

**No. 5**

**THURSDAY**

**Second Session**

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

**Seventh Parliament**

**SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

**THE**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**ADVANCE COPY**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

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**THE**

**THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE FIFTH 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.**

**TWELFTH SITTING**

**28<sup>th</sup> March 2002**

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

The Honourable House of Assembly met at 10.15 a.m. in the Assembly Chamber, Court House, Kingstown.

**PRAYERS**

**MR. SPEAKER IN THE CHAIR**

Honourable Hendrick Alexander

**Present**

**MEMBERS OF CABINET**

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

Dr. The Honourable Ralph Gonsalves

Member for North Central Windward

Attorney General  
Honourable Judith Jones-Morgan

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

Honourable Louis Straker

Member for Central Leeward

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

Member for South Windward

Minister of Education, Youth and Sports  
Honourable Michael Browne

Member for West St. George

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

Member for Marriaqua

Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries  
Honourable Selmon Walters

Member for South Central  
Windward

Minister of Health and the Environment  
Honourable Dr. Douglas Slater

Member for South Leeward

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

Member for North Leeward

Minister of Tourism and Culture  
Honourable Rene Baptist

Member for West Kingstown

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

Member for East St. George

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

Member for North Windward

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

Member for Central Kingstown

Minister of Transport, Works and Housing  
Honourable Julian Francis

Government Senator

Honourable Edwin Snagg

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

**OTHER MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE**

Honourable Juliet George

Government Senator

Honourable Andrea Young

Government Senator/Deputy Speaker

**ABSENT**

Honourable Arnhim Eustace

Member for East Kingstown/  
Leader of the Opposition

Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday

Member for Northern Grenadines

Honourable Terrance Ollivierre

Member for Southern Grenadines

Honourable Gerard Shallow

Opposition Senator

Honourable Major St. Claire Leacock

Opposition Senator

# **SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

## **HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**THURSDAY 28<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2002**

### **PRAYERS**

The Honourable Speaker, Hendrick Alexander read the Prayers of the House.

### **STATEMENT BY SPEAKER**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Madam Clerk before we deal with the obituaries, I have received further, I wish to inform the House that I have again received from the Leader of the Opposition, a letter indicating that they are boycotting this session of the House again protesting the presence of the Honourable Minister of Tourism and Culture and further to that they consider this meeting of the House as being religiously insensitive. I am somewhat appalled by that -- and I think I need to chip in here. I would want to believe that when we meet at Parliament we are working and today Thursday the 28<sup>th</sup> March, known as Holy Thursday is also a working day in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I do not know if we can say to the public servants or the persons in the private sector not to come to work on a Holy Thursday and see nothing as being anti religious for this House to be meeting on a working day in St. Vincent and the Grenadines even though it is regarded as Holy Thursday. [Applause] And I would want it to be in the record that I am not accepting that as a valid excuse for the Opposition not being in the House of Assembly here today. We are all working, we are being paid for job we do, some of us quite handsomely and I think that we have a duty and a right to be here in the House to conduct the people's business. It is not a public holiday. It is a working day in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Thank you.

### **OBITUARIES**

**HONOURABLE MICHAEL BROWNE:** Mr. Speaker, let me preface this by saying that I share the sentiments which have been expressed by the Speaker, and to note this particularly auspicious occasion it being the first anniversary of the very progressive Government of the Unity Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to pay tribute to a colleague of mine who passed away on March the 12<sup>th</sup> at the time I was oversees in Washington attending a workshop seminar called by the World Bank, and which was subsequently attended on my return by the Minister of State. I had learnt of her death on my return and I took note of the fact that a tribute had been paid by my ministry and not without significance incorporated into a statement marking National Heroes Month which was sent to the schools on the 13<sup>th</sup> of March, that statement for that occasion incorporated and

paid a small tribute to Miss Viola Thomas. She was buried on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> of April, I attended the funeral. She being a very good working colleague of mine she was almost 67 at the time of her death. She was born Mr. Speaker, in 1935 at a time when both St. Vincent and the Caribbean were going through certain upheavals based on a number of factors which we do not need to go into at this time. In her contribution to education has been noted in the eulogy about her which was read in the church on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> by my predecessor the Honourable John Horne who had worked with her and I would like to ask people to refer to the Searchlight Newspaper which carried a very extensive, or the full coverage of the tribute paid to her by Mr. Horne. I therefore do not intend to give those details at this time but just to note that her role in education was situated in what I will deemed as the second century of Vincentian education. The first century being of course the 19<sup>th</sup> century which can be deemed the century of primary education in St. Vincent and the Grenadines that was when the primary school system was substantially established. Even though the embryo of that system existed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but substantially the primary school system was established in 19<sup>th</sup> century and therefore that century from the standpoint of our educational history will be deemed the century of primary education. The 20<sup>th</sup> century, the one which just left us, is deemed the century of secondary education. That is when we established quite fulsomely the secondary school system in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. There is a certain logic to that because the primary system of the previous century laid the basis of the secondary school system of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and of course, when the third century the 21<sup>st</sup> century as far as education is concerned, and I can assure you and the nation that this is the century of tertiary education, but another time for those details, Mr. Speaker, just to say that Viola Thomas' work was in the last century and she contributed in terms of the consolidation of the primary school system by her own role at different stages and positions in the educational system, and she also contributed to the on going process of consolidating secondary education during the last century. She was the first female Chief Education Officer, having worked between 1986 to 1990 and it is an interesting coincidence that we are now having our second female Chief Education Officer in the person of Miss Laura Browne, so she follows in the footsteps of Miss Thomas.

I think Viola truly captured the essence of educator and I am basing this on the old original Latin origin of 'educare' where a teacher, an educator was understood to be a person who brought up a child, reared a child, guided a child, in other words, that concept in the original Latin sense captured a holistic approach to education and I think that is how Viola tended to operate. This comparison may suggest Mr. Speaker with a more modern concept where education is equated with coaching and training, especially for examination. We tend to lose that broader perspective which ought to characterize education but she came out of that vein, and we would like to pay tribute to her and indeed a tribute to her can best be paid by us recapturing the essence of what she stood for educationally.

I had the privilege to work very closely with Viola at the Teachers' College along with her sister; I believe it was the first and only time that two sisters worked at the Teachers' Training College, they were both there at the time and we had some very, very fond memories at the college and in her efforts to build a home and establish it and that's another story which we do

not need to go into. But I want to pay tribute to my dear friend and colleague and to express on behalf of the Ministry of Education and indeed on behalf of the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines our heartfelt condolences to her family and may continue the work of Viola Thomas and in the spirit in which she had conducted that work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I too rise to pay tribute to the life to Miss Viola Thomas. I did not know her very well as a teacher, but I knew her in my church where we worshiped together every Sunday morning, almost and some weekdays, the St. George's Cathedral in Kingstown. She was a devout Anglican, very much involved in the ecumenical services of the church and also with the young people in the church. She undertook a course of training and became a lay member and rendered her assistance in every aspect of the churches work, she is best remembered by the young people for being a leading member of the Flower Guild, and you can always rely on the Cathedral Church to be the most beautiful on a Sunday morning when you can see the many designs that she had prepared for us to look upon, the creation of God's hand and handiwork in flowers. She also enjoyed being involved in the lay worship. She was a long-standing member of the St. George's Cathedral Church choir and in over a decade when I read the second lesson every second Sunday of every month, she read for the choir for the final Sunday in that month. When she retired from the choir she left the choir loft and sat just two pews behind me, and we always remember to exchange a peace of God every Sunday morning. I last spoke to her the Wednesday night of length. The 27<sup>th</sup> of February, we had lay service, mission service at St. George's Cathedral, Mr. Speaker, and I led worship and she led the intercessory prayers. And we all sang I surrendered all. On Sunday evening it was mothering Sunday, and the young people had a large part to play, and she was pinned especially by the young people of the Sunday's school of the Cathedral for the role that she played in the church and I remember the words of Mrs. Alleyne, that even though she had suffered a stroke, and an illness, she never gave up faith and felt that she would be well, one day, and she looked so well. By the following few days she had gone to meet her Maker in peace. May the soul of the faithful Christian, sister, Viola Thomas rest in peace.

**HONOURABLE CONRAD SAYERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Honourable Members, I rise also to pay tribute to a great Vincentian female educator in the person of Miss Viola Thomas, who departed this life on the 12<sup>th</sup> March. You would have heard that our preceding members in the person of Honourable Minister of Education, referred to here as his colleague in College. The Honourable Minister of Tourism referred to her as her sister at church where they worship. But I would like to refer to her as my lecturer; for it was at the St. Vincent Teachers' College where I was enrolled as a student that she taught the principles of education and I can still reminisce in those early years when we in that class known as Group L were greeted by a very charming dynamic and intelligent young lady, whom we know would have reached very far in the field of education given her aptitude, her ability and her sense of dedication.

She was indeed a fashionable lady. She was a lady of character. She was a strict disciplinarian. And one who taught with vigor and enthusiasm and with great clarity. It is she who introduced us to the great philosophers such as Plato, Socrates and the English educators like John Dewey,

educational psychologist like Pavlov; she has indeed brought us up and out and I am sure I am speaking for my other colleagues, many of whom have been touched by her caring hands. People like Mr. Joe Ferdinand, manager of the ECGC, people like Mr. Simon Greene, PS in Agriculture. People like Dr. Marks, Vincent Stewart. Dr. Murray. All of us, just to name a few passed through her capable hands and we were very much impressed by the thorough work she did, the way she caused us to love, learning and education, and so Mr. Speaker, her death has been a tremendous loss to St. Vincent and the Grenadines, given the way she started, we were not at all surprised to know that she had risen to the point of becoming the first female Chief Education Officer in this country. And she had brought to bear her skills of administration to that job and has made a tremendous contribution to our countries education. Mr. Speaker, he did retire from education, she was seen to display another great talent, something we called green fingers, in which was very productive as a horticulturist and florist, and was seen in many agricultural exhibitions in this country. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be one of those whose lives have been touched by hands and her heart and I know we all sadly mourn her loss, but we are happy that someone like her has passed through this country and has left an indelible mark in this country's educational edifice and in the lives of many of our sons and daughters. I would like to convey sincere condolences to her family; I know that she rest right now in peace. I say again thanks to her for her tremendous contribution to this country's educational development. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### **CONGRATULATORY REMARKS**

**HONOURABLE SELMON WALTERS:** Mr. Speaker, I want to offer congratulations to the Ministry of Tourism and the Tourism Department of St. Vincent and the Grenadines for regionally and internationally for winning the best Caribbean Island for Tourism Award two years in succession. [Applause] The award is given Mr. Speaker, by the United Kingdom based Caribbean World magazine. The Magazine is published by a group of Caribbean Nationals in the United Kingdom, whose major aim is to present the Caribbean as prime tourism destination. Last year, Mr. Speaker, while I attended the third meeting of the international whaling commission in London, I was asked to bring home the award. This year, again, Mr. Speaker, while I attended conference on organic production in London I was asked to receive the award on behalf of the Minister of Tourism. And Mr. Speaker, I was very happy to do so.

Mr. Speaker, this award has done us good. It shows us how St. Vincent and the Grenadines is viewed regionally and internationally. Again, this award, Mr. Speaker, as a Government we had to clean up Kingstown. We have to make it more environmentally and visitor friendly, even though some people did not like it, we had to do it. Our people Mr. Speaker, are very friendly and warm to visitors who frequent our shores. May St. Vincent and the Grenadines remain the best Caribbean destination for many, many years to come? I am much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members it is indeed extremely heartening to hear that last year we also won the award and I wish to thank the Honourable member, Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries for receiving the award on behalf of the Government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to also congratulate our Vincentians authors who did us proud in this month, National History and Heritage Month, Dr. Edgar Adams for his publication 'People on the Move' and as well as Dr. Adrian Fraser for 'Chatoyer, National Hero of St. Vincent and the Grenadines'. [Applause]. Mr. Speaker, according to the rules, I would also like to lay this document at this time, with your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, for the records of this House.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, it is with a heart that is full of joy that I stand this morning to say congratulations to first the Ministry of Education, for organizing athletic meetings throughout the country, for the trainers who journeyed for day to day to help our youths. Congratulations. But more congratulations are in place for two schools from the breadbasket of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, I speak of our Valley's number one St. Joseph's Convent Marriaqua. This year in the Inter School Athletics meeting held at Arnos Vale, on March 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> 2002, St. Joseph's Convent Marriaqua was the over all champions for girls. I would at this time, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, make bold to give some details. Top in all the girls' category, junior intermediate and senior, they were third place for intermediate boys, and the outstanding athletes are as follows: Intermediate girl we have Kennique Alexander, then GERALY Jack. The junior girl is Ronnel Laidlow, the boy is Ateba Joseph. Others are Ofnel Trumpet and Lauren Bynoe.

