff is and was at all material times, the only in-house solicitor of an offshore bank incorporated and licensed and doing business in the State known as New Bank. That is in her statement of claim. She is making it quite clear that no one else Mr. Speaker is in that position. So I just want to make that point Mr. Speaker so that there can be no doubt at all in the minds of anyone in the Honourable House as to the relationship.

Mr. Speaker, so Zug Insurance, Ramerson Trust, New Bank all of them Mr. Speaker, involve in what is essentially a corrupt activity. Essentially a very corrupt activity Mr. Speaker and I have heard the New Democratic Administration being condemned day after day in this Honourable House as corrupt. And Mr. Speaker, we are now getting the evidence to the corruption Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, today we have a situation in this country where other businesses in which the Nanos are involved, the Minister has be involved awesomely. The Owen Investments Mr. Speaker, the Caribbean Imaging Centre, we have Acres Sonny Land Development Ltd. involving some lands transactions down in the valley. All these Mr. Speaker are tied in with the

activities of New Bank Ltd., The Nanos in this country and all are tied in a common thread. In all of them Mr. Speaker, is the Honourable Minister.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard it said in this House that the Minister is no longer involved with the law, but Mr. Speaker, I will like an explanation. I have a letter head here Mr. Speaker, for the firm of Baptiste, Young and Company. Barristers, Solicitors, Notary Public and I see two names here Mr. Speaker. Rene Baptiste, MP. The fact that the representative Parliament is included in the Letterhead and Andrea Young, who is the Deputy Speaker of this House, not a Minister MP. That Baptiste and Young Mr. Speaker are the Bankers for the Government's New Development Bank. I don't know what that is. They are Bankers for the New Development Bank, the lawyers for the New Development Bank, sorry, so I don't know what that is. There is no practice of law there. So if there is no practice of law then I don't know what they are going to get paid for. But Mr. Speaker, this is unethical. As a matter of fact Speaker, the fact that you put MP there, is party they advertising. In other words, I have influence. I am a Member of Parliament, so I can help you along. And Mr. Speaker, I question, seriously question Mr. Speaker, the ethics of that.

And Mr. Speaker, you know I used to wonder in the early life of this Administration, why the Honourable Prime Minister did not make that Minister the Attorney General. But I think I understand it fully now. He was too smart for that. He recognized certain associations.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: A glad you know I smart. I too smart for you.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: I know that you are very smart and experienced.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Order, order.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: I know that you are very smart and experienced.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Order, order.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: so I have never denied that you are smart and experienced. Never deny that for one minute. After all you claimed to be...,

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Order.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: a major son of the Caribbean civilization, you couldn't be stupid if you are that.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Exactly.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: But the fact remains...,

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I gonna ask the strangers in the gallery please to be quiet. I am hearing you too loudly from up here.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: The fact remains Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that the Prime Minister knew that because of that association if he made her Attorney General he will have problems. So despite of being a very experienced lawyer, over 20 years as she has indicated in this House, he say, boy I better don't try that thing dey. I better I look for some sweet rose outside of the elected members to choose an Attorney General. Well I have no problem with his choice you know. All I am saying that a Government that has a twelve three majority and has a lawyer elected would not see it fit to make that lawyer Minister of Legal Affairs and Attorney General. The Prime Minister himself made sure that he himself took on the Legal Affairs portfolio. He is the Minister of Legal Affairs though. He knew Legal Affairs were coming up you know and some are yet to come. He knows legal matters are to be handled. Very clever Mr. Prime Minister, very, very clever, I applaud you for that [applause].

Mr. Speaker...

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: You wish you did have me as your Prime Minister eh?

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: But you are my Prime Minister. You are Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and I am a citizen of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I wish to say to the Leader of the Opposition you have limited time.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Yes, I know.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You need to be careful.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Well I notice that the Government took care of that early today sir, by stretching out the proceedings for as long as possible to minimize the time that we will have today. But I understand that, that goes with the cutting trust of everything. But Mr. Speaker, it is my contention...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Members be quiet please. Allow him please.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, it is my contention that there are going to be other warrants issued in relation to the Nano issue by the United States. And Mr. Speaker, those warrants will also affect people in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. I am worried Mr. Speaker that people whose names have been put down as Directors and Chairman and so on, I don't know what their position is and I don't know what the position of the Honourable Minister is either where that is concerned, because those who aid and advise are also subject to

the law Mr. Speaker, those who aid and advise Mr. Speaker. And I am sounding a note of warning here Mr. Speaker, that we should not be surprised if other warrants are in fact issued.

Mr. Speaker, you know the more I look at this situation the more I realize that the Minister must not remain in office. She is too integrally involve, too integrally involved Mr. Speaker in this whole process, much too involved and at the advisory level and at most all aspects of the operation Mr. Speaker. This is not good for our country Mr. Speaker. If she in a private practice now then that's okay, but she is too involved.

Mr. Speaker, she did her job Mr. Speaker, with gusto. I remember Mr. Speaker and I brought this matter to the attention of this Honourable House before. I remember Mr. Speaker that when we dealt with the issue of assuming control of New Bank and Nano and Sons, 1146 Private Bankers Ltd. the offshore finance authority had occasion to write to New Bank and indicate that they are pertinent receiver. The Prime Minister made reference to it this morning. I always recalled the letter Mr. Speaker, I refer to it in this House before, I always recalled the letter that the Honourable Minister in her capacity as the legal representative sends to us on the 12th February, 2001. That is about 6 weeks or so before the General Election and I want to read it back Mr. Speaker. This is addressed to Linton Lewis of the offshore finance authority. It refers to his letter of February 9th in which he indicated the appointment of a person a assume control of New Bank and Nano and Sons. And this is what she said, this was received on the 15th February 2001,

“The unlawful attempt to appoint a person to assume control of New Bank Ltd. and Nano and Sons is abusive and illegal.” That is the Honourable Minister writing in her capacity as a lawyer. “You are perfectly aware that the whole matter is pending before the High Court and is due to be heard shortly,”

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: That's before the Election.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Just before the Election.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Yes.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: “We view this appointment as an attempt to enact a politically driven scheme designed to remove from the files of two above-mentioned Banks documentary evidence of corruption and extortion on the part of your offshore finance authority. Former Prime Minister James Mitchell, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Arnhim Eustace and other members of the Ministry and Administration including present and past members of the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.” She goes on,

“This will be strongly resisted and brought to the attention of the international news media and of the various diplomatic representatives of the clients of both Banks.

This is yet another avenue through which you hope to manipulate the system seeking protection for the law and funds loan to you and past Members of the Government, which remain unpaid as of today's day.

Finally, we strongly advice you that we have other information which leads us to suspect that certain illegal acts of violence against the premises of the two afore-mentioned Banks such as larceny, burglary, arson or the like are planned by persons known by yourselves." Signed Rene Baptiste.

Well I want to know who committing the burglary that happening now? What it is they are trying to move? Who sent in the FBI to assist to remove documentation? Certainly not the NDP Administration. So the thing has come round to haunt you. You had to turn around on the very words you are using are now apply to you.

But Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to another matter. Mr. Speaker I have here a document, this document Mr. Speaker,

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You have 10 minutes Member.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: they took away 5 minutes Mr. Speaker they took away 5 minutes.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No I have added your 3 minutes for the point order.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I have here a document Mr. Speaker No. 517 of 1993. This document is a lease registered here at the Registrar's Office. And this lease Mr. Speaker, is the lease for the rental of the Blue Caribbean Building, which houses the Nano Bank's, the Honourable Minister's Chambers and other activities including, I believe now defunct Zug Insurance, all of them are housed and covered by this lease. And Mr. Speaker this lease is signed by Thierry Nano and I want to read Mr. Speaker because Tyrone Crease is the person who solemnly and sincerely declared that I was present, quote, and did see Thierry Nano, the leasee mentioned and referred to in the lease here onto annexed and Mark A duly signed, sealed and deliver the same as and for his free and voluntary act and deed and that the name of or signature of Thierry Nano, set and subscribed to is the true and proper signature of the said leasee. And the name and signature T. Crease set and subscribed hereto as the signature of the witness attesting the due execution thereof is the true and proper signature and handwriting of me this the deterrent. And it says, I made this solemn declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true and by virtue of the provision of all the laws and statutes which is given unto me enabling, declared at the Registrar's Office, Kingstown on the 24th day of February 1993.