Kennique Alexander of Mesopotamia achieved the following results, she obtained five individual gold medals in shot-put, long jump, one hundred metres, two hundred metres, four hundred metres and she broke the four hundred metres record. She led the team to gold in all the relays in which she participated. One hundred metres, two hundred metres, and four hundred metres. Kennique Alexander was awarded victrix latorum and most outstanding athlete. Kennique left this morning, Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> as the sole athlete from St. Vincent and the Grenadines to attend the Carifta Games in the Bahamas over the Easter weekend.

As I am about to speak of the Emmanuel High School Marriaqua I remember with great respect John Parmenos Eustace the good work that he began in the Valley and in Kingstown, and by extension I remember this morning, a hard working woman, Miss Grace Eustace. I wish to commend the teachers of the school and I wish at this time to say that overall for the boys they were the champions in the interschool athletics meeting, held at Arnos Vale on March 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>. The Girl's also did their part, they were third overall. Mr. Speaker, Honourable members, what more can we ask of our young people in Marriaqua even if we do not have proper playing fields. I am trusting that soon and very soon by God's help that all will be well and that sports can continue to soar high in the Valley. Mr. Speaker, I am much obliged.

**HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable members, I would like to join Minister of Social Development in her congratulatory remarks to those individuals who did so well in the just concluded inter secondary school athletic championship. But before, Mr. Speaker, I move into the athletic field of sports, I want to talk a little bit about table tennis and congratulate the schools and individuals.

Mr. Speaker, during the past twelve months a number of sports have been reintroduced or there have been some new innovation in sports during the past twelve months by the Ministry which is responsible for sports and the sports department, so I want to congratulate the sports department for wonderful job that they have been doing in the past twelve months.

Mr. Speaker, after a lapse of eight years we have seen the reintroduction to interschool table tennis tournament. I said after the lapse of eight years. In this month of March we have seen the reintroduction of table tennis in the schools. Nine schools participated in the boys division, and four in the female division, Mr. Speaker, a while ago the Minister for Social Development was taking credit for her achievements, but I would hasten to say that in the table tennis arena, the Prime Minister constituency have almost taken all the winning trophy's for that division. However, the Minister of Social Development would lay some claim here again as the overall champion was the Emmanuel High School, Mesopotamia. So congratulation to the Emmanuel High School, Mesopotamia in the table tennis competition.

Looking at the individuals who won events, we have Kerry Pierre of Campden Park Secondary School winning the boys singles. Candace Franklyn, Georgetown Secondary, the girls singles. Marlon John and Josel John, Georgetown Secondary, mixed doubles, Candace Franklyn and Josel John Georgetown Secondary, girls doubles and Keston Webb and Sean Browne, Campden Park Secondary, and Mountain View the boys doubles winner.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to congratulate the St. Joseph's Convent Marriaqua on winning the girls division in the just concluded inter secondary school athletic championship. And also to the St. Vincent Grammar school for winning the boys division. Special mention must be made to Miss Kennique Alexander who established a new record in the four hundred metres intermediate girls division. Congratulations to all those individuals and schools that participated and have come out on top are winners in these various competitions. Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members it would be remise of me if I did not speak however briefly on congratulations to the Emmanuel High School on the celebration of their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. As a product of that school, and since we are not going to meet prior to their big celebration I want to pay great tribute not only to the school as an institution, but to those who have led out in that school over the years. Emmanuel High School came on the scene when the major secondary schools in the country were the Girls High School and the Grammar School and of course the founder of the Emmanuel High School John Parmenos Eustace had founded the Intermediate High School and had moved on and created the

Emmanuel High School. This institution came and filled a void that was very, very necessary at that time and provided many of us with an education because the tuition was much cheaper than that of the Girls High School and the Grammar School.

The institution has done a lot to build and mould many of us who are Vincentians, not only in the academics, but in terms of giving us that kind of character that is necessary in order to prepare us for this life and the life to come. Our morning devotion was very inspiring by the Doc who himself was a preacher, and of course there was one course dealing with Bible knowledge which we took up to the senior Cambridge level. The Doc is unique in the history of this country, there is no name particularly for those of us who have attended the Emmanuel High School that is revered to us as the name of John Parmenos Eustace. He was a great man and humble man. He did not seek to accumulate wealth; that was not his aim, he was optometrist by profession but he devoted a great part of his time towards educating young people in this country, and today we have young men and women who are providing necessary services not only in this country, but throughout the world, because of the training which they have received, from Dr. Eustace.

Dr. Eustace was a man who could teach any subject, we had trigonometry, he could teach it, geometry, he could teach it, French, Spanish, Latin, no matter what it was, the Doc was well versed and could teach up to the sixth form and of course there were those on the staff, people like the late Hugh Drakes, people like Walford Thompson, Ruth Eustace, Grace Eustace, all these people have played a significant part in molding the school in its formative years and keeping the school going up to this very day. We are glad for students like Theo Browne the prominent attorney in this country here, Cosmos Cozier, the Counsel General in New York, the Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Trade, the former PS in the Ministry of Industry Wilfred Ollivierre, Miss Greta Stephens who works in the Ministry of Education and Leroy Rose of the Chamber of Commerce. There are many others who have distinguished themselves in the service of this country because of the Emmanuel High School.

We want to thank the Emmanuel High School for what it has done for us as students and hope that the years to come it would continue to render the services to give the quality education, giving a holistic type of education, the mind, the heart, the brain, so that men and women can come and serve this country and make a great contribution abroad. I wish that the Emmanuel High School will continue for another 50 years and beyond and this country would be well served and men and women can receive the benefit of a good education.

## **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the sitting held on the Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2002 copies of which had been circulated previously, were taken as read and were confirmed

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Among the persons who are here with us this morning in the gallery are members of the Spiritual Baptist denomination who I believe are here for the expressed purpose of witnessing the passage of their Freedom of Worship Spiritual Baptist Bill, we want to extend to you a very warm welcome here to the House of Assembly this morning [Applause] and we want expressed to you all the best wishes. Thank you.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, if I may, Mr. Speaker, there are some announcements which I would wish to make as Leader of this Honourable House and being the anniversary of the election of this Government, I would like to make a comprehensive statement about our record of the past year; but I was wondering, Mr. Speaker, if you may permit and under the rules I believe it is possible, so long as we have the concurrence of the House that even though the rules in the Order Paper points to a particular sequence in which matters can be held, I believe it ought to be possible to facilitate the members of the clergy who are here, from the Spiritual Baptist faith to take the particular measure before the full comprehensive statement which I would wish to make, so I would like to suggest if the Honourable Speaker, grants the kind indulgence and permits me to put the matter to the House, because the House can regulate its own procedure that I will make the relevant announcements and then we can take the bill relating to the official recognition of a day for freedom of worship of the Spiritual Baptist May 21<sup>st</sup> that that can be taken before I make the comprehensive statement, Mr. Speaker. What I am suggesting therefore, I make certain announcements and then we can defer the Ministerial Statements until after the particular Bill. If you are kind enough. May I therefore move that Mr. Speaker?

I move, Mr. Speaker, that the sequence in the Order Paper be altered, that after the Leader of the House has made certain announcements that the Bill relating to the official day of recognition Freedom of Worship for the Spiritual Baptist be given priority on the agenda and then we refer to the matter of Statement by the Prime Minister. And I so move.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I am obliged, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my duty as Leader of the House to make a comment briefly on the letter from the Leader of the Opposition regarding the continued protest as he puts it against the Honourable Minister of Tourism. That issue has been canvassed in a motion. I commented upon the silliness of the absence of the Leader of the Opposition and his members on the last occasion and reminded them that they do have a duty to attend this Honourable House because they are paid by the tax payers of this country to do the work. The public ought to be informed as to what is on the Order Paper, you see the business which the Opposition is by their own volition, their own free will, and absurd exercise of their free will what they are ducking. They are ducking the answering of ten questions which they have put in. Mr. Speaker one of the reasons for question time in this Honourable House is for the Government to be held accountable to the people and that persons who are not members of the Cabinet can ask questions and traditionally the Opposition asks the questions even though we have on this side two members of Parliament

who are not members of the executive. Senators Young and George and they can quite properly ask questions, but they have not been doing so, the Opposition; that group has been asking the questions. On the last sitting they tabled eight questions to be answered. For this sitting they tabled ten questions. These questions were put in on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March, did they not know on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March, that the Honourable Minister of Tourism would be in the House. Similarly on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March didn't they not know that the 28<sup>th</sup> March was Holy Thursday, I find that this reflects extra ordinarily poorly on the Opposition; put in questions, apart from the general issue of not coming to do the people's business and being away from work without leave. The putting in questions showing that they are coming to the House and then do not come, so it must mean that they are planning their strategy at the last minute or they are waiting on somebody to tell them what to do, where as a leader I listen to people which I must naturally do, I you incorporate what people say but a leader cannot simply, cannot be given instructions in the way in which the Leader of the Opposition obviously is being given instructions by persons who are outside this Honourable House.

I just want however, Mr. Speaker, to continue with what is on the Order Paper, the questions, reports from the Select Committee on the National Park's Bill and the National Lottery's Authority Bill. Then there is a Commission of Inquiries Amendment Bill, maybe this is one of the reasons why they do not want to come to House today, because in the Commission of Inquiries Amendment Bill, it is the intention of this Government to amend the existing law in relation to the Commission of Inquiries Act to strengthen the power given to the Commissions of Inquiry to take evidence overseas in relation to any matter in which investigation to be done in St. Vincent and the Grenadines is required to be done overseas. And to appoint a chief investigator to investigate certain matters and of course they must know that top of the list is the Ottley Hall, so I am putting the law in place; so this Parliament is putting the law in place to investigate Ottley Hall, and they know that they have a lot to hide at Ottley Hall, perhaps that is why they do not want to come to the debate on that on. I know that a number of persons have been asking the Government and asking the Government and asking me personally, Mr. Speaker what I have been doing, well you know this Government move very swiftly on certain matters but we also move at our own pace because we have to moves with deliberation and we have to put things in order properly, and when the debate comes on that there would be a fuller elucidation of the subject.

Then Mr. Speaker, there is the Finance Bill 2002 this bill contains the provisions which were announced in the last Budget and which were covered up to this point by the provision taxes order and there are four months within which we have to put the finance bill, because after four months the provisional collection of taxes order expires; and they would have had an opportunity to debate those measures and to have second thoughts on certain matters which arose in the budget.

Then today is a most historic day because the Spiritual Baptist official recognition of Freedom to worship bill is coming to the House, is here, this is a culmination of a process of winning freedom for Spiritual Baptist since 1912, when the so called 'Shakerism' Ordinance was put on

the books by the Colonial Government, are we to understand that the Leader of the Opposition does not want to be part of this very historic day, to give an official day of recognition to the Spiritual Baptist for freedom of worship. Well the Spiritual Baptist and other Christian people in this country will make their judgment and conclusions in regards to their absence from this historic meeting, and the importance of this meeting is underscored by presence of so many clerics from the Spiritual Baptist faith.

Then Mr. Speaker, the Carnival Development Corporation Bill is on the Order Paper. So is the Internationally Protected Persons Bill, so is the Act against the taking of Terrorist Bill, and then additionally there are five bills relating to the incorporation of specific churches and a motion against corruption tabled by Honourable Deputy Prime Minister, that is what the Order Paper is today and the public must know what the Opposition has boycotted.

It does them ill to raise concern about the lack of sensitivity displayed by the Government of a Christian community by scheduling a meeting of the House on Holy Thursday. Well it is a meeting of the House on Holy Thursday when we are extolling freedom of worship and acknowledging that freedom of worship; that very day and that is what they are boycotting. And Mr. Speaker, may I just say this, Holy Thursday is no different that holy Wednesday, holy Tuesday or holy Monday. Because on Palm Sunday in the Christian community at least the large section of the Christian community there is one section of religious community which I believe does not recognize Good Friday. That is there own belief. But from the time you have Palm Sunday you have a holy week and every single one of those days is holy. But for the day to be holy does not mean that you do not work. We as Christian's people have decided that we will have a holiday on the Day when Christ died. That is what we have decided. Here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the world over but on all the other days we will work and we will be reverential. Does not mean that we cannot enjoy ourselves, that we cannot have fun but we have to be reverential. And remember God, I wonder how many persons who jump on this political bandwagon of which they are talking prayed this morning, and thank Almighty God for a wondrous day, that we are having and thank Almighty God for deliverance from the NDP administration, [Applause] this being the anniversary.

Mr. Speaker, I am want to say further, last election I requested of the then Prime Minister to consider not holding the elections during lent, he dismissed the thought, he said what nonsense is that. Christian people can't consider who to vote and who not to vote in during elections. I said I just raise the question, because we are a Christian community, I am prepared to fight the elections during lent I am just asking you to give it consideration because you are the man who is calling the date. We must not forget that on Holy Wednesday 2002, they brought here a most iniquitous bill to give themselves enhanced gratuities and pensions and their presence on Holy Wednesday which precipitated their down fall, so I could understand they do not want to be here on Holy Thursday. [Applause.]. You, see Mr. Speaker, if there is an absence of memory. If a leader suffers from political amnesia it is no wonder that these sorts of infantile errors are repeatedly made. But I want Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence and permission to draw to their attention and to the general public and especially to that dwindling minority which still supports

them, that Standing Order 74 of the Rules of the House addresses the question of absence from Parliament by members, elected members and senators. Let me say this, if they did not want to come today because today is the anniversary day of the ULP's victory, next month on the 17<sup>th</sup> of April Mr. Speaker that is the day, I should say in advance, that I would be moving for this House to be adjourned for the 17<sup>th</sup>. That is the first anniversary of our day in Parliament, since our victory, so if they do not like our anniversaries, they will stay away from that one also. Because, we are here because of a democratic event which took place and they will not control when this House meets, because this House meets when the majority decides it is going to meet and we meet I must say with frequency. Today is the 28<sup>th</sup> meeting of the House since we took office. [Applause]. Twenty eight, before under the NDP, the House met with the frequency of the Supreme Soviet, under Brezhnev which was three or four times per year.

Mr. Speaker, Standing Order of this Honourable House, 74(1) states:

“Any Member who is prevented from attending a meeting of the House shall acquaint the Clerk as early as possible of his inability to attend.”

Now, when was this letter written on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March, this morning, so we must presume that as members who would obey the rules of the House that they made this decision this morning, because that's when it came, because you are enjoined by the rules that if you are going to stay away from the House you must indicate very early, and it isn't one letter which should come, because the order says that ‘any member who is prevented from attending a meeting of the House shall acquaint the Clerk as early as possible of his inability to attend.’ So every single one of them has taken an oath here, every single one of them is paid, every single one of them must write, because the question which arises, and this is a matter which we have to give serious consideration to as to whether they should be paid at all.” [Applause].

And Mr. Speaker, 74(2) goes on to state, you see they do not want to come but they want to draw the money to pay their mortgages and to pay for their motorcar. Well they cannot have it both ways. You either come and do the people's work here or you cannot get the people's money. [Applause] Seventy four (2), Mr. Speaker, it says;

“If any Senator or Elected Member is absent from the House for more than three consecutive meetings without the leave of the Speaker....

(and the Speaker has not given leave, the Speaker has not indicated that leave has been sought and that leave has been granted. If you are absent for more than three consecutive meetings, they have been absent for one and then two consecutive meetings; the third one is coming on yet another ULP anniversary.

obtained in writing before the expiration of that period, the Clerk shall, immediately after the third such meeting direct the attention of the Member concerned to the provisions of this Order. If the Member continues to be absent

for the next three meetings, then, unless before the expiration of the last of those meetings the Member has obtained the leave of the Speaker in writing or unless the House upon motion made without notice has granted him leave of absence, he shall vacate his seat under section 29 (3) of the Constitution.”

So if they miss three meetings, they miss next month on the 17<sup>th</sup> the Clerk will write to them saying to them if you miss three more and the Speaker, does not give you leave or the House by a motion does not give you leave, your seat is vacated. That means that Mr. Eustace will no longer be a member for East Kingstown, Mr. Friday will no longer be member to the Northern Grenadines, nor Mr. Ollivierre for the Southern Grenadines and the two Senators will have post vacated, because they were appointed on the basis and elected on the basis, those who are appointed and those who are elected on the basis that they will attend this Honourable House. This is not a joke. This is where laws are made, this is the highest political authority in the land. I cannot do anything as Prime Minister outside the laws of this country and the laws are made here. No citizen can do anything outside the laws of this country. And those laws are made here, and that is why the regulations, the laws are put in place that if you do not want to come, well you resign. Well you do not resign; you are vacated. And there will be a bye-election if they continue the next meeting and then for three others. Well I would like that very much because there is nothing I enjoy more than elections. I used to enjoy them even when I lose, much less to know that I am winning I enjoy them even more. So, Mr. Speaker, I think that I ought to draw these provisions to the attention of the Leader of Opposition and the Honourable Members of the Opposition, and to say to them that the Honourable Minister of Tourism and Culture, the representative for West Kingstown will be in Parliament God’s willing so long as she is healthy and alive, here, and they will have an opportunity to remove her at the next elections, which the law says, I will call, not them, that I will call. So I think let us put all the issues very clear. Because I know there a lot of people who are fooling themselves about a number of things.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I want to make certain specific announcements. The first announcement I would like to make is that yesterday, upon a request for advice from the Offshore Authority which requests me on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March that I have yesterday advised the Offshore Finance Authority pursuant to section 18 of the International Banks Act No. 18 of 1996 that Class 1 International Banking Licenses for the following Offshore Banks be revoked. There are nine of them. 1. Digital Commerce Bank. 2. Rhine Bank AG. 3. Marina International Bank Limited. 4. Bank Net and Finance Incorporated. 5. Vantage Internet Bank Limited. 6. Balted Bank Limited. 7. Platinum Bank Capital Bank Limited. 8. Global Access Bank Limited. And 9. Heritage International Banks Limited. These banks were all banks which were registered by the Offshore Finance Authority during the time of the NDP administration. There are others; many of them are very good banks, in standing, of course you know in relation to two of them a manager has been appointed. The two Nano Banks and there is a legal process now in relation to the liquidation, spearheaded by the Offshore Finance Authority. So I think it is important that I make that announcement. May I just say that I will provide to the press the answer to a question, not now, but I will have the Offshore Finance

Authority give them the data, to give the lie to much of what was said about the decline in revenues for the Offshore industry.

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour also to report to this House that the bond issue which was floated by law, through the law in this Parliament, floated from the first of March; at the end of the three weeks, the bond issue three weeks old, 22<sup>nd</sup> of March that the finance community, the business community, the banking community, the insurance community, ordinary people in St. Vincent and the Grenadines have voted with their money, and though we have asked for bonds for \$30 million, it is up to the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March oversubscribed by \$15.792 million dollars. [Applause] I want to say, Mr. Speaker, and there are two commercial banks which have indicated that they intend to purchase bonds. The people on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March last year voted overwhelmingly for the Unity Labour Party, after one year we went to the financial market to borrow \$30 million in bonds, and from within St. Vincent and the Grenadines and entities operating here they have applied not for the \$30 million but so far they have applied for \$45.792 million that is a tremendous vote of confidence in the Government. So persons can speak on the radio talk shows, be they convicted felons and other persons who wish to traduce the Government and say we have done nothing in a year, well let them go and tell the financial community that we not doing anything. Because this is a vote of confidence, because people put their money, they say they giving you the Government money. And I want to say Mr. Speaker, that the rate of interest which we have offered is lower than the rate of interest offered by Sir James when he floated his last bond issue, which has come due, he has offered 7 ½ and we offering 7, indeed it made me feel that if I had asked them to buy it at 6 ½ I would have gotten it over subscribed also. In fact even I, myself under estimated the confidence which is held for the Government by the business community. Even me. So when the people go on radio to talk, these figures must resonate in their heads.

Mr. Speaker, I want also to announce formally to the House, that the Organisation for Economic Cooperation on Development a group of wealthiest countries in the world, those in Europe, United States, Japan sent out this document to us, they announced this, the OECD is pleased to announced that Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines have made commitments to improve the transparency of their tax and regulatory systems and establish effective exchange of information for tax matters with OECD countries by December the 31<sup>st</sup> 2005. The OECD looks forward to working with Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines and encourages other jurisdictions to come forward with similar commitments. Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines were among 35 jurisdictions identified by the OECD in June 2000. That is during the NDP administration, the OECD put them on a black list as meeting the technical director of being a tax haven. As a result of having made these commitments, under now this ULP Government neither Grenada nor St. Vincent and the Grenadines will be listed as un-cooperative tax haven. You remember that the Opposition has been going up and down the country saying to say that we will never get off the black list, the OECD, they said that don't care what we do, that we would not get off the black list. They make sure that we got on the black list you know, now we got off the black list, you know what they are saying, they are saying by coming off the black list I am going to mash up the Offshore Financial Sector. That

is what they are now saying; when in fact when they were on the black list we say we are trying to get off because if we do not get off the country could be closed down because we would lose corresponding bank accounts. There would be no trade, there would be no. You couldn't send any money outside through other banks or banks outside couldn't send any money here, that is what the black list meant. And in one year, this Government has passed legislation, went through the whole process to the point where the OECD is saying we are now off the black list. There is one black list still in relation to this matter, the Financial Action Task Force; one dealing with money laundering and we have made progress on 22 of the 25-point criteria. And watch us with that one too, but because we are off that black list, you are not going to see any defensive measures taken against us. So the grannies here who expect their cheque in the post they can breath freely, the ULP Government making sure that your money can change at the bank. [Applause].

Mr. Speaker, a letter was written to me by Mr. Johnston the Secretary General of the OECD in response to a letter which I wrote to him on the 26<sup>th</sup> of February and also an attachment. The Offshore Finance Authority has issued a press release on the matter, and Mr. Johnson wrote me this letter on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March.

*“Dear Prime Minister, [this is the man who is in charge of the OECD] I am writing to thank you personally for the commitment made by St. Vincent and the Grenadines to join with the OECD in its efforts to address harmful tax practices. It is now more important than ever for members of the international community to work together to improve transparency and increase cooperation through effective exchange of information. Your commitment to the principles of transparency and effective exchange of information represents an important step forward in this regard. The OECD looks forward to working with you and building upon the cooperation we have now established.”*

I may say, Mr. Speaker, this is an important question of good governance, which is a critical criterion to obtain aid. And that point was reinforced at the monitoring consensus at Mexico, the meeting which I just attended.

Mr. Speaker, I have because everything now we dealing openly, sometimes I respond to some journalists who I believe they say things so that their importance would be increased by the Prime Minister responding to them. But I do not mind that because it's a mock self-importance, of some of them, they said that I wrote this letter, and the commitment, I did not say anything to the people, of course I spoke about it at press conferences, and that I did not make the document available. Mr. Speaker, the document was put on the Offshore Finance Authority Website to which all journalists has access. [www.st.vincentoffshore.com](http://www.st.vincentoffshore.com). I want to repeat it, so they can go on it. [www.st.vincentoffshore.com](http://www.st.vincentoffshore.com). It is there.

Mr. Speaker, I want to announce also that this week we have received a letter from the head of delegation of European Unions, John Caligurou and the Minister of Education and the parents and students especially at the Community College would be pleased to hear this. Subject: Your

Request of 18<sup>th</sup> June, 2001: this is a request made to them on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June, 2001. This is just two and half months after we got into Office. Pleased be informed that the supplementary funding for the construction of the learning resource centre has been approved by the European Commission. A financing agreement will be submitted for signature in the near future; in the meantime the tender for the construction can be launched with immediate effect and without a suspensive clause. That is a project which will be starting of 4.2 million dollars. State of the art.