Mr. Speaker, this lease does not, and I better read it, the leasee Mr. Speaker, convenience not to assign or part with possession of the demise premises or any part thereof except as provided in

clause 3(I) and clause 3(I) Mr. Speaker provides for a leasee to assign this lease to a limited liability company already formed or yet to be formed.

Well Mr. Speaker, as of now the Minister's Office is still in the same place. Rent has been paid Mr. Speaker under this Agreement, most the time when the Minister became a Minister of Government and indeed since 1993 according to the least Mr. Speaker. So the rent Mr. Speaker of the Minister's Office has been met.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker I think it's a question of correction and there has to be.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: just a minute please, the member has to give way.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: I am not giving way Mr. Speaker.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Well it's not the Minister's Office, it's the Office of Baptiste and Young.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Yes,

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: There are two entirely different things.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: well the Minister is a principal of Baptiste and Young.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Well say it, that's the point.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Sir, we could talk all kind of technicalities, we can raise all kind of technicalities that we want the fact remained is that her rent was paid, that's the point Mr. Speaker. Her rent was paid by a fugitive from justice. And past the time when she was appointed the Minister, that is the point that I am making. Up to and past the time that she was appointed the Minister. It is not a matter of shaking head, that is not acceptable Mr. Speaker. With all the difficulties we have been having on this Nano issue, the rent is being paid by him [interruption] it's been not exactly so? The lease say so.

Mr. Speaker we cannot have that. We cannot have a Minister who claims not to be involved and has in fact Mr. Speaker, been having her rent paid all these years, and since Mr. Speaker and during the time Mr. Speaker where the licenses were provided given back. When the Government took the decision to give back the license her rent was still being paid by Thierry Nano. If that is not continuing involvement, I don't know what is. What a lovely arrangement to have all these years and you say that you no longer involved. Man this is something else. She is not supposed to be here Mr. Speaker, with all due respect [applause].

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: this is my last warning to you members sitting in the gallery. If I have any outburst like that any more I am going to have you evicted and I serious about that. I am going to have identified and removed from the gallery. I say you must not participate in debate and I am serious. Go ahead Sir.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I regard this Mr. Speaker as a matter of extremely bad faith and taste. Not becoming, Mr. Speaker, a Member of this Parliament. Most unbecoming Mr. Speaker of a Member of this Parliament. People repose trust in us Mr. Speaker because they expect us to operate in particular ways. And Mr. Speaker I am saying that the Minister is violating that trust by her activities. And she is being called upon to remove, resign as Minister and from this Honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot tell our children, the young people who were here this morning in this Honourable House that that is the kind of behaviour we expect sometime in the future. We cannot do that and we have to send the signal Mr. Speaker, we have to send the signal that those who say that they have zero tolerance for corruption, live it out. Don't talk it, live it out. Mr. Speaker those who say they have zero tolerance for corruption let them live it out. I am saying Mr. Speaker that all those unlisted numbers that were used to carry out certain transactions will lead to further charges being laid on people in this country.

I do not Mr. Speaker..., any body to be so tarnished. In the circumstances Mr. Speaker and in the circumstances of the fact that Nano has been paying, that fugitive from justice is paying the rent of a Member of this House, Legal Chambers.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You have 2 minutes to wind up sir.

HONOURABLE ARNIHM EUSTACE: Just imagine that. But Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the Honourable Minister; she should do the correct thing. Send the signal to the people of this country that matters of this sort are not tolerated by the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. We are sending Mr. Speaker, a very dangerous signal, very dangerous indeed. How could people look at us internationally, despite whatever work we have been doing when they hear that the Minister's Legal Chamber's rent has been paid by a fugitive from justice who they themselves are trying to apprehend. It doesn't stand Mr. Speaker. And I therefore call on the Honourable Minister to resign forthwith.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members...,

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I must remind you, you have just about 27 minutes.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I'm obliged Mr. Speaker. If I can get the podium to be brought to me by the Sergeant at Arms, I now have 26 minutes. Mr. Speaker,

Honourable Members, I think that those persons who listen to height preparatory to the presentation of this Motion, even those most partisan of the NDP Tribe would be most disappointed with what is being offered [applause].

Mr. Speaker, I want to say in a summary form because I am hoping that this debate will continue, that first of all the Leader of the Opposition's presentations was stuffed with political hypocrisy and duplicity [applause]. Secondly, it was an exercise in political shadow boxing to cover up his internal problems inside of the New Democratic Party [applause]. Thirdly, I want to assert that I, as Prime Minister have confidence in Rene Baptiste as Minister of Tourism and Culture [applause]. And finally, this Motion will fail [applause].

Mr. Speaker, it is important for the general public and for Honourable Members to see an attempted slight of hand in one limb of the Pre-amble to this Motion and whereas for many years very limited information on some of the early investors was unavailable but is now increasingly coming to light due to improved technology and tighter surveillance measures and legislation. That is an artifice, which has been subsumed into the Motion to cover up the NDP record in dealing with the Nano family. They are now saying these matters is only now coming to light. I want to read it.

And whereas for many years very limited information of some of the early investors was unavailable, but is now increasingly coming to light due to improved technology and tighter surveillance measures and legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the first four of the so-called scandals adumbrated by the Leader of the Opposition relate to matters, which took place in 1958, in the 1960s, in the 1980s, the early 1990s prior to the issuance by the NDP Administration a 15-year licenses to New Bank Ltd. and to Nano and Sons 1146 Private Bankers Ltd. I want to repeat that all of the four first mentioned instances of scandal and alleged corruption, all occurred and all were public knowledge in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines prior to August the 31st 1993 when the 15-year bank license was granted to New Bank Ltd and prior to June the 23rd 1995 when Nano and Sons 1146 Private Bankers Ltd. was given a banking license for 15 years. So that they knew all these things, yet in 1993 at the end of August, they give New Bank a 15-year license, normally you get a 1-year license and you renew it. And then in 1995, they give Nano and Sons a 15-year license and proceeded Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members to put into the law a grandfather clause, section 29 of the International Banks Act passed in this Parliament under the NDP Administration, past in 1996 accented to..., past on the 27th June 1996 and accented to on 7th October 1996. I would read the grandfather clause designed to protect New Bank Ltd. and Nano and Sons. I want to point out that the record would show that the Honourable Vincent Breache and myself. We opposed the grandfather clause. This is what it reads, they brought a new law into place. The Nanos paid \$5 hundred thousand to hire Tims Scranton, the lawyer who prepared all these new laws which the NDP Administration brought into being in 1996. Long after all these information was known about Zug Insurance and everything else, long after.

Mr. Speaker, the grandfather clause of the law, of the NDP International Banks Act designed to protect New Bank Ltd. and Nano and Sons reads as follows: And I want you to you very carefully.

“Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act to the contrary”, this is the last but one section you know. They say don’t care whatever you have in this Act, notwithstanding that, here it, “Notwithstanding any provision of this Act to the contrary a company, which on the effective date of this Act hold a license granted under the International Companies Act to undertake offshore banking business or equivalent activities under such Act”, instead of their, you read Nano and Sons and New Bank Ltd. “shall automatically and without further application or review be issued and hold a license under this Act to conduct its offshore banking business as it is being conducted as of the effective date of this Act for the remaining period of the current license held by such company.” For the remaining period, for the 15 years by such company under the International Companies Act. “And any such licensee (that is to say the banks) may renew license to be automatically granted under this Act upon its expiration in the same manner as prescribed under section 5(1) provided that such licensee shall at the first applicable license renewal date amend its original offshore bank license applicable to include and update the information to confirm to the requirements of this new schedule.”