Mr. Speaker, there is a letter here, I do not have to read it, just to report that I have received a very warm letter, from George Depenar, General Secretary of the Caribbean Congress of Labour to me in relation to my own role and the role of the other OECS countries on the matter of freedom of movement of citizens in the OECS. So the Caribbean Labour Movement supports the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines on this very import policy measure.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak on a matter concerning, on a matter concerning the Government property in Dallas Texas. As you know there was a property which was bought in Dallas, Texas for tourism, the NDP administration had put a lady there Diana Williams, close confidant and friend of Sir James. I had asked Mr. Cruickshank about this matter when he was in Government, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. And he said the Government owns the property, they paid \$225,000.00 for it and not one cent is owed on it. But when we asked the woman to leave the place she said she owns half of it. So I want to give you a report on that. You think it is easy things we have to meet. But I am dealing with them one by one. And those who have any impatience just remember the promises made to you during the election and we are not departing from them. Just remember that. This is the report. I have put this matter in the hands of the Ambassador to the United States, Ambassador Esworth John to follow up on the matter, and this is the report he sent to me yesterday, because I requested an up-to-date report for Parliament.

“In March 1991, the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines purchased a property in Dallas, Texas to used as the office and residence of the tourism sales representative at the Dallas, Tourist Office. The representative at that time Miss Diana Williams signed the documentation for the purchase on behalf of the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.”

She was working there, she just signed on behalf of the Government. In June, 1995 the Director General of Finance and Planning wrote to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs wrote to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Tourism requesting the deed for the property to be forwarded to the Ministry of Finance. In August 1995 the tourism sales representative, Miss Williams sent a copy, of the deed of property to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On April the 24<sup>th</sup> 2001, that is last year after we came to power, we told her we are closing the office, we no longer need her services. Miss Williams was informed by her Ministry that she no longer had a position with the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Miss Williams was later informed that she should hand over the key to the property, to St. Vincent and the Grenadines Ambassador to the

United States, she refused, claiming part owner of the property. In October 2001 a law firm of Hermis Sergeant Bates based in Texas, was asked by our Ambassador to the United States to research the claim by Miss Williams. Because I said this woman isn't a mad woman, let us hire a lawyer to find out whether she owned half of the property, or whether Cruickshank did not tell the truth when he answered me in the House. Based on their report, the lawyers found that Miss Williams claim was without merit. On December the 5<sup>th</sup> 2001, Miss Williams was written a letter by the lawyer for our Government requesting that she execute a special warranty deed in favour of the Government in order to clear the title to the property and also that she vacate the property. On December the 12<sup>th</sup> 2001 Miss Williams responded to our lawyers claiming that the ownership of the property was both in her name and the name of the Government. In this same letter she indicated that she spent, hear this \$111.50 of her personal funds at the closing of the property, she acknowledged that she did not spend any additional funds toward the purchase of the property that was purchased for \$225,000.00 US. She indicated that if the Government wanted to sell the property she would consider selling her half share at 50% of its current value and move out, so she pay for some stamps to put on the document, \$111.50, that is how NDP used to do their business, you know, and because she put \$111.50 she put her name also to the deed. On January the 14<sup>th</sup> 2002 our attorney wrote a letter to Miss Williams informing her that the Government intents to pursue its claim for recovery of full legal title to and possession of the property. Miss Williams was given ten days to respond, she did not respond. In March 2002, this month, the law firm of Hermis Sergeant Bates filed a civil suit on behalf of the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the are awaiting a response from Miss Williams to our suit. At the request of the Prime Minister, that is at my request, the lawyers have been asked to explore whether criminal charges could be brought against Miss Williams, he indicated that he would discuss the matter with the District Attorney for that county in Texas to find out if they would be willing to prosecute her criminally. When you want to thief people's property I not only want back the property for the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines but if under the law of Texas she has committed a criminal offence I want here to be locked up. It may well be that under Texas law, something could happen like that and you do not get lock up, well if that is it so be it, all I want then will be the property for the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. You ever see a thing like this? One hundred and eleven dollars and fifty cents and you claim half share for \$225,000.00 US.

Mr. Speaker, since I have spoken about Mr. Cruickshank I want to say this, I have read in the newspaper and I have received reports also, of a public meeting, the newspapers quotes Mr. Allan Cruickshank former Minister of Government and now Mr. Eustace Leader of the Opposition, that I am spiteful and wicked in not paying the pension and gratuities for Mr. Cruickshank and Mr. Scott. Let me repeat again, just in case people break stick in their ears. Let me repeat again, the position of this Government. This is a Government of laws, and not of men. The law governing the pension and gratuity for parliamentarians, for members of this House of Assembly is clearly set up. It says first of all that you cannot get your pension until you are 55 years old. Neither Jerry Scott nor Allan Cruickshank is fifty-five years old. It does not say in the law, what age you should be to get your gratuity. So therefore, I sought a legal opinion through the office of the Attorney General and the opinion which I received said that

where there is no date in relation to payment of gratuity and there is a specific date for the payment of pension you have to follow that same age because gratuity is nothing but stored up pension. So you get it at 55. I have told Mr. Eustace and I said it openly in this House and other places if Mr. Cruickshank and Mr. Scott feel aggrieved that they have not received their gratuity then they can go to the court by way of an originating summons which in this circumstances not too contentious, a procedure, have the Attorney General as a defendant and asked the Court for an interpretation of that part of the law. And I have said that whatever the Court says I would abide by it, so if the Court were to rule that they should get their gratuity, not their pension as soon as they leave the House I would not go to the Court of Appeal because why should I have any spite against Cruickshank and Scott when I pay Sir James, I pay John Horne, I pay Alpien Allen and I pay Monty Roberts. There is no reason for me not to pay them other than simply the question of the state of the law. But since they are repeating that I have the spite for Mr. Cruickshank let me say this, I did not want to talk about this, and the Deputy Prime Minister is my witness, I was going away sometime last year, towards the middle of the year I think it would have been or just after the middle of the year the Deputy Prime Minister came to the airport to see me off, I met Mr. Cruickshank and his wife, they said to me that they were trying to get me but could not get me they have a problem. The problem was that their son who is a young man I see grow up, whom I like very much said he did not complete his degree in the four years for which he had gotten his scholarship and you know normally if you do not complete your degree in your four years, if you have to go back for any time that is your bacchanal you have to find the money for yourself. And he said that he did not have the money, it cost a whole set of money, \$46,000.00 for an additional semester for three months. The young man apparently had taken some courses which he was not suppose to take and did not take some that he should have taken. I gave instructions to the Deputy Prime Minister I said when you go back tell my officials in the Ministry of Finance to begin to make arrangements for payments for the \$46,000.00 but to get in touch with the Cruickshanks, I had mentioned this to Allan too, that he must get a letter, get his son to get a letter from the university in America explaining the reasons why he has to go back so that we will have a document on record, I gave the Deputy Prime Minister the instructions. Imagine \$46,000.00 for three months. I did not have to do it. The Deputy Prime Minister turned to me and said Comrade Ralph; I am a man of God, but you seeing God face before me. [Laughter] He is here. There was a delay I believe about two weeks because it took sometime for the letter to come and the money was paid. Sometime also, I will just finish the matter with Mr. Cruickshank son. I saw the young man on the road, I was driving one day, I did not know he had come back, when I got to the office, I called the Minister of Transport and Works, and I said Allan's son look as if he is finished because he is back here, give him a job give me nah, down in the ministry. I asked for him to get a job, I am who is spiteful. Forty-six thousand dollars. The young man is going to start working at the Ministry the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April, how can people be so lie and malicious, and traducing people's good name.

Then in July, August, last year, Mr. Cruickshank's daughter who was working at Income Tax she had gone up to the United Kingdom to do a course in Estate Management, she got admitted to Oxford Brooks University, the newspaper quoted Mr. Cruickshank saying Oxford, but she is

not at Oxford, she is at Oxford Brooks, and the NDP did not give her a scholarship. It was in my position to block her from getting the scholarship and I allowed her to get one of the best scholarships on offer, a European Union scholarship. I do not want to talk about these things. But when you go out and you have a bundle of these lies, which are just been told, and these lies are being spread and perpetuated by journalists some of them who claim they are independent. And from time to time, I will select one or more of these lies, which they come with. I cannot respond to all. I just want to let the public understand. Now if I had done all that for a ULP family, they would have had and say the Parson christening the 'pickney' them first. But, when I say together now I mean it. When I say together now, I mean it! We must not have divisions in this country, in this way, we can have political differences, but there are people who are taking advantage of my goodness and my niceness. [Applause]. They are doing that.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I would ask the members of the gallery please to restrain themselves.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, we had promised the people of this country that we will stop cement being sold at Murray's Road; because of my public statements, the people who have been selling cements, carried the cements in some room towards the back, making it not so offensive apparently at the front as it used to be. But still offensive. When I spoke people say well, he just talking. But you see I do not do things, and this Government does not do things by guess. I asked the physical planning unit to draw up for me a comprehensive plan for that area as part of a comprehensive plan for the city. This document, Mr. Speaker, Beachmont Local Area Plan Review. And when this has been subjected to extensive discussions by the professionals I said okay let us move, and yesterday, Statutory Rule and Order No. 25 because that whole area is an educational zone, we are putting the big library next door, the modern library, this is what it said yesterday, Mr. Speaker, this Order may be cited as the Town and Country Planning Zone declaration Beachmont Murray Road Order 2002. 2. In accordance with section 14 of the Town and Country Planning Act the areas of Kingstown East of Murray Road and the Windward Highway, more particularly described in the Schedule hereto are declared a zoned area for a public purpose namely for the development of educational, cultural and associated institutions. The following uses are strictly prohibited, (a) commercial uses of any type or class, (b) industrial uses of any type or class, (c) agricultural uses of any type or class; strictly prohibited. A map of Kingstown delineated the zone area, referred to in this area are available for inspection by members of the public during normal working hours, from March 28<sup>th</sup> 2002 and thereafter for a period of 6 weeks at the following places, (a) the Central Planning Division, Administrative Centre Kingstown, (b) the Registry, Kingstown, (c) the Kingstown Town Board and (d) the Kingstown Public Library. And just in case there is any doubt as to what this order is talking about it refers to all that portion of Kingstown South of the Murray Road Windward Highway, and all lots abutting the Murray Road Windward Highway from the Northern boundary of the lot where trans Caribbean Limited warehouse is located to the Southern Boundary of the property of the UWI centre where it abuts. The Frenches Road to include, and we named Trans Caribbean property, the

Connell's property, Fred Dare property, the Y Hut, the Technical Centre, the Vinsave building, and the UWI centre, in that area there will be no commercial activity of any type or class, no industrial activity of any type or class, no agricultural activity of any type or class, that area is researched for educational, cultural and such associated institutions and naturally for the people like the Bishop who lives there, because it still has a residential component. I know they are going to say that this is politics. But this is to make sure that the children in the area and the children in the community do not continue to suffer the insensitivity of having cement dust in their face and in their nostrils, day in day out. [Applause].

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Member, I want to make an announcement in relation to four letters which have been sent by the Attorney General to the following persons, Sir James Fitz Allen Mitchell, KCMG. Jeremiah Scott Esquire, Randolph Toussaint Esquire, and John Horne, Esquire. These letters are sent to them without prejudice and therefore I do not consider it proper in Parliament to read all the terms of the letter but to say, what the Government has done in relation to these four persons. As you know Sir James bought two acres, three rods, 18 poles, or 184,643.8 square feet of land at Canouan at 40 cents per square foot from the Development Corporation, which is a state owned agency. We have asked the Survey's Department, to survey the land, give us the value of the land what it would have been then and to tell us the difference which Sir James have for us. And the difference he has for us is \$822,506.60 plus \$43,625.33 the 5% stamp duty and we want that within seven days. [Applause]. If we do not get it, that money within seven days we will give him back his \$50,000.00 and take back the land. [Applause]. And if there is any attempt by him to fight the Government on this matter the Government will take certain other steps which is resolute so to take. [Applause].