In other words, don’t kay what you do you gotta give them the 15-year license to remain there. And that was one of the bones of contention why the Nanos were saying, that this new law doesn’t apply to us because it gives us a grandfather clause to protect us. That is the gravamen of the issue and that is what we have had to confront with and to deal within, the most astute manner to reach a stage of renewing the license because it was revoking properly because cause was not allowing to be shown to them, natural justice was breached and we proceeded to appoint a manager to take control of the affairs of the Bank. Contrary to what the NDP did where they incurred \$335 thousand in legal costs and had to go to courts and had the courts strike them down. That grandfather clause is the gravamen of the problem.

Mr. Speaker, when the Leader of the Opposition comes here, we know that he is seeking to undo an election result. All these issues were sister are involved together in an investment called Caribbean Imaging. That’s where canvassed in the General Elections that Rene Baptiste worked for Nano, that Rene Baptiste and her here sister, doctor Ambrose help Vincentians with the CT Scan, The Imaging. A lot of people who listening to me has taken advantage of that, no she shouldn’t, help poor people who find things hard to come up, they take investment how they can get it and they provide a service for Vincentians. That’s what happened. That is no thievery, that is no vagabondary, that is no corruption. That is a business investment providing a service to Vincentians.

Parnell Campbell didn’t asked the colour of the people them money when he took it. When he took it and ain’t pay it back, why should a legitimate investment providing a benefit to people

of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines be adversely commented upon. What topsey turvey world? What a skewed view held by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, when a press conference was held to respond to the allegations by Thierry Nano about certain monies being lent to different people, the defense by the former Leader of the NDP was that I didn't get any money to borrow. I got a lot of money from them in 1989, 1994 and he said that is the last time I did take money from them for the election. The Nanos say, "But that ain't true, you got in 1998 too." So for the four elections they got, they were bankroll by the Nanos, bankroll and now they coming to bawl because Rene rent is being paid by the Nanos according to them. Well let's come to that. I have enquired about this matter as I do of my Ministers if I hear certain allegations and she said to me, "Prime Minister, I have been their lawyer and what has happened there has been an agreement for a set off that when the firm work for fees and I before as Rene Baptiste and subsequently when firm works for fees, the rent is set off as against fees." That is a normal thing which happened all about the place. Now that is being presented as though a fugitive is paying her rent. You see the difference? A simple fact, you see when you get a straightforward explanation you see the difference? Entirely different thing, entirely different.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, and I want to move very speedily because I want to deal with the essentials not the fluff. It is said that there is something wrong with a Member of Member of Parliament acting as lawyer for an institution owned and controlled by the Government. Mr. Speaker, the representation of the people Act was amended in 1989 under the miscellaneous amendment Act, this is how they called it you know No. 25 of 1989. Amending the representation of the People Act by adding a new section. (h) By reason only of any engagement for the provision of professional legal or professional accounting services. Now, what it says was this hitherto. Section 36 of the representation of the People Act as it was regional past. Subject to the provisions of this section, no Member shall be qualified to be a Member of the House of Assembly if he or any firm in which he is a partner or any body corporate which he controls is a party to any contract made with the Government or a Department of Government or an Officer of Government contracting as such for the sale or lease of land including any interest or over land, the sale of goods or the rendering of services by that person or by that firm or body corporate. Subsection 2, a person shall not be disqualified to be elected or appointed as a Member of the House of Assembly by virtue of subsection 1 and they list from 'a' to 'g' in the original law and then they added this 'h' which I just read, in 1989. Up to 1989 when the N.D.P changed the law, a Member of Parliament was unable to contract with any entity for Government for any services or sale of goods. That's what the law was. Parnell Campbell was a Senator I believed that he worked for the Government in some way. Other people have done so and they changed the law. They say well, it if by reason only of any engagement for the provision of professional legal or professional accounting services. So they made it legal, the N.D.P that if you are a lawyer here in the House, you can provide services to Government and to Government Institutions. You could have a contract with them and you not be asked to leave the House. Before 1989, if you did that you could not sit in the House. If they want us to change that law, I am prepared for us

to change that law and go back to the position in 1984 [applause]. I am prepared to do that because all that will come out in the wash in the Integrity Bill, which we are preparing for Parliament. The point about it, any Member of Parliament, there is not a distinction in the law. [Interruption] Yes, but want to deal with the question the legality and how you changed it so that people will know what is happening. I am coming now to ethics. Not only will you change it then but when Glen Stewart came into the House, you changed the law further. You changed it first to suit Parnell, then you changed it to suit Glen. Hear what you say, subsection 2(h), the one I just read of the Principal of section 35, it's really 36 of the Principal Act, is amended by inserting therein immediately after the word accounting, the words "or professional architectural or engineering" [applause]. Now the point I..., this one is 1992 and Glen Stewart was a member individually and as a company as part of Stewart Engineering even whilst he was a Minister Stewart Engineering had contracts with the N.D.P Government and this law was amended. This is the Glen Stewart amendment in 1992. You know why I tell you, you all hypocritical [applause], you see the point..., I don't talk about these things you know Mr. Speaker and I want them to come to a head. Because you have a lot of bush lawyers. You see in this country anybody who has a mouth and who has a hand to make an "X" they feel they are an authority on every subject. They could talk and if you tell them they talking foolishness, they say all right I talking foolishness wait till next time I go mark my "X" against you. Well I have stated before, I will not allow the lowest common denominator to rule this country [applause]. And I quote Errol Clinton Mounsey, "I will not allow the untutored and the uncultured to lead the tutored and the cultured." [Applause] If you want to deal with these matters in law go to university. First of all past your O'levels and your A'levels, go to university study the law know the legal history of the country and then you can open your mouth and talk.

Mr. Speaker, it is said that it is unethical for Ministers of Government to act as lawyers. Well I have just showed that it is not unlawful, it is unethical. I am prepared, if the Leader of the Opposition is prepared for us to change the issue of ethics which is relative because you have the Stewart Amendment, you have the Campbell Amendment followed by the Stewart Amendment. If you are prepared I am prepared to have both those Amendments repealed and put ourselves back on the 1982 Representation of the People Act, which was passed by Milton Cato's Government, I am prepared to do that. But of course, I don't believe that the seconder of the Motion who is a lawyer, a young lawyer now trying to pass his exams, the Member for the Northern Grenadines, will want that because he sees an opportunity to make some money with Government.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Don't worry about me.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: No, I am not worrying about you, you are the least of my worries [laughter] my runs dey on the tin yo know, you rely on Sir James's coat tail and that is slipping. You can't do anything in this country with politics. You are nothing in this country in politics. And if you are an upstart I will put you down.

Mr. Speaker, many things inside this document are false. Rene Baptiste I have been advised has no investment in Dorian Investments. She has no investment in the Herald News Paper. Well I know that many who came to expect fireworks from the N.D.P would have to leave. That is why I see the star and I hear the rolling thunder.

Mr. Speaker, the resolution says, the motion says in its operative part that it is in the public interest and in order to restore the good reputation of this country both politically and as a pre-eminent offshore centre, well the Opposition is really bare face to restore the good reputation of this country. The reputation of this country has never been higher than under the Unity Labour Party Administration [applause]. The British Government on August the 31st, an independent Government, said that they are giving us debt relief after five months in office because of governance we showing, because we bearing down against corruption, because we have a focused approach to dealing with poverty reduction. And for three years including the time when you were Minister of Finance, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition now, begging and pleading to get them, they say no we can't give you because you are not bearing down on corruption, you are not focused enough in dealing with poverty and you don't have good governance. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Organisation of American States and the University of the West Indies never invited anybody from the NDP to talk about Constitutional Reform and good governance. They invited the Leader of this party on January the 21st to deliver the keynote address to an international and regional gathering in Barbados on that subject. Professor Carnegie just saw me this morning from the University of the West Indies. They say they played it back on radio and television down to Sunday. They showing off Ralph speech over there like is soap opera on good governance and constitutional reform. The reputation of this country is higher today than at any time before. I just received a letter from the British Government thanking us for our cooperation on a particular matter relating to good governance. The matter relating to..., it didn't take me a minute, whilst I was at the Lewis Punnett Home when they contacted me on the cell phone on December the 20th to give them permission to board a vessel which has come out of Mauritius had gone past Djibouti and was in the international waters going to the United Kingdom. They suspected it had something to do with terrorism. It turned out that the information was wrong. A Vincentian registered vessel. Contrast that when it took the NDP Administration nine days to give the U.S Government permission to board the Lucky Star and then the Attorney General in the United States through an emissary they sent a message to me to congratulate the Vincentian Government for the position which we have taken on the issue of the issuance of the search warrant with the Nano bank's and the manner in which we dealt with it in such an expeditious way. They acknowledge that the N.D.P has left us a ram shackle legal apparatus where we could not have acted under the fugitive offenders act to deal with Thierry Nano, the warrant concerning Thierry Nano. Within days we corrected that in the Proceeds of Crime and Money Laundering Prevention Act right here in this Parliament. A piece of legislation incidentally which the British Government has written to me and written to me and due to my attention from an offshore publication in the United States, they are recommending it as the model piece of legislation to be followed throughout the world to deal with the Proceeds of Crime and Money Laundering Prevention. The people in West Kingstown knew that Rene Baptiste worked with

the Nanos. They knew that. The letter she wrote before the elections to you, she wrote under instructions from her clients. It had nothing to do with Rene. Rene is good decent churchgoer. She knows you and she knows your family but she is doing her job and she write you the letter. So you ignore it, she makes a dollar, you ignore it and life goes on. So what you sweating about? And that's before she came here in the House. And I have said this morning and will say again, there is no Member on the Government side, not one single one sitting down here who address any matter concerning any individual offshore bank or anything to do with the offshore finance authority. That authority advises me and under this law I have this next on the right side. The Leader of the Opposition will know the Prime Minister Office. The seat I sit down which they say I never would have sat down in. I get it on the right side. I have this and the Holy Bible. And in this book I have certain legal obligations. And when the offshore finance authority asked me for my advice on any subject or asked me to give approval on any matter, I do so in a quasi-judicial capacity I don't ask anybody in the Cabinet because it is not their judgment call. The law imposes that on me, because I can be subject to judicial review. Decisions of mine can be subject to judicial review. I can't hide behind Louis or Mike or Duggie or sister Girlyn or anybody else to say well in Cabinet they did tell me to do so or not, it is my judgment call that's what they pay me for. That's people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines repose confidence in me and have me as their Prime Minister and not the Leader of the Opposition [applause]. I want to say that the motion raises certain matters, which we should address in respect of the legislative framework and to the extent that the motion is useful it is to that extent. But what it is calling for it is ridiculous, it is stuffed with hypocrisy and duplicity, it is an, it is an exercise in political shadow boxing. It wants to reverse the verdict of the people in West Kingstown. You will get an opportunity when this Prime Minister decides whenever he would call the next election. Thank you very much.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: That brings us to the end of the Opposition business.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker,

Members of the Opposition walked out of the House as a mark of protest at the presence of the Minister of Tourism, Honourable Rene Baptiste in the House.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: He is protesting the presence of the Minister and he is leaving as a mark. The Members of the Opposition leaving as a mark of protest.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Well Mr. Speaker, the point about it is this, since he is going to be here and they don't come back well that is their business. The people will make their decision.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Members please let's not have that kind of shouting.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, may I therefore before we resume in as much as I noticed some people are moving if I may asked for ten minutes for Members convenience, for a suspension for ten minutes for Members convenience.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, this meeting is suspended for ten minutes for Members convenience. Thank you.

Suspension 5:00 p.m.

Resumption 5:10 p.m.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move under Section 48(2) that this Bill be taken through all its stages at today's sitting.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Seconded the motion.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill passed and taken through all its stages.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move the second reading of a Bill for an Act to amend The Trade (Bottle Deposit Levy) Act No. 13 of 1991.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Seconded the motion.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

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

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I'm obliged Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in 1991 The Trade (Bottle Deposit Levy) Act No. 13 of 1991 was passed. This Act introduce a deposit levy of 25 cents per bottle or can on all Bear, stout, malt, ale and aerated drinks bottle in non returnable bottles. This levy is in addition to the normal customs impost payable on such imports. Under the Act the Comptroller of Customs and Excise is designated to administer the levy. The Act also provides for a refund of the levy deposited. If the depositor,

1. re-exports the empties.
2. makes suitable arrangements within six months of the deposit to dispose of the empties.

Failure to do any of the above under the existing Act will result in the forfeiture of the deposit to the Consolidated Fund. This piece of legislation when introduced in 1991 was essentially an environmental protection measure. The proposed amendments seeks to promote the freer

movement of goods across Member States of the O.E.C.S by removing the deposit levy from all goods manufactured locally and in other O.E.C.S States. The exemption is granted by the Comptroller of Customs and Excise on the condition that acceptable arrangements are made by the importer manufacturer for the disposal of the empties. This amendment is consistent with the current spirit of facilitating closer economic relations among the O.E.C.S States and recent efforts to allow the freer movement of people and goods within the sub-region.

Mr. Speaker, I should give specifically the background to this particular amendment. I have been specifically asked by the Prime Minister of St. Lucia to bring this Amendment to the House and I agreed with him.

Mr. Speaker, there is a factory in the Prime Minister Anthony's constituency and I think he is concerned that this levy is creating some problems for his drinks to enter the market. It is not that the bottle levy makes them less competitive. But what happens, the bottle levy eats up working capital up front because you can get it back when you re-export the bottles or the cans as the case may be. But in this particular case we are asking for the O.E.C.S countries and for Saint Vincent for the bottle levy to be removed but we will take care of the environmental problem by putting the burden on the Comptroller of Customs to ensure that the particular importer or manufacturer makes appropriate arrangements for the disposal of the bottles or the plastic or the cans. So that the environmental elements is still there but the levy is removed.

Mr. Speaker, the Officials also in the Ministry of Finance found that this particular levy was very, very difficult to administer. They had a lot of problems with it. And they are not dissatisfied to see the levy go because it was not a revenue measure. The money had to be paid back once the bottles were exported or disposed of in some way.

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind Vincentians about something and when Prime Minister Anthony asked me about it, I had to give it serious consideration, because he helped me a great deal and Vincentians on the issue of the Flour Mill. Vincentians may not know this, because it is not every thing I speak about. But it is time to speak about it a little more fulsomely since we are bringing this law. A few months ago, there was a serious threat to the well being of the Eastern Caribbean Flour Mills. Antigua and Barbuda, that country was importing flour from Trinidad contrary to article 56 of the Treaty of Chaguramus, which basically states in so far as flour is concerned, that the O.E.C.S countries which supply the O.E.C.S countries with flour and in this case there is a Flour Mill in Grenada and one here in Saint Vincent. Our flour is a better quality. Grenada flour is slightly cheaper and Antigua was importing flour from Trinidad and Trinidad was dumping flour in Antigua cheaper than it was being sold in Trinidad. And two container loads of flour had gone to Antigua under cutting our flour. Well why was this very important for me to address. Antigua imports 20% of our production. Saint Vincent consumes 30%. If you lose 20% of your market it's a hell of a drop. And I saw that workers will probably have been laid off down at the Flour Mill if the flour continue to go through from Trinidad to Antigua. I also saw the possibility, the real prospect that the electricity to consumers would rise because if production goes down at the Flour Mill because they consume