Secondly John Horne; John Horne purchased from the Government 6,479 square feet of land, Sir James had purchased from DEVCO but DEVCO is Government, John Horne had purchased directly from the Government. He purchased 6,479 square feet of land at \$2.00 a square foot now on examination of the record other people bought land around that same area for \$2.00 so he can say he did not get it at an under value but he was a Minister of Government buying crown land, in our view without certain proper processes being gone through, and the failure to go through certain proper processes in our view constitutes misbehaviour in public office. [Applause]. The first stage is that we are a reasonable people in this Government. We will give you back your money and give us back our land. [Applause] and if you do not do that then the Government is resolute that certain other steps which are open to it will be take. [Applause].

Jeremiah Scott, he also bought crown lands, 20,794 square feet of land at Campden Park at the price of \$144,102.00 according to the estimate done by the Chief Surveyor, the value of the land at the time was such that Mr. Scott owes the Government \$78,280.00 plus \$11,119.10 5% stamp duty within the seven-day period. Again, Mr. Scott has built his house on that land, well he has renovated it, the Government will not be going to take away somebody's house, but his gratuity is in the Government's hand. [Applause]. And there are also certain other steps which are opened to be taken by this Government which if any difficulty presented to this Government we will take with resolution.

The fourth one, Mr. Toussaint, he bought land from DEVCO at 12,957 square feet of land at 50 cents per square foot, by the assessment made by the Government surveyor the land would have required him to pay \$84,220.50 more and we are asking for that and the stamp duty within seven days, if not we will give him back the money and take back the land. And if we meet any problem or opposition from any of those let it be understood that the Government is resolute to take all necessary measures which are to be taken in this regard. All necessary legal measures. [Applause]. I want to say these are four there are others, and please I am asking the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to notice how we are going, do not pressure unduly, we have our time table, we are doing our work and we are going to make sure that the corruption of the past that whoever was corrupt or involved in any practice which is corrupt will not go without there is redress. We gave you that undertaking in the election and we are following through on that undertaking. Permission of Inquires Bill which is coming here will deal with other matters.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say this, those who would have wish us to do these matters earlier forgot one thing, had we come earlier to deal with these matters some of you sitting inside here and some listening to me would say but why Comrade and the team do not get on with the governance of the country and put the thing on a good footing and when you settling properly you make your move. Well I believe that was the wise thing to do, and that is why we are doing like this. And I want to assure you that this Government and this Prime Minister is doing all the work necessary to deal with matters for corruption. There are certain ones we are looking at which we cannot speak about yet. Some people make some reference to Patrick Manning in Trinidad, he have had half a dozen people arrested. But that inquiry was started by Ramesh Maharaj months before with a Canadian investigator and that is why Ramesh and Panday fell out, that is one of the reasons. I start with a clean slate and I tell you this there are some files we cannot find. Do you hear me? There are some files we cannot find. There are some documents we cannot find. But be assured that time is longer than twine and justice grind slowly but surely. Thank you. [Applause].

## **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

### **NO. 5 SPIRITUAL BAPTIST RECOGNITION OF FREEDOM TO WORSHIP DAY BILL 2002**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker in view of the fact we are taking the public business, I think it is proper that I move that the hours, though we may leave a little earlier we can't be sure that they ask for an exemption for the hours of sitting as provided in the Standing Order.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move the introduction and the first reading of a Bill for an Act to provide a date for the Official Recognition of the Freedom to Worship of the Spiritual Baptists' Religion. The object of this Bill is to declare the 21<sup>st</sup> day of May as the day on which the Spiritual Baptists Freedom to Worship is recognized Officially.

**HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER:** Seconded the motion.

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

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move under section 48(2) that the Bill for an Act to provide the date for the Official Recognition of the Freedom to Worship of the Spiritual Baptists Religion go through all its stages.

**HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER:** Seconded the motion.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move the second reading.

**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 GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I want at this time through you to greet the Clergy of the Spiritual Baptist sitting here with us this morning. I do so Mr. Speaker, because as a person who loves culture and who would have been involved over the years. I remember doing work having the history done and I would have learned how the Spiritual Baptist Religion came into being. I remember now Mr. Speaker, how when they would have met from time to time as they struggled for their religious freedom when they meet they would say the words of this hymn 'And are we yet alive, to see each others face, glory and praise to Jesus give, for his redeeming grace.' I would have practised and remember that during their struggles you would have heard the words of this Negro, 'nobody knows the trouble I see, nobody knows but Jesus.' Sometimes I'm up, sometimes I'm down, sometimes I'm almost to the ground. Oh yes Lord. I remember this great emotion, the Negro Spiritual, come ba ya my Lord, some one's praying, some one's singing, some one's suffering. These are hymns that would have been song by the Spiritual Baptists.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like at this time before I move further into the history of the religion to quote from a document gotten from the Internet by Kim Johnson, and it is entitled, "born again in living waters." And speaking of the Spiritual Baptist, Kim said, "there's are the vibrations shared by most Trinidadians, everyone who can move to the music of David Rudder or Super Blue. And although they are not represented in the Population Censuses, the Spiritual Baptist or Shouters are estimated to number anywhere between 100 to 300,000. Listen, she said, to early steel band, the grumbler and listen to a Baptist adoption, says musicologist Mervin Williams, who has written a dissertation on the Churches music and you wonder who influence who. It's the same Trinidad folk element cutting through steel band and religion. And it's not only Trinidad and Brazil, as David Rudder sings, argues Arch Bishop Raymond Obor Douglas of the Mount Pizga Spiritual Baptist Arch Diocese International Limited. In Guyana they are called Jordanites, because emersion started at the Jordan. In Saint Vincent, it's the Shakers. In Jamaica, the Revivalist. But explains Arch Bishop Douglas, apart from a few differences they have all the same general traits. Entertainment of the Holy Spirit, shaking and talking in tongues. It is the Christianity of Africans in the new world."

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, it is believed that the Baptist Religion or the Shaker Religion was practised on the slave plantations. And it was on these plantations that the hymns I quoted before were sang. But it was not until the 1860's that the authorities of the day knew of the existence of Shakerism. The Shakers continued to meet and to build themselves spiritually until in 1903 an ordinance was passed to curtail their meetings after sunset. So in other words, after sunset the shakers could not meet. But in 1912 the religion was declared illegal because it was felt that it catered for African primitivism. The established churches lost many of their members to shakerism and so there was a great fight. But persons continued to hold on to the religion which they believed was right. Up until 1930, George A. Mc Intosh fought to have the religion recognized. And he fought and fought with the existing shakers until the 21<sup>st</sup> of May 1951 when the ban on worship was lifted. George A. Mc. Intosh fought long and hard. The struggle was joined by the late Robert Milton Cato as a lawyer. He fought for its establishment as a religious body. The struggle continued and the number of shakers grew. The struggle was again joined by Ebenezer Theodore Joshua. In the year 1965, Mr. Joshua piloted the Shakers Prohibition Repeal Ordinance through the legislative Council. In the Council, 10 members were for the motion and there was 1 abstention. And this drove R. M. Cato to quote these words, "it was one of the few times when both sides of the House were in agreement and he continued to say that we as a people cannot pay lips service to freedom." He said, "there must be freedom of religion, freedom from want and freedom from fear."

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I hasten to say that the shakers or the spiritual Baptists, they were undaunted. Even though punishments were meted out to them at times, they continued to hold on. Until the 24<sup>th</sup> of July 1978 an Act was passed to give the Spiritual Baptist incorporative status. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of April 1983, an Act to provide for the incorporation of the Archbishop and Primate of the Spiritual Baptist of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was passed. Today March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2002 we are here. It is a historic moment and as Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs, Mr. Speaker, I hasten to say that on this Holy Thursday the Christian

people within our country remember that we became free through Jesus Christ our Lord. Tonight, in many of the churches throughout our country, congregations will meet and we will do what Jesus did many years ago. When he took a towel and wrapped it around his waist, he took a basin with water and he washed the feet of his disciples and asked, “do you know what I have done for you, I have given you the example and that is what you too shall do.” Today I want to congratulate our Prime Minister. A Prime Minister who listens, a Prime Minister who understands, a Prime Minister who does his work, a Prime Minister who gives a hand up and we know the struggles of the Spiritual Baptist. And so today we are here to declare the Spiritual Baptiste official recognizance of freedom to worship day. A day when Spiritual Baptists would be called to come together throughout the State of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and give God thanks and praise for freedom of worship [applause].

Mr. Speaker, I hasten to say and to say in the hearing of the Clergy of the Spiritual Baptist Faith, freedom is not free. We have to pay the price; we have to sacrifice for a liberty. The Spiritual Baptists religion, the Spiritual Baptist people have held on together, regardless of the persecutions and as Minister with responsibility for Ecclesiastical Affairs I so encourage that we continue to do this. Where there is hatred, let us show love. Where there is injury, let us give pardon. Where there is doubt, let us show hope and faith in one another. Let us hold on because we have got one goal, one faith, one birth, one baptism and I am hailing all the Spiritual Baptists, mothers and teachers who are not here with us today in this Honourable House, but who may be listening by radio, I want to let you know that we have freedom in Jesus [applause].

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I wish this Bill a speedy passage through this Honourable House [applause].

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to join the Minister of social Development, Family, Gender Affairs and Ecclesiastical Affairs in supporting wholesomely and fulsomely this very historic piece of legislation. It is very simple but profound. Only two clauses and its brevity, it said it all.

1. This Act may be cited as Spiritual Baptists Official Recognition of Freedom to Worship Day Act 2002.

Clause 2. The 21<sup>st</sup> of May is declared to be the Spiritual Baptist Official Recognition of Freedom to Worship Day. Straight and to the point no beating around the bush. And we took the lesson in not beating around the bush from the great leader, Ebenezer Theodore Joshua who sitting where I am sitting now on the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of March 1965 when he passed a law again with just two sections. It’s called an ordinance, to repeal Shakerism Prohibition Ordinance. Because there was a law in 1912, as the Minister just spoke to you about, which said that as they called in those days, shakers couldn’t worship. I’ll come to the whole story just now. It says,

1. This ordinance may be cited as the Shakerism Prohibition Repeal Ordinance 1965.
- 2 The Shakerism Prohibition Ordinance is hereby repealed.

Joshua brought an end to the Act, the Ordinance of 1912 which was prohibiting Spiritual Baptist, whom they called the shakers, from worshipping. And this happened on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 1965 right here. The late great Ebenezer Joshua I believe he was sitting down in this same type of chair because the chairs last long. But before, so I am going back in the history, yesterday there is the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 1965, then there is the 21<sup>st</sup> of May, which is the day the Spiritual Baptiste recognized officially as the day when they got the freedom to worship. Though it was unlawful, according to the law in 1912. There was a court case and after that court case, the colonial authority stopped prosecuting Spiritual Baptist. And instrumental in that court case is the great late founder of the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Labour Party, the first Prime Minister of this country, Robert Milton Cato, he was the lawyer for the Spiritual Baptist. And after that day in 1951, the colonial authority stopped prosecuting, so that Spiritual Baptist despite the law on this books, from 1912 stop prosecuting. So that is the date in fact, which the Spiritual Baptist recognized. Though Joshua took the law off the books in 1965 on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March. So there is the 28<sup>th</sup> of March 2002, which is today, there is the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February, there is the 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1965, there is 21<sup>st</sup> of May 1951 and then there is 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1912 and that's where legally, this long battle from thence it has been fought. And I want to read the old law so that young people would know what Spiritual Baptist had to undergo. The Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs spoke very well when she said that freedom is not free, meaning freedom you don't get it for nothing. Because there are a lot of people in this country believe you can get things for nothing without struggle. In writing the historic wrong by paying the workers their Severance Pay, which they didn't get for seventeen years, you had to struggle with the U.L.P in order for that to be done [applause] in order to get passed this 1912 Act, the Shakerism Prohibition Act, ordinary Spiritual Baptist and their leaders had to suffer and I will come to the imprisonment and the charges. George Augustus Mc Intosh had to struggle with you because I will talk about his struggle and what he brought to this House. Milton Cato fought it in the law courts. Joshua and Milton Cato in the House here because Cato supported Joshua when Joshua brought the law in 1965 to do away with the law from 1912. And then today the Unity Labour Party Government is bringing to a fitting conclusion this long struggle for your freedom and your recognition [applause]. In 1912 the law which the colonial authorities brought,

**Whereas**, this is how they begin their law you know, listen carefully and I will get a photocopy of this for the church so that you can keep it so young people will, when they come to the church, they must remember how the colonial authorities saw your religion.

**Whereas**, there has grown up a custom amongst a certain ignorant section of the inhabitation of the colony of Saint Vincent of attending or frequenting meetings from time to time at houses and places where practices are indulged in which tends to exercise a pernicious and

demoralizing effect upon the said inhabitants and which practices are commonly known as shakerism. The Colonial Authorities in this law say that. Practices grow up among ignorant people who frequenting these meetings from time to time. Where your practice is, your religion you worshiping you know, they say you indulge in things to exercise a pernicious and demoralizing effect upon the said inhabitants. They say you wicked, you worthless, you ignorant, demoralizing everybody round you. So they had to ban you. And the law proceeds to say that it is in the best interest of the colony and its inhabitants that such meetings and practices should not be permitted. And they went on, you know how they defined a shaker meeting? A shaker meeting shall mean a meeting or gathering of two or more persons whether indoors or in the open air at which the customs and practices of shakerism are indulged in. The decision of any magistrate in any case brought under this ordinance as to whether the customs and practices or shakerism shall be final. No appeal from that. Magistrates so is so. So if you and your wife praying and chanting and singing and worshipping in your way in accordance with your church, that was a shaker meeting and could lock up for that. Even inside of your bedroom. And then they went on to define a shaker house. They didn't call it a church you know, a shaker house. Now, the main churches at that time, the Anglicans, the Methodist and the Roman Catholics, yes, the Roman Catholics and look how things come full circle. A Roman Catholic moving the law to give official recognition and another Roman Catholic heading the Government, say yes, you must have your official day of recognition [applause]. What goes around really does come around. The Colonial Administrator called..., sorry, the churches joined the Colonial Administration at the time and called your religion a blot on the civilization, a blot, a dark mark on the civilization. Your worship, now they don't think so of course. After 1912, I want to draw to your attention what has been happening. I want to tell you about the prosecution. The first years operation of the law, witness a rather grim picture of intimidation, suppression and persecution of shakers. This is in accordance with a man from a university in the United States called Rice University in a booklet entitled, "religious intolerance and persecution" the case of the shakers in Saint Vincent 1900 to 1934. I will give the shakers who they called then, Spiritual Baptist now, I'll give the descendants a copy of this. They called you shakers; well you can read it now. And incidentally, the man who was behind this was a Colonial Administer by the name of C. Gideon Murray. The man whose name is on Murray's road and if I were a Spiritual Baptist, I would call on the Government and start a debate for the change of the name, "Murray Road". If I start it myself, they would say I want to change everything, but if you start it, see what support you can get in your community. Begin the debate, call in on the show and say, Murray is the man, unless you want to have his name remembered for his wickedness. You might say no, you want to keep his name there so every time you drive down Murray road you remember his wickedness. If that is what you want to do that's fine. The first year of the operation, of the ordinance witnessed a rather grim picture of intimidation, suppression and persecution of the shakers. In February 1913, six persons were prosecuted for participating in a meeting at Questelles village. That's the first set of people down Questelles. The police reported that when they entered their house shortly after 10:00 p.m., 10:00 in the night they found about 20 persons inside dancing in a ring and hear what they said nah. Hear what the police report said, emitting occasionally curious grunting noises

like a flock of goats. A colonial issue of praising, they come inside there 10:00 O'clock the night and they see you catch the spirit and you shaking and you singing, they say you grunting like a flock of goats. You see why they say it was a blotter on the civilization? And you see why it is important that we bring this law here today to give you official recognition? To wipe the slate [applause] and the Opposition is missing on a historic day like this when the slate, the dirty slate is being wiped clean to give you the official recognition and sanction. Because when it passed here, it ain't staying here you know, the law is going up to the Governor General who is the representative of the Queen, he will put his signature on it. It would be published in the Gazette and any man or woman who want to change that law afterwards, they have to come back here and change it. They have to come here. But I want to see after we done do it, who brave enough to come here and change it. They go on and they say them singing not in words but to a well-known hymn tune making inarticulate sounds. Those composing the ring as they dance sprang into the air clapping their hands at the same time. The only intelligible sounds, which were occasionally heard, were the words, "the water wheel of Zion." So they prosecute six people for singing and dancing and shaking and saying water wheel of Zion, because they didn't understand anything else what the people say. That is where they prosecute your predecessors in your religion for. They broke up the meeting, five of the six persons charged were convicted even though the meeting had not gone very far at the time and three were fined sums ranging from 20 to 30 shillings, which is a lot of money in those days, payable within seven days or face imprisonment of 14 days to 1 month with hard labour. The young Spiritual Baptist must know this history. That is the first set that were prosecuted. Then they went on and they continued to harass. You know the Administrator after he passed the law he was so pleased, Murray, now he was the Colonial Administrator. He say, I expect that in a few weeks writing to another fellow who was a previous Administrator, but gone to St. Lucia, he say, I expecting that in a few weeks these lodges will likewise be close down and that shakerism in Saint Vincent will be as dead as mutton. Well Archbishop Pompey is not dead as mutton. Archbishop Jones ain't dead as mutton, the following is getting larger. That's what they said you know. They expect you to be finished and they continued to prosecute you and inside here all the prosecutions are reported. Then in 1920 they had nine convictions, eight of these were in Campden Park. The Administrator then, you notice plenty of them down in the Minister of Health Constituency. They are harassing your constituents. The then administrator, Henry Popum Lob, remember they use to play for the Popum Cup, the sports cup. Oh he was very optimistic as to what would happen. He said, it is only in that area, the Campden Park District, that the practice still exist to any considerable extent though it is believed to have a few adherence at Belair and Arnos Vale, on the Windward side of the island. Lob hoped that by keeping the Campden Park under heavy surveillance that he would, to use his words, "to wipe out shakerism completely soon." So Campden Park had the most Spiritual Baptist according to this report around 1920 and they kept it under surveillance and by trying to do that they were hoping to bring it to an end. While Lob was going on like that, there is a gentleman name Haddon Smith wrote to Winston Churchill and told him don't bother with Lob, for Churchill was in the British Government. He says, shakerism will survive for generations. At least there was somebody in the Colonial Government who had a little sense. They say, don't mind the

Administrator it will survive for generations. In 1923, there were 23 convictions; in 1925, 18; in 1927, 22; one person was convicted for each of the years in 26 1930-1931 while there were no convictions even though brought cases. In 1924, 28, 29 and 32 the presence of an alarmingly high 35 convictions in 1933 was followed by 94 prosecutions in 1934 and 14 convictions in 1935. The sudden upsurge of prosecutions and convictions was so great and irritating to the shakers, that members of one group felt constrained to forward a petition to the British King. There is a group here who wrote the King in England complaining of religious persecution and requesting that they be granted and this is their words, "a free written pass sign by your hands allowing them to use the Spiritual Baptist words in the letter to the King." They petition to magnify the name of the Lord in any way. When the pressure was too much here, they wrote the King. They say sign something; give us a pass so that we can practice our religion, so we can magnify the name of the Lord. Just remember that, the young people must remember that too. Now the petitioners, those who wrote the King, noted that they always started their meeting with praying and singing and held a lighted candle in their hands as a guide, because according to them to use their words, "Jesus Christ says, he is the light of the world and our lighted candle represents him. No one can say their prayers in darkness. The church has lighted candles on the altar nobody trouble them why should we be trouble now." That's what they wrote to the King. It seems that the singing, praying and lighted candle was evidence enough for the police to see that a shaker meeting was in progress. One special case of importance to us is that the signer of the petition, is a man from Barrouallie name Hilton Fife. He was fined in 1913 under the shaker ordinance and was prosecuted again in 1933 and was in 1934 as a practicing member of the movement. After 1935 when there was the uprising, the prosecutions decreased, none took place in 1936, none 1937 and only one in 1938. You notice they prosecuting you, but when you took to the street and you protest, just like you did it in 2000, you see how the authorities crumble. When their cause is unjust, they must crumble. They could do whatever little they want to do, but they must crumble. And then of course, bit by bit, the prosecutions stopped though by 1951 for some reason 48, 52 which brought about the culmination of a struggle by the political personalities, by the Spiritual Baptist, by the lawyers in this case Milton Cato, which brought about the day which you recognize. Some people may say you should recognize the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March, because that's the day when the law was wiped from the books, but you say, you made the representation to us say that you want it to be May the 21<sup>st</sup> because that is the day which you recognized as the day from which your freedom of worship started. Now, I want to say this, even though the Roman Catholic Church, Anglican Church and Methodist Church were against the Spiritual Baptist, people who are baptized in those churches became Leaders of the church indicating clearly that their respective churches were not providing for them for whatever reason, the closeness with God which they wanted, for their Saviour which they wanted. The political Leaders Mc Intosh, I have here in my hand a meeting of the Legislative Council of the 5<sup>th</sup> of October 1950. Mc Intosh brought a motion in favour of Spiritual Baptist. This motion in 1950 three people voted for it four vote against and one abstained. In 1950 the 5<sup>th</sup> of October. Mc Intosh himself on the 13<sup>th</sup> of April 1939 had brought a motion that the shakerism ordinance be amended to define what shakerism is. And you see what happen then, Colonial Authorities were held bent on prosecuting shakers. Mr. Mc Intosh tried to get around them by

saying no, people who practice the religion are no shakers, they are Spiritual Baptist. To try to get around them that way Mc. Intosh says, the request was allowed and they put to a vote in 1939 and the motion was passed. In 1939 it was passed. And according to the law, the Legislative Council should have proceeded to repeal the shakerism ordinance, but Mc Intosh say, I understand through the influence of the churches in Saint Vincent, which sent in a petition to the Secretary of State no action was taken. So as late as 1939, the churches was still fighting for the Spiritual Baptist to be legal, to be lawful. In 1944, Mc Intosh was again on them with it and then in 1950 he said, some time ago, this is 1950 we had a conference comprise of those persons interested in having their own kind of worship and sections of the community from all over the island at that conference. We formed what we called the Spiritual Baptist Church, and elected certain of its holders. Mr. McDonald Williams was elected Pastor in-charge. Myself and others who are endeavouring to stamp out shakerism were given to the church that charter to see that the practices were not carried out. In order words, they were trying to get around the law and Mc Donald Williams himself, the Chief Pastor, wrote to the Spiritual Baptist and say they must make a distinction between themselves and shakers because of the law on the books. He is being tactical and sensible to get round the Colonial Authorities. And that is why even names were changed from Spiritual Baptist to Christian Pilgrim. All that happened in the fight, in the struggle. Then you can get here from the House, I can ask here in the House, the Clerk of the House, to get you the debate in 1965, Monday the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March where Joshua moved the passage of the law, and Cato supported it, to throw away the law out of 1912, to pass the law from 1965. Mr. Cato then who had defended 25 persons in 1948 at a Court House in Mespo and had them acquitted. He called, in the debate in 1965, the law of 1912 a vicious and pernicious ordinance. So it is all the great leaders in this century, Mc Intosh, Joshua, Cato and now Girlyn Miguel they fight for the freedom of Spiritual Baptist.

Mr. Speaker, we consider today a most historic day. We had, during the previous Labour Party Administration, two laws passed putting organizations on the books. The first one was in 1978, Spiritual Baptist Organization of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was given the right to hold property in its own name and had its own charter. And then in 1983, under the previous Labour Party Government, an Act was passed to provide for the incorporation of the Archbishop and Primate Spiritual Baptist of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. This was on the third of May 1983. And was an Arch Diocesan Council made up of his beatitude the most Reverend Percival Berkley Dick, of blessed memory, Archbishop and Primate. The Right Reverend Conrad C. Sutherland, Bishop, the venerable Reverend Harry Arch Deacon, the Reverend Duff Walker James of blessed memory, Arch Diocesan Secretary, the Reverend Cosmus Pompey Superintendent Minister North Windward who is now the Arch Bishop. Reverend Jobe Ferdinand, Cannon. The Reverend James Cupid Superintendent Minister Marriaqua and the Reverend Edmond John, Superintendent Minister for East St. George and their successors in Office. And then we had Dr. the Honourable Barbara Burke, Archbishop in Trinidad who came up to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to perform a celebration of the service and the elevation of Johnny Jones, Pastor, to the position of Archbishop both of Mt Carmel in Chester Cottage and also of a church in Trinidad and a church in New York.