a lot of electricity, it means that the unit price for electricity will rise. Because they will consume less electricity and Vinlec will have to come to the householders and other business places to increase the electricity. Sometimes people don't know how all these small matters hang together in this economy. And you have to know it inside out. So I had to move very quickly. I contacted the Antiguan Government of course Prime Minister Bird is pleased to assist because I was helping very much on LIAT. But it took a little while to get it sorted out. I called Prime Minister Panday; I dealt with him on that. I reported the matter formerly to Prime Minister Owen Author who has responsibility for the Caribbean single market and economy. One container came first to Antigua. I was assured that a second wouldn't come, then the second came and St. Lucia was buying flour also from Barbados contrary to Article 56. And I wrote Prime Minister Anthony about it and he promptly communicated with me by letter and said yes they are doing it and it's wrong, he is stopping it. And that what they will only do in St. Lucia is to buy the flour in the 1 pound and 5 pound packets to give the consumer a little variety but the bakers flour they would buy it either from Saint Vincent and the Grenadines or from Grenada. I contacted Prime Minister Douglas in St. Kitts Nevis. They were buying their flour from Grenada in St. Kitts. Though Nevis strangely was buying our own flour. And their Cabinet agreed that they would buy our flour also if we could give them a particular price and we agreed to give them the particular price, which they were asking, which wasn't unreasonable for us to give in the circumstances. So that in that general movement where you got all that support and collaboration and cooperation on the flour issue, if another Prime Minister in the O.E.C.S asked you about a matter of the bottle levy it becomes reasonable in all the circumstances to reciprocate. So the buster drinks, which comes out of St. Lucia, for example, will not have the bottle levy attached to it. But the buster if it comes out of Trinidad will still have the bottle levy imposed. So this is a measure to deepen the links in the O.E.C.S countries for the protection of own set of industries. Of course, the time will come when we will have to open it completely. The single market and economy but that is where we are at the present moment. It's a very straightforward measure Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members and I commend it to the House [applause].

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Any further debate on this Bill Honourable Prime Minister?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker there being no further debate. I move that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House to consider the Bill clause by clause.

House went into Committee.

House resumed.

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

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker I beg to move that a Bill for an Act to amend The (Bottle Trade Deposit Levy) Act No. 13 of 1991 be read a third time by title and passed.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Seconded the motion.

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

THE PUBLIC SECTOR INVESTMENT LOAN BILL, 2002

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move the first reading of a Bill for an Act to authorize Government to raise a loan for the funding of a Public Sector Investment Programme.

This Bill seeks to authorize the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to raise a loan of \$30 million dollars for the funding of a Public Sector Investment Programme. The interest to be paid is 7% per annum.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Seconded the motion.

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

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move under Section 48(2) of the Standing Orders of this Honourable House that this Bill be taken through all the stages and past at today's sitting.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Seconded the motion.

Question put and agreed to.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move the second read of a Bill for an Act to authorize Government to raise a loan for the funding of Public Sector Investment Programme.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Seconded the motion.

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

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

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, this Bill is proposed to allow the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to raise \$30 million by way of debentures to finance a number of projects in the public sector investment programme. The bond issue will carry an interest rate of 7% and will mature around 2013, 2013. This Bill

also provides for the establishment of a sinking fund to be funded by Government from which the redemption of the bond issue will take place.

Mr. Speaker, so what we are doing here is to have a Bill to raise \$30 million through what is popularly called Government savings bonds. We are hoping that we would have been able to raise the bond by 6½ percent interest because the interest rates are getting depressed around the world. But it does appear that we may have some difficulty in raising it at 6½ percent, so we put it 7 percent which is less than the 7½ which the existing 30 million dollar bond issue which matures on March the 16th was issued at. The requisite Budget Provision has been made in the Estimates 2002 to meet the initial contribution thereto. The following projects will be financed from the proceeds of this bond issue. The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development refurbishing of the Office Inland Revenue \$100,000 equity investments in LIAT \$2.9 million.

Mr. Speaker, I should point out in respect of the equity investments in LIAT we have already invested that money, but we have invested it from the loans which we had negotiated last year so that when we raise these monies we will simply replenish that particular loan fund by the extent of the \$2.9 million. We did a little bridging finance there. Ministry of Social Development Corporatives and the Family: re-cobbling of the streets and sidewalk \$132,000 upgrading of roads in small towns \$200,000. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the basic educations project \$2.838 million. The construction of the Peruvian Vale Primary school \$1.5 million. The computerization of the schools \$377,000. The Bequia secondary school \$700,000. Contribution towards the new public library \$200,000. Under the Ministry of National Security, Airport Development and the Public Service: the Correctional Facility formerly called the Prisons the one which we are going to build \$2 million for this year. Police Station Canouan \$371,000. The purchase of equipment for Airports \$533,000. The J.F Mitchell Airport improvement, Bequia \$500,000. I should point out particularly to those persons who are listening from Bequia, we have discovered that some 40% of the passengers who travel on American Eagle to Canouan would go on to Bequia, but because there are no lights in Bequia functioning, a lot of them don't want to go to Canouan because they have to stay over the night. But if we get the lights in Bequia going, the passengers for Bequia would be able to come and they will be able to make their transfer by S.V.G Air or some other airline. So we are locating \$500,000 to fix the light. And I want to say to those persons at Moon Hole who have their shot guns and some of them who want to break the lights that we gonna keep an eye on them. Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries: lands purchase for 2002 to 2004 \$5 million. Ministry of Transport, Works and Housing: River defences \$500,000. The Grenadines Multi-project three, \$1.674 million. Traffic improvement study for Kingstown \$50,000. Upgrading of roads \$850,000. The Housing Development Programme \$2.5 million. You would recall that we had said that we would raise \$20 million by way of Government saving bonds to address the issue of low income housing. Well out of this money the first allotment is \$2.5 million for the low-income housing. But we are not using all the bond monies this year. Just over \$23 million so that we will have \$7 million for next year to be used towards the further development of the Housing Project. And we have \$240,000 put aside for Maritime Distress and safety system.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, it is important for you from Honourable Members to understand how this arrangement will work. We are going to float the bond issue \$30 million but we have to set up a sinking fund so that every year a contribution is made to the sinking fund and the interest is paid every six months. So that at the end of the period in the year 2012 or 2013 there wouldn't be a burden on us. And whoever is then Government that the money comes out of the sinking fund and paid to the bondholders so that they will get back their money at the end of that period and in the meantime every six months they will get their interest at the rate of 7%. Some people don't bother want their interest they leave it there, but they are entitled to take it. In relation to the sinking fund for the previous bond issue, the sinking fund 2001-2002 by the authority of Act No. 6 of 1992 the Public Sector Investment Loan Act 1992. The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines raised \$30 million by way of debentures for the purpose of Public Sector Investment that was under the N.D.P Administration. These securities carried an interest rate of 7½ percent to mature on March the 16th 2002. On March the 16th 2002 we have to pay \$30 million out. Some people of course who have their money will buy new bonds. In section 6 of the Act, provision is made for the establishment of a sinking fund, which has to be funded by Government over the bond period to finance the redemption of the bond issue. On February the 11th 1993 approval was granted by the Minister of Finance to establish a sinking fund at the National Commercial Bank. The First contribution to the fund was \$2 million was made in August 1994. Notice that the bond issue was floated in 1992. Since coming to Office, the new administration (and I want people to understand this, they have used the money, the N.D.P has already used the money) and this new administration since we came into office we put in \$7½ million into the sinking fund which the N.D.P set up for the \$30 million bond issue because they didn't have enough money in it. As of the 11th of February 2002 the fund amounting to \$24.3 million so we have to find the other \$5.7 million to put in by the time the fund matures on the 16th March. And I think it is important that people know that we have had to put \$ ½ million of the \$30 million though we had nothing to do with the spending of that. So that people will have their monies redeemed come the 16th of March.

So Mr. Speaker, this is a simple and relatively cheap way for the Government to raise monies to finance its Public Sector Investment Programme. It is not a heavy burden and I would like to commend this to the House.

Mr. Speaker there being no further debate, I beg to move and it is unfortunate that the Opposition left because I would have liked them to have some discussion on this but it is their choice the work of Parliament can't be held up.

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

House went into Committee.

House Resumed.

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

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that a Bill for an Act to authorize Government to raise a loan for the funding of a Public Sector Investment Programme be read a third time by title and passed.

*Question put and agreed to.
Bill read a third time by title and passed*

THE PUBLIC SECTOR INVESTMENT LOAN ACT 2002.

ITEM NO. 9 GENERAL LOCAL LOAN AMENDMENT BILL 2002.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move the first reading of a Bill for an Act to amend the General Loan Act, Cap 184.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: seconded the motion.