I don't want to introduce partisan politics in this, but you notice between the period 1957 to 1967 when Ebenezer Joshua was heading the Legislative Council as it was then called, they passed the law on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March which made the practice finally legal, though it was legal from by way of practice since 1951 on the 21<sup>st</sup> of May. So there is law favouring Spiritual Baptist, which Joshua passed. There were two laws passed by the Milton Cato Administration favouring Spiritual Baptists. Spiritual Baptist Organization of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Act and the 1983 Act of the Incorporation of the Archbishop and Primate Spiritual Baptist Act of 1983. For seventeen years, the NDP in power, despite the fact that my colleague Parnell Campbell was Chancellor, the NDP did not bring one law in this House [applause] for Spiritual Baptists. Today we are one year old in this House and we bring the official recognition of the Spiritual Baptist Day culminating in a victory for your long struggle [applause]. When I say the proof of the pudding is in the eating, there are some who would talk and run their mouth, but it is by your deeds that you are known, the person. I came in this House and I told the Leader of the Opposition who had made a prediction, he has been making predictions that election is coming. He says that he had to ring the bell. He says that election is coming soon. He first of all say three month I would last, then six months, I could last the hold of last year, I couldn't last a year that's what they said you know, the bell ringing soon. So I told him, I say something is wrong with your head. It look to me like when you drink in the night and you eat too much food and you lie down like a man who do that and when you get up in the morning food ride your stomach and you believe that you have a vision. You ain't get no vision from the Lord is the food just ride your stomach and you tek up bell and yo start ring it. He say that I say Spiritual Baptist. The convicted felon led him to say that on his programme. And then Archbishop Jones who had heard what was said called in and said, the Prime Minister did not say that. Called in on a radio station, spoke I believe to the television. Pastor Pompey, the son of Archbishop Pompey also made a similar statement. You think that the Leader of the Opposition and the convicted felon would say that they made a mistake, no. They start to attack the Lord's anointed. The attack Archbishop Jones personally and attack Pastor Pompey. Well when you reach that stage, is it any surprise that the devil make them stay way today from this historic event? [Applause] touch not the Lord's anointed. It is any surprise?

Mr. Speaker, at a personal level, and that was pointed out by the gentlemen and others. Mr. Speaker, when I returned to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines finally to put down my bucket among the people in 1981, in July, I run election around 1970, my good friend and my colleague the Honourable Minister of National Security. I came as a young upstart and he whip me thoroughly. He taught me many things and I still learn from the master. I was approached by the Leaders of the Spiritual Baptist Organization of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines headed by the late Bishop Blucher. They came to me, Mr. Bayliss Frederick had been their lawyer and I try to form a Spiritual Baptist Friendly Society. Bayliss was going back to Trinidad and told them the man they believe they should come to, to do the legal work to put the thing on a proper footing because what Bayliss had prepared had been rejected by the Magistrate and by the Registrar. So I took the document, revised it and got Theo Brown,

was then Registrar to accept it. Theo Brown is right here, he is in the gallery and he is the Registrar who signed on and signed the Certificate of Registration. I think is January 1982, though it was established earlier, January 1982 is the date or late December 1981, the date when the Spiritual Baptist Friendly Society was registered. I did the work as a lawyer. And from 1981 until I became Prime Minister I worked for the Spiritual Baptist Friendly Society as a lawyer free of charge [applause]. Every Christmas they will come to see me and give me a gift expressing their gratitude. Before the document was registered they said that they wanted me to be the Chancellor of the society, but what Bayliss had left for me, the role of the Chancellor was a very elevated role and the Chancellor would have been required to attend every funeral and they garment was described with particularity which you had to wear. You had to wear the guard as a Chancellor, you have to put on the spiritual guard you have to put your colour, and you have to have on all your arrayments and so forth. I told them, I say I am a Roman Catholic, I am not a Spiritual Baptist, I can't put on those raiments. It would be hypocritical. So we discussed it and I was given the job as Warden of the friendly society so that other people other than Spiritual Baptist could join the friendly society. So I was the lawyer for the church from 1981 until I became Prime Minister. And I was Warden of the Friendly Society until not too long ago since I became Prime Minister because I demitted office as Warden because as Minister of Legal Affairs Friendly Societies are under my responsibility. So I can't be a Warden of a Friendly Society and have to supervise them. I am the godfather of Mt Carmel Spiritual Baptist Church, one of the four godfathers. I worship in all churches including Spiritual Baptist Churches and in my work as a Warden as the Warden for the Friendly Society I had on many occasions to go to the church because that was the organizing core of the Friendly Society. And I never used my association with the Spiritual Baptist for political purposes, never in my life and will never do so. Before in the election in 1989, Bishop Blucher came to me with his whole team. He said Comrade Ralph, election coming up you ain't even talk to us. I say I don't have to talk to you; I don't want to use the church. You know me you know my work if you want to support me support me, if you don't want to support me so be it. And it is the same spirit with which I come with this law. But I know there is a God of righteousness and there is a devil of wickedness and iniquity; and righteousness will triumph and the lies and slander which are perpetrated against this Government by a tiny minority, they will not prevail, because the majority of the people in this country and the grace of God is upon us.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I wish this Bill a very speedy passage.

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

**HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to give support to this Bill for an Act to provide a date for the official recognition of The Freedom to Worship of the Spiritual Baptist Religion. The Honourable Prime Minister has given the historical background including the Parliamentary background in respect of the struggle of this particular religious sect. What I rise to say Mr. Speaker, is to just put a little red rose

flowering on this particular day. And I wish to draw to Honourable Members, the provisions of our Constitution, Section 101 which says:

“This Constitution is the Supreme Law of Saint Vincent, and subject to the provisions of this Constitution, if any other law is inconsistent with this institution this Constitution shall prevail. The other law show the extent of the inconsistency be void.”

I quote that section because Mr. Speaker, in the preamble to the Constitution of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines it reads as follows:

Whereas the people of the Islands of Saint Vincent who are known as Vincentians,

- a. have affirmed that the nation is founded on the belief in the supremacy of God and the freedom and dignity of man.
- b. desire that this society be so ordered to express the recognition of the principles of democracy, free institutions, social justice and equality, before the law.
- c. realize that the maintenance of human dignity, pre-supposes, safeguard and rights of family life, of property and of fostering of the pursuit of just economic rewards for labour.
- d. desire that the Constitution should enshrine the above mentioned freedoms, principles and ideas.

### **Protection of fundamental rights and freedoms**

1. Whereas every person in Saint Vincent is entitled to fundamental rights and freedoms, that is to say the right, whatsoever his race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or sex, but subject to respect for the rights and freedoms of others and for the public interest to each and all of the following mainly:
  - a. life, liberty, security of the person and protection of the law.
  - b. (an important one) freedom of conscience, of expression, and of assembly and association and that these provisions of this chapter shall have effect for the purpose of affording protection to those rights and freedoms. Subject to such limitations that protection has contained. The limitation designed to ensure the enjoyment of the said rights and freedom by any person does not prejudice the rights and freedoms of others and the public interest.

I quote these sections of the Constitution Mr. Speaker, particularly to outline that we should never take for granted our fundamental rights and freedoms. The Prime Minister dealt with

the enforcement of the rights and freedoms before this independence Constitution and as an independent nation, and as an administration conscious of the rights and freedoms of people and in listening to the voice of the people and in listening to the urging of the anointed sons and daughters of the Spiritual Baptist faith, that we today come in this Honourable House to bring this Bill for this Act. But in doing so we also wish, I also wish at this time to quote just briefly, the protection of freedom of conscience. And I would like the anointed sons and daughters of the Spiritual Baptist Faith and the Leaders, Preachers and Pastors, Deacons and Evangelist, Bishops and Archbishops to listen to this Provision.

“Except with his own consent, section 9 of the Constitution, a person shall not be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of conscience including freedom of thoughts and of religion, freedom to change religion or belief and freedom either alone or in community with others and both in public and in private, to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observers, those are your fundamental rights and freedoms guarantee to you under this Constitution of our country.”

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, when the Leader of the House was giving that historical account, I remember that there are many members but one body. I remember that it must have been a painful sacrifice for so many people to be treated as outcast, down trodden, nobody, not counted. And I remember the night at midnight when this Constitution proclaims those fundamental rights and freedoms. When we practise therefore these fundamental rights and freedoms, remember always to do so in a spirit of dignity and service as you have always done. But on this day, 21<sup>st</sup> day of May which will be the first time in the history of this religious body. The day on which the Spiritual Baptist is officially recognized, their freedom to worship day, worship in spirit and in truth, worship with joy, worship holy in the holy books and declaring the word of God. Shout it from the rooftops, ring your bells, wear you garments with grace and with praise and with power, your day of recognition has come. Throughout the world, you read on calendars and almanacs Mr. Speaker, President’ Day, Republic Day and ours, National Heroes Day, Independents Day, the Spiritual Baptist Day has arrived [applause]. Therefore all evangelists of this faith welcome people to the flock and ring with them in their hearts what is really the bell of freedom because no freedom is easily won as this battle has shown through the discourse given by the Honourable Prime Minister. Remember that this freedom to worship day is a day that you should keep holy, like any other day, as Pastors, Preachers, Evangelists and Teachers. Teach the little ones because I have noticed that there is small set that is suddenly teaching people in this country to be disrespectful of older persons. To be disrespectful of people wearing the cloth, to be disrespectful to the Honourable Members of this Honourable House, I believe is perhaps the only country in the world where people believe that their freedom of expressions puts laws on vacation otherwise. No law is on vacation in this country [applause]. And those who failed to so recognize that in heaven there is an order and therefore there is an order under the sun and under the heavens. And that order will soon be brought to bear. The people of this country, one year ago went to the poles in a free and fair election Mr. Speaker, free and fair and the

people have spoken. And this Administration has taken up the candle that the people have given us. Because the people have given us light, the people have given us light and we are letting the light of the people shine and believing in that light, they said, let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and today we are demonstrating the good works which the people have asked us to do for them [applause]. And by the will and the power of the people Mr. Speaker I wish this Bill a speedy passage through this Honourable House and I give it my wholehearted support in all that is within me, amen. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Labour.

**HONOURABLE EDWIN SNAGG:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I want first of all Mr. Speaker, through you to greet the Members of the Clergy of the Spiritual Baptist Movement.

Mr. Speaker, this is the day that the Lord has made, [applause] I want to offer commendations to this Administration of which I am part for bringing such a legislation to this Honourable Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to give my support to this Bill of official recognition of the freedom to worship of the Spiritual Baptist religion. Mr. Speaker, we have heard so much that I don't think that there is any need for any further lengthy debate. However, I think that it will be a remiss of me not to rise Mr. Speaker, in support of this Bill and to make a few statements.

Mr. Speaker, the Spiritual Baptist movement, whether we want to call it Spiritual Baptist, shouter, shaker all on the same, maser bull, maser cow [laughter].

Mr. Speaker, but it gives me great pleasure to see the clerics of this illustrious faith sitting in this Honourable House Mr. Speaker, [applause]. Mr. Speaker, it is widespread and full knowledge that this is a faith that has gone through a period of struggle, a faith that has been misunderstood, a faith that has been misrepresented, ridiculed and could find all sorts of adjectives Mr. Speaker, to describe what the Spiritual Baptist religion has gone through in the Caribbean.

Mr. Speaker, it is a faith that practises baptism by emersion. It is a faith Mr. Speaker that practises mourning as a means of spiritual purification and advancement in the faith. Is a faith that practise bell ringing, often misunderstood and it is a faith Mr. Speaker that carries out the recognition of the visitation of the Holy Spirit [applause].

Mr. Speaker, in order to understand this faith, in its in-depth circumstances, one has to be part and parcel of that particular fraternity. Mr. Speaker, a faith that is so original and so authentic, having its grounding coming out of West Africa being practised by the first generation of

slaves in the Caribbean. Has changed over the years Mr. Speaker, its format of Yuroba beliefs together with Creole doctrines eventually with the induction of Christianity.