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

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that under section 48 two of the Standing Orders of this Honourable House that this Bill be taken through all its stages and passed at today's sitting of the House.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: seconded the motion.

Question put and agreed to.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move the second reading of Bill for an Act to amend the General Loans Act, Cap 184.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: seconded the motion.

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

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

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, this is a very straightforward Bill and it is consequential upon the passage of the Bill for the Public Sector Investment Loan Act, which we recently passed. The Act here, the General Loan act which we are seeking to amend is one where we are seeking to amend an Act, which declares the terms and conditions which authorizes the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

to raise loans by way of debentures. Section 6 of this Act permits the Government to issue debentures in denominations of \$50.00, \$100.00, \$500.00, \$1,000, \$2,500, \$5,000, \$10,000, \$20,000 or \$100,000. This amendment now seeks to permit the Government to add a denomination of \$500,000 to future issues of debentures. This will improve the portability of the bonds especially the large purchases and allow for easier storage just improving the overall level of convenience in the handling of certificates. Basically, what that means Mr. Speaker, is that if you are having \$30 million bond issue and a bank for instance decides to buy \$5 million in bonds you know you would have to write up for a million, you will have to write up 10 of them because the most you could go under the existing law is \$100,000. So it just really facilitates for persons who want to buy a larger component of the debentures that you have larger issuances in denominations. And this is all that this Bill is about Mr. Speaker. It is a Bill of real convenience to facilitate the life and work of the people who are in the bureaucracy and for persons who are going to buy so that it has less space to store them. They require less space to store them. They make them handier, neater.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Any further debate?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, there being no further debate I beg to move that this Honourable House resolves itself into a Committee of the whole House to consider the Bill clause by clause.

House went into Committee

House Resumed.

Bill read and passed with no amendment.

GENERAL LOCAL LOAN AMENDMENT ACT 2002.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that a Bill for an Act to amend the General Loan Act, Cap. 184 be read a third time by title and passed.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: seconded the motion.

Question put and agreed to

Bill read a third time by title and passed

ITEM NO. 10

Living Water Ministries International (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) Incorporation Bill 2002.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I beg to move the introduction and first reading of. a Bill for an Act to make provision for the incorporation Living Water Ministries International of the (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)

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

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: seconded the motion.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I beg to move the introduction and first reading of a Bill for. an Act for an Act to make provision for the incorporation of The Wells of Living Water Church of (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines).

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

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: seconded the motion.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I beg to move the introduction and first reading of. a Bill for an Act to make provision for the incorporation of Bethany Baptiste Church in the State of (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) Apostolic Deliverance Church in the State (Saint Vincent and Grenadines).

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

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: seconded the motion.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I beg to move the introduction and first reading of. a Bill for an Act to make provision for the incorporation of the Mount Olivet Christian Church of the World incorporation Diocese of (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) Halibethian Church of the Epiphany in the State of (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines).

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

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: seconded the motion.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I would us very much if we can after half an hour or so for Members convenience to permit the Minister of Tourism and Culture to polite the National Parks Bill, because I think she is anxious to get that through. So accordingly Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that we suspend for half an hour for Members convenience to return at 6:30.

Suspension at 6:00 p.m. TEA.
Resumption 6:30 p.m.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: seconded the motion

HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE: are outlined in the Bill before you Mr. Speaker, from section 4 right through to section 6. The idea is to set up the scheme Mr. Speaker, so that there will be a superintendent on either side of the island and in the Grenadines so that the variety of recreational sites starting from Owia Salt Pond right down to the Falls of Balleine would be under the supervision of a superintendent who will have a number of park rangers under him and will take direction from a director who is expected to be an individual who would be sufficiently qualified and knowledgeable in matters relating to national Parks.

Mr. Speaker, in the scheme a National Park in the definition is any park, reserve, river, or beach declared a National Park under the Act and any other site as may be prescribed by order. The functions of the authority and powers are set out at clause 7 of the Bill, which indicates as follows Mr. Speaker:

That the authority will have power and control over rivers, streams, springs, swamps, waterfalls, water pools and beaches in the State.

There are a number of beautiful springs in North Leeward that we feel will need to be properly supervised to prevent any soil erosion or any pollution by pesticides and other chemicals and for enjoyment in use of our peoples and the tourist. I saw some mangrove swamps, some in Union Island and in Canouan. And I was appalled at the condition of these swamps where old vehicles and old tires were just left in the swamp. And the swamp is very important for the maintenance of the ecological balance, particularly in the Southern Grenadines. And therefore in having this authority it is envisaged that the authority will take steps to have experts of various kinds assist in the restoration of those areas that are fragile. Many people now go to the Falls of Balleine and Trinity Falls. So we have to be careful Mr. Speaker. I have read with interest where in Ecuador they had to limit the number of persons going to certain sites because the sites had become worn. They were losing the species of butterflies and other insects had been disappearing because of the invasion by humans and humans can be sometimes quite destructive. So the authority would have the responsibility to manage and maintain these rivers, streams, springs, swamps, waterfalls, water pools, beaches, parks to advocate and promote conservation. It is envisaged there would be an education programme in a very strong..., on education so that people would become knowledgeable and informed what they should and should not do in order for us to preserve and conserve our heritage.

The authority will also undertake the duty to foster the use of our natural and historic resources to recreation and tourism. This is all outlined in the Bill Mr. Speaker at clause 7. To establish priorities and mechanisms for selecting, establishing and managing a National Park, to

supervise the operation of system of National Parks once they are established including the functions of planning, budgeting and financing and recruiting and training of staff. To ensure permanent protection of species and habitats, especially species, which are threaten, rare, endemic and commercial species and representative habitat. To undertake to replenish the replenishment and rehabilitation of depleted fish and invertebrate stocks of damaged coral reefs.

Mr. Speaker, I note with interest and I have been informed by experience divers that there is now some damage to some of our coral reefs and some of it is done by anchoring of certain yachts and boats in areas where they ought not to be moored. It will mean that this authority would have to be extremely vigilant and fearless in the enforcement of the regulations under this law. The authority further has the power to maintain the natural attractiveness of National Park as a tourism attraction to operate and provide for the operation of facilities for national enjoyment and for tourism.

In some of our sites Mr. Speaker, there has been indiscriminate picking of flowers, stealing of slips and samples, especially in the Botanic Gardens, of indiscriminate littering and some vandalism. The workers at the Botanic Gardens Mr. Speaker have indicated to me that some members of the public treat them with a lack of respect when they try to tell them not to interfere with these plants and flowers, the flora and fauna in the Botanical Gardens. Sometimes it escapes us Mr. Speaker, that the Botanical Gardens is the oldest one in the Western Hemisphere. That is a rare honour for a small country, for a big country much more a small country Mr. Speaker. And perhaps it has not yet touched us. The historical importance and the cultural importance of the Botanical Gardens. Since my Ministry has taken responsibility for the Botanical Gardens, we have had a look at a Trade Union Agreement, which was only enforcing a breach. The people in the Botanical Gardens, they have no uniform so they come to work in their own clothes and you know when you are working in mud and dirt and bush and so on, you wouldn't go at one the boutiques in town buy something for \$120 to go and rake leaves. So you put on something a little older as you are raking leaves and you are walking through with brush and shrubbery and it doesn't look so good Mr. Speaker. I have studied that collective agreement very carefully and I intend to hold some meetings with the Trade Union concerned. The very highly respected CTAW and for us to see when and how certain of those provisions would be implemented over the period of time. because we must bear in mind Mr. Speaker I am taking on an inheritance of neglect of 17 years. There are some species that have disappeared out the gardens Mr. Speaker, campher is just one. They are storing dangerous chemicals locked into a room at the Botanical Gardens, bliss was just left for little mites coming down they look like yeast and the young lady was sitting there and those were the working conditions at the Botanical Gardens, broken tools. We are doing an inventory of tools. Bits and pieces of lumber, the house of the former curator Mr. Doyle was left, no windows no doors. Behind them closer to the boundary to the official residence of the Governor General, just bits and pieces of wall and I have had reports that those places are used for trafficking in certain illegal substances. We will be reorganizing the Botanical Gardens with the aim towards maintaining its natural attractiveness, repainting some of the road in the Botanical Gardens to their credit; they have to stop vehicular traffic. Only two vehicles allowed

in the park from official vehicles, but the main bridge at the original entrance at the Gardens, I guess if I walk on it and I am about 200 lbs it would crack, a bridge. Such is the inheritance from the N.D.P. Therefore Mr. Speaker, this authority along with the Ministry would ensure that developmental activities are in concert with professionally drawn National Park plans and will ensure that development activities within place like the Botanical Gardens, which is intended to be declared our first National Park are not adversely affected. To identify and resolve potential conflicts between users of natural goods and services offered by the park particularly in some areas for example where there is Marine Park. Where there are fishermen and Tourism interest. You have fishermen and the yachts men and they have to dwell in the same space to ensure that that is done in an orderly fashion.

Mr. Speaker, every week I get complaints, grievances about persons who seem to insist and persist. I do not know if they trying the patience of the Commissioner of Police or if they are testing my reserve as the Minister of Tourism and Culture Mr. Speaker, but mine would not be tested. The Commissioner of Police and I have had discussions dealing firmly with those individuals who are sometimes I believe they don't even know what they are doing. Sometimes people with the better intellect, tell them do it, give she trouble. We are building a new prison and we will rehabilitate them there, they will be rehabilitated there. The Commissioner of Police has had to pick up a number of persons in Port Elizabeth, at the trail at La Soufriere. Picked up another one at the Falls of Balliene. We are making progress because the Commissioner of Police is also resolved that no one will test him and his resolve to break the back of crime and criminal activity in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, the idea of having this National Parks, rivers and beaches authority is also to put in place a regulatory framework for the exploitation of the National Parks and buffer zones, because sometimes activities within the park can be as detrimental as those outside. For example people who would use salt pond, what kind of activities would you permit there? Will you permit to have barbecue? Where will you permit games to be played? And also to ensure that all visitors are safe that security is provided and that enforcement mechanisms are in place. And this authority will also liaison with other agencies for managing and conducting marine and biological research, because we are loosing some of our river life. Sometime last year, my Ministry started a clean up of the river at Murray road and some little boys had never seen mullet and they were fascinated when they were looking down at the river by Girls' High School because they never see river fish. Little boys from the town area and what even motivates me further Mr. Speaker, is having just come from Guadeloupe and visited their National Park and they took me to an area where you can walk in and the stones look exactly like the river bed in Yambou Mr. Speaker. Exactly like the river bed in Yambou, but it is well kept, clean, litter free, nobody running down the tourist, Brimmer was in the port when I was taken there and they were groups of tourist going to visit and walking and put their feet in the river water. They feel a little river water. Some of them had little children and they take off their clothes and dipping them in the river water.

Mr. Speaker, I would like us to be able to enjoy our natural resources like that once again. And my Ministry with this newly established authority intends to go on a campaign, education and work campaign dealing with all the rivers in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. And this law will provide us with the enforcement mechanisms to ensure that the steps we take will preserve these conservation areas; these protected areas and also ensure that the law is not broken.

The Board in clause 8 Mr. Speaker, is to comprise of a number of persons: The Director of Planning, Chairman of the National Trust, The Director of Tourism, Medical Officer of Health, Commander of the Coast Guard or any person nominated by him, a person nominated by the Chamber of Industry and Commerce, three Non-Governmental Organisations nominating someone, two persons who have wide experience in and shown capacity in environmental matters. And the National Parks Advisory Board would advise the authority on policy matters as outlined in clause 9

To preserve, protect and manage National Parks.

To monitor and discuss the condition of National Parks.

Advise the authority on the improvement of facilities for persons visiting.
How you would carry out work collaborate with other Ministries etc.

In clause 10 Mr. Speaker, provisions are made for the National Park Plan and this plan will identify National Parks, the present state of development an inventory of the resources, a statement of the objectives and policies, the development of the use of the land, maintenance and protection of the environmental areas, protection and conservation of flora and fauna, heritage resources, historical and archeological sites. Specify management and development measures and the scheme of the Act follows that particular way Mr. Speaker. Further provisions are made for the declaration of a National Park. The Bill also makes provision for types of National Parks. We can have a National Park being a Marine National Park and a Terrestrial National Park. Then the demarcation of the boundaries and how we make surveys of that because we also have in mind to deal with some areas that maybe unusual to be called a National Park, but we are going to... the intendment is Mr. Speaker after the debate is to appoint a Select Committee so we can get other views. They, you may fishing in a National Park or aqua culture. You know in some parks they breed turtles, sharks I am not talking about 'jaws' and other creatures from the sea. And the intention is some where down the line to also have a similar function with a National Park, so even establishing National Parks like this. Because there are some children who have never seen a shark, they don't know what it is like apart from seeing it in 'jaws' they are going to be very important education for our young people. There is even provision in case there are resources that are on private lands, how the private lands may be acquired or used or leased and managed as a National Park. Already we have interest expressed by private persons with private lands upon which there are certain historical sites and markings and heritage markings, petroglyphs etc. and they are willing to let us have those lands and sites and provisions are made for that in this Bill in section 18, 19 and

20. How the Government may lease, exchange, buy or acquire property for use as a National Park and what would be the terms and how they would be worked out by the Director of National Parks.

Provisions are also made for prohibited acts in the Park. Cutting, burning, occupying and cultivating, constructing, because sometimes National Parks are more than 20 acres or more than 10 acres or more than 5 acres and some people may encroach upon that. Sometimes unaware that they are occupying lands that have been set aside for gardens and parks, mining, quarrying and drilling removal of any minerals, taking livestock there, obstructing or polluting any river, sea, or body of water, removing cultural materials and archeological materials and what would be the scheme of punishment for disobedience under the law. The powers are outlined of the authorized officers may be police officers or national parks officers duly authorized by the law. The immunity of officers acting under the law, the power to inspect and seize and how you dispose of things seized. Right on to clause 30 that speaks about the power to prosecute and the offences. All National Parks, all Boards, all Authorities need funding Mr. Speaker and provisions are made under clause 33 and in clause 34 we have provisions made for the Minister to make regulations with respect to the prohibition or restriction or entry or movement within or outside the National Park, the fees, the payment of compensation of anyone damaging the National Park. The control of conduct or any trader business and other matters incidental thereto.

Mr. Speaker, apart from what the Act has said I avail myself of other material as to why we ought to do this because anyone in this century who is going to offer you assistance will be looking for an institutional framework that your policy is so formulated and coordinated in an orderly fashion and the Bill such as this Bill before this Honourable House Mr. Speaker, is that institutional framework. And that recommendation came out from a National Parks Commission Study that was done with assistance from the CTO and the OAS and they outlined that we must make provisions to protect and manage and operate fragile areas, provision in order to get technical assistance to management organisations and the scheme is in some areas Mr. Speaker, already we have civil society organisations who are assisting in the management. Is not to take it away from them but to compliment the work that they are doing and to give them technical advice from time to time in the monitoring and the use and effectiveness of the management structures that they have put in place and how you would maintain the integrity of the system of maintenance and the development and management of information systems.

So Mr. Speaker, that is the reason we have brought to this Honourable House this Bill which I have outlined the more pertinent sections as the Honourable House would have an opportunity in the Select Committee for us to go through it in much more detail for persons to give us the benefit of their experience and expertise as we would be moving towards the preparation of codes of conduct and guidelines. The promotion of best management practices and the environmental friendly properties operations and eco-labeling of the system and schemes within the proposed National Parks System.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I do wish this Bill a speedy passage through this Honourable House and I trust that if there is any further debate it would be in support of this Bill before this Honourable House.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Any further debate? The Honourable Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

HONOURABLE CONRAD SAYERS: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to give my contribution and support to the Bill for the establishment of the National Parks, rivers and beaches authority tabled by the Honourable Minister of Tourism and Culture.

Mr. Speaker, I am of the opinion that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is blessed with very unique and attractive and valuable environmental features. And as such Mr. Speaker, we as custodians of such resources should do all in our power to preserve it and to cause it to develop sustainably. With that in mind Mr. Speaker, I particularly congratulate the Honourable Minister in seeing in her wisdom the need for such a Bill. When one looks at the structure, a setting in place of a Director of National Parks supported by capable staff. The establishment of the National Parks Committee or Board represented by very capable and experience persons, I am of the opinion Mr. Speaker that the objectives of this Park would be achieved. This Bill I would say would be achieved.

Mr. Speaker, Saint Vincent possesses a number of outstanding rivers, beaches and parks and other features of the natural environment. Remember the Falls of Balliene, Trinity Falls, the Tobago Cays, the Spa at Belair and I was very enthused Mr. Speaker when I went to Trinity Falls and they introduced me to a hot water springs some mile or so up the river. I have had the privilege of sitting in that water and enjoying the warmth of that..., a privilege that many Vincentians have not yet been able to enjoy.

Mr. Speaker, the Botanic Gardens, one of the oldest in the Western Hemisphere. With all the work that has gone into it, it is my humble opinion Mr. Speaker that it has not been developed given the potential that it possesses and the popularity that it has. It has not been developed correspondingly and so Mr. Speaker, when this Government beings to have function or focus I would say on these National and Natural Heritage of this country, it tells us that we are not just talking environmental preservation and development but we are walking the talk [applause].

Mr. Speaker, Saint Vincent possesses great bio-diversity. A number of flora and fauna in our country continue to attract great admirers. Continue to form the basis of many people leaving foreign lands to come here to admire these and if we did not put in place the measures to preserve them, like many other species they too would become extinct. I remember years ago getting involved in a drive to preserve the Amazona Guildingi, the National Bird. And so Mr. Speaker, this makes us alert so that we can take an inventory of the National Heritage of this country and seek to ensure that our people enjoy them to the full and they also become a source

of income generation. We must always remember that while we do not want to restrict our people from visiting and enjoying these natural resources, there are many who cannot be trusted to go there and enjoy these without vandalizing them, polluting them and stealing them in some form or the other and hence these measures are designed to ensure the promotion, the development and the preservation of these natural and national resources and our heritage. When we preserve these Mr. Speaker, we allow for the development of other calls by the ecologist ecological succession. It allows our environment to emerge and flow naturally and brings out the beauty for the full expression of each specie and hence to create ecological balance and harmony within the environment.

I give my fullest support to this Bill Mr. Speaker, so that we can prevent undue pollution, abuse, the deposit of toxic chemicals and substances and a wanton vandalism of these treasures of our nation. I trust that all Vincentians will catch the light and will seek to work with this Government to preserve these parks, beaches and national treasure. And so promote and enhance the fame of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines as the natural place to be in the Caribbean and indeed the world. I thank you Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Any further debate on the Bill Honourable Minister of Culture?

HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the Honourable Member for his support of this Bill in his debate and his contribution to the debate. Mr. Speaker, we are very fortunate in this Honourable House to have a Member such as a Member, the Honourable Minister of States in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Trade, who has an intimate knowledge of the Botanical Gardens and other recreational and heritage sites. So he speaks with authority and out of practical experience and expertise, he being duly qualified having walked through the doors of the University of the West Indies and other colleges of learning.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to move that this Bill be taken into a Select Committee Mr. Speaker

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Second the motion.

HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE: And the following Members are Mr. Speaker, The Honourable Attorney General; the Honourable Minister of Education, Youths and Sports; the Honourable Minister of Social Development; the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries; the Honourable Minister of Transport, Works and Housing; the Parliamentary Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office the Honourable Senator Edwin Snagg and the Honourable Minister of Tourism and Culture Mr. Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, given the fact that Opposition is absent and it is an important. What I will suggest is that perhaps we can ask the Leader of the

Opposition to send two persons to the Select Committee so that we can have their input if they so wish. Maybe the presence of the Minister of Tourism and Culture on the Committee may perhaps deter them. They may find her so unsanitised that they may wish to continue in the existing tradition. But I think they ought to be offered the opportunity.

NATIONAL LOTTERIES AUTHORITY BILL 2002

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker if I may just indicate in the terms of..., there are two other Bills on the Order Paper. The Immigration Restriction Amendment Bill which is a matter which all the O.E.C.S Governments have agreed for the final reading on March 12th and the item 4 on the Order Paper, Carriage of Goods by Sea Bill 2002, the Honourable Minister of National Security, Airport Development has the carriage of that particular Bill, but he as you know Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, is out of the State on business and has indicated that he would like to polite the Bill himself, so that we would also will have to postpone.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the second reading of a Bill for an Act to provide for the establishment of a National Lotteries Authority to promote the development of Lotteries in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and for connected purposes.

HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE: Seconded the motion.

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

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

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, as is well known the National Lotteries which is a very important institution in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is for all practical purposes a Department of the Ministry of Finance though run by a Board. And for some time it has been the recommendation of successive Boards at the National Lottery and indeed of right thinking persons in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, particularly those who are in Sports and Culture and those who have been involved in gaming generally that we ought to give a greater institutional strength to the National Lottery. And that it ought to be established as a statutory entity. And that is essentially the purpose of the Bill for it to be a particular authority and to have a National Lottery Board to run it.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, this Bill is divided into several parts. Part 1 addresses the matter of the establishment, constitution, management and staff of the National Lottery's Authority. Defines the powers and duties of the Authority and the responsibility for operating the Lotteries and the Administration of the Authority and addresses the meeting and procedure

of the Board and other ancillary matters thereto such as the seal of the Board and service of notice on the Board. Declaration of interest by any Member, so that if a Member who is in any way, whether directly or indirectly, interested in any application to the Board, or for a contract, or proposed contract with the Board, shall declare the nature of his interest at the first meeting of the Board at which it is possible for the Member to do so. So that we will have transparency and that everything functions above board.

The Act Gives power for the Board to delegate, and it defines the remuneration of Members and others. And it spells out that subject to the approval of Cabinet, the Board shall appoint a General Manager, and terms and conditions to be agreed upon. And there the provision is made for the appointment of Officers and for the validity of acts of the Board and the protection of Members of the Board and for the issuing of policy directions. And that's parts one (1) and two (2). Part three (3): financial provisions: deals with the funds of the authority: the borrowing powers of the authority, the guarantee of borrowing by the Board which calls for the establishment of a reserve fund for specific contingencies and defines the application of those funds, sets out the provisions for accounts and audit: for the Auditors report, for the report of the Board. And part four (4); miscellaneous and general provisions: the Authority would secure exemption from stamp duty and other charges, exemption from Income Tax and exemption from Import Duties. Clause 29 of the Bill itemizes the offences and penalties relating to this particular Bill, and the power to issue a search warrant in circumstances where criminal offences are apprehended. And that minutes of the Board, of the Authority, of the meetings of the Authority to be received in evidence in legal proceedings and other ancillary matters plus the power of the Minister of Finance to make regulations for the proper carrying out of the provision of this Act. It's a very straightforward Bill Mr. Speaker and it is one, which I believe will commend the support of right thinking peoples and of the House. Well I think in the circumstances also, though we can proceed with this Bill here, I believe we should send it also to a Select Committee so that the general public can make commends on the particular Bill.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Any other debate?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, there being no further debate, I beg to move that this Bill be put to a Select Committee of the following Members. The Deputy Prime Minister, the Honourable Minister of National Security, the Honourable Minister of Telecommunications, the Minister of State in the Ministry of Agriculture, the Honourable Senator Young, the Attorney General and the Minister of Finance who is the Minister responsible for National Lottery.

Question put and agreed to.

The Honourable Prime Minister indicated that the Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Arnhim Eustace would be invited to submit nominations (2 persons) to sit on each of the aforementioned Select Committees.

ADJOURNMENT

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable House do stand adjourned to Tuesday March 12th 2002 at 10:00 a.m.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: seconded the motion.

*Question put and agreed to.
House adjourned accordingly at 7:20 p.m.*