Mr. Speaker, it is widespread knowledge that the Colonial Masters encouraged the Christian churches or encouraged Christianity into the Caribbean and it was used as a means and a method to control the non-European population.

Mr. Speaker, this illustrious faith who today we recognize their day of freedom of worship is one Mr. Speaker, that is steep with a particular type of culture separate and distinct to any other. Mr. Speaker, the period 1912 to 1951 is a dark blot in the history of the Caribbean in terms of the freedom and privileges and rights of the individual. But I want to commend this administration for the continuous righting of historic wrongs, so many has taken place and this is but just another one [applause].

Mr. Speaker, the Spiritual Baptist faith or the Spiritual Baptist religion is one that is supposed to be now so seasoned, so organized and so together because of the period of struggle. And any organization or group of people who have gone through the type of struggle that the Spiritual Baptist religion has gone through is an organization that is supposed to play a very significant role in development of the country [applause].

Mr. Speaker, and I want to quote here from the words of Franz Fanon, “is the Spiritual Baptist movement prepared to sit and settle just for its recognition or is it prepared to go forward in a very objective way after having spent all this time in the wilderness, observe, you nearly spend as much time as Israel, 39 years”, Franz Fanon said, “Should we continue to be hunted and penned in an inglorious spot?” For that is what took place with the Spiritual Baptist and when a man, Mr. Speaker, found himself in a position where he cannot worship his God as he sees fit, Mr. Speaker, as a flagrant attack on any Constitution, it’s a flagrant attack on the freedoms and privileges of any individual and any society. Because if a man believes that if he takes two sticks and knock them together that his God will hear him then so be it, then so be it.

Mr. Speaker, the unification of the Caribbean is not a matter that is high on our agenda. We have just done in this Honourable House, the passage of a Bill encouraging free movement through the O.E.C.S. We have a Prime Minister who is a Catalyst in the vision of a unified Caribbean. Mr. Speaker, but the Spiritual Baptist movement in itself has transcended the shores and boundaries of every single island in the Caribbean [applause]. It is a classic example Mr. Speaker, of Caribbean Unity. There isn’t one place in the Caribbean that you will go and don’t find a Spiritual Baptist Church. If there is somewhere that you don’t find one, it is probably some off shoot in which some individual feels to divert from some of the rituals and some of the practices. But the base likewise would have been the same.

Mr. Speaker, the Spiritual Baptist man and woman in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines played a significant role in the spread of this religion throughout the Caribbean and he

continues to do so. And if you permit me Mr. Speaker, I want to just quote here from a book written by C. M. Jacobs and ironically, the name of the book is "Joy Comes in the Morning." How synonymous does that sound with the Baptist faith, that joy cometh in the morning. And I want to quote here Mr. Speaker, the reports of the deliberations of the Legislative Council of Trinidad and Tobago. Also provide an idea of the origins of the shouter Baptist faith. The debate on the Bill to introduce the shouters prohibition ordinance on the evening of 1917, November 16 began with an address to the Council of the Attorney General who said in part and I quote:

"Apparently the shouters have had a somewhat stormy history from all I have been able to learn regarding them, they seem, if they did not arise there, to have flourished exceedingly in Saint Vincent and to have made themselves such an unmitigated nuisance that they had to be legislated out of existence. They then came to Trinidad, and continued complaints have been received by the Government sometime passed as to their practices."

Mr. Speaker, I want to quote even further, and I want to quote here from an American Anthropologist, Jeanette H. Henny, and this Mr. Speaker is her quotation:

"Because of the Vincentian derivation, the shouters or Spiritual Baptist of Trinidad would be expected to bear a close resemblance to the shakers of Saint Vincent. They appeared in Trinidad presumably with the same beliefs, system and practices that the Spiritual Baptist had at the time of migration. After they became established in Saint Vincent, the Spiritual Baptist as already mentioned, spread to Trinidad where they found fertile ground for growth and where they were considered sufficiently problematic for the legislators to outlaw them in 1917."

Mr. Speaker, it was a calculated attempt by the Colonials at the time. They outlaw them in Saint Vincent in 1912 and then did it in Trinidad in 1917. But this gives us a clear indication as to the role that the Spiritual Baptist man and woman from Saint Vincent played in the development of the religion in Trinidad. And those of you who would be familiar, would know that in every nook and every cranny in Trinidad where the religion is practiced extensively, would know that many of these churches that their mothers or their leaders or pointers are either Vincentians, most of the time 90% Vincentians [applause].

Mr. Speaker, this religion encompasses the masses of the people. The uniqueness of this religion is that 90% of the Spiritual Baptist religion is poor people, 90% of them are the masses, and there is no two ways about it. And in keeping with the policy of the Unity Labour Party, of this Administration, to look after the poor and to look after the oppressed and to look after the down trodden. Mr. Speaker, this is a fitting tribute [applause] to the policy and manifesto of the Unity Labour Party [applause].

Mr. Speaker, as I said I don't think that there is need for much lengthy debate. I think that the Honourable Prime Minister has done a post mortem, a historical review of what took place in Saint Vincent with the shakers or the shouter Baptist, but I feel a certain sense of joy this afternoon you know. Because you see I speak to you today not only as a politician or as a member of the Administration, but I speak to you today as a Spiritual Baptist [applause] you know. You see Mr. Speaker, the Spiritual Baptist have a voice, you see at one time in Trinidad there was a Senator, Archbishop Barbara Burke and at some time also there was the Honourable Parnell Campbell who was here and there are others. But Mr. Speaker, I could speak about the Spiritual Baptist with proof and with authority, because it is not for political gain or anything of that nature Mr. Speaker, because I understand the rituals, the practices. I understand Mr. Speaker, the trembles, the shake, and the doption. I understand Mr. Speaker, the hieroglyphics that are written on the bands. I understand Mr. Speaker, the small and lowly shelters that exist, sometimes behind houses, in downstairs and in small places. Because I understood Mr. Speaker, sometime ago over 27 years ago that how it feels to have the icy chilly water in the wee hours of the mornings in baptism and I understood also Mr. Speaker, to enter into the secret place call the mourning chamber to be pointed Mr. Speaker, by some 'hooker, transcend boundaries of the spirit. And I heard Honourable Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs, Honourable Girlyn Miguel speak a little while ago about Archbishop Raymond Obor Douglas of the Mt Prisca Spiritual Baptist Diocese who is incidentally my spiritual father [applause].

So Mr. Speaker, I feel a particular kind of joy today and I am extremely happy to be associated with what is taking place and with this Bill that is brought to this Honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, I want however, to say to my brothers and sisters in the Spiritual Baptist religion, that the time has come for your elevation. The time has come for you to elevate yourselves, to play a more meaningful role in the society, the time has come for you to stand up and to be counted and I look forward to the society as a whole embracing the Spiritual Baptist religion and I am not talking about those who will seek your assistance in the dead of night or in the wee hours of the morning, but I'm speaking about those who will invite you to their prayers and invite you to their sessions and whenever there was the opening of public places and public functions that the clerics of the Spiritual Baptist religion could stand as any other and to open prayers or to bless a building [applause]. I look for Mr. Speaker to an easy passage of this Bill, now I wishing, normally we sometimes say, I wish this Bill an easy passage. Mr. Speaker, I am not wishing anything here, because it ain't no wish here, this Bill will be given a safe and easy passage and God bless. Thank you. [Applause]

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs.

**HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let me say that I had no intention of speaking because I figure the speeches by the previous speakers have covered a number of items that I would have had to say. But there is such a thing as

contagious inspiration and having listened to the other speakers waxing so eloquently, having come from a different faith, I thought lest my silence be interpreted that I should give full assent, vocal one to the passage of this Bill. One of the rare ironies of our times is that a people who for 90 years have been on this journey are now sitting before us. At one time these people were not able to worship in their own homes but today they sit in the highest House of the land, the Parliament of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines [applause]. They have been subject to ridicule sanction, but today we uphold them as brothers and sisters believing in one God. However divergent our doctrinal points might be, yet they are our brothers and sisters because we believe in one God.

Mr. Speaker, I am not defending the rights of any particular group to practise their religion. I seek to uphold freedom in its entirety. When I defend the rights of a Spiritual Baptist to practice their religion, and when I give recognition to their struggles over the years, I am doing this because I am subject to the same thing, for freedom is indivisible. By upholding your rights and your freedoms I am upholding my rights and my freedom also [applause].

Mr. Speaker, one of the greatest enjoyments of our society is our democratic right. And what we are enjoying here now, freedom of worship, freedom of conscience, this is the greatest antidote to tyranny. For anytime there is any organisation, institution or individual who seeks to circumscribe our way of worship, who seeks to squelch our freedom of conscience, we are moving from that freedom which we normally, and should, have and we are enjoying nothing but tyranny. And so we have enshrined in our constitution certain fundamental rights and these are God given rights that should be given by the State or taken away by the State. These are God given rights every man has the right to practise their own religion according to the dictates of his conscience; and that is God given. That should not be permitted by the State and should not be taken away by the State. That is given to you by God, it's a fundamental freedom and without the pillars of this freedom as I have said, what we would have is tyranny.

Mr. Speaker, the 90 years have been a journey for Spiritual Baptists. They have had their ups and downs. They have been in the valley and they have been on the mountaintops. But yet they can come today and smile, realizing in the words of Isaiah that what they are enjoying now is because their persistence, because of their devotion and I tell you, today is a day of great rejoicing. They can shout with the words of Isaiah that every valley shall be filled. Every mountain brought low. The crooked shall be straight, the rough places smooth and all flesh shall see it together for the mouth of the Lord had spoken it. So though there might have been mountains in your way, because of the tenacity of your faith you were able to say, mountain get out of my way. I speak to you in Jesus Name, mountain get out of my way and the mountains have been removed and today we celebrate the recognition of your day.

Mr. Speaker, I admire the Spiritual Baptist, because they are never too tired to attend their places of worship. When they come home, many of them are poor people, from the mountain, if even it takes just a little wash in their face and hand, they are in their places of worship to worship. They are devoted to their church and they are devoted to their brothers and sisters.

But let me warn them with just this warning; if you may take a warning from a brother, you cannot allow the vision to separate you as brothers of one denomination. Never allow that to divide you. You have one faith, one baptism, one Lord. Whatever is your personal difference, put that aside and unite as one Spiritual Baptist Organization [applause]. Yes you have travelled long and you have come far, but you must realize that they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles, run and not be weary, walk and not faint. If you have fainted you would not have been here today. And I look forward to the day when Spiritual Baptist as well as other religious organization, when someone would ask who are these, particularly of the Spiritual Baptist someone will answer, these are they that come through great tribulation, have washed their robes and make them white in the blood of the lamb. Through persecution, through prosecution, through legal sanction, through social ostracism, through scorn and ridicule, you have come this far by faith and faith will see you through. God bless you [applause].

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Mr. Speaker, I move that the House resolved itself into a Committee of the whole House to consider the Bill clause by clause.

*House went into Committee.*

*House resumed.*

*Bill reported, read and passed Committee Stage without amendments.*

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be read a third time by title and passed.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill read a third time by title and passed.*

## **SPIRITUAL BAPTIST OFFICIAL RECOGNITION OF FREEDOM TO WORSHIP DAY ACT, 2002**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, this is a time as both the Deputy Prime Minister and our Pastor in the Spiritual Baptist faith, Senator Snagg, it is said that they did a tremendous job and I am very glad that we have all lived to see this day and to indicate now to the thousands of Spiritual Baptist that the Bill will now be sent to His Excellency the Governor General for Assent and upon him given the Assent which will be given, the Bill will be published and upon its publication, it will become the law of the land. What we have done here, the Bill has passed through the House, and the Governor General has to sign his Assent. Of course the Governor General Assents Bills sent to him by the House.

It is my understanding Mr. Speaker, that the Spiritual Baptist denomination, the faith would be holding a big celebration on May the 19<sup>th</sup> which is the Sunday before May the 21<sup>st</sup>. Of course, May the 21<sup>st</sup> is the official day, but if they feel that they want the Sunday immediately preceding they may wish to have a rejoicing on the celebration of this particular official recognition, well that is in my own view a very wise decision because it will be on the Sabbath also. I want to give the undertaking that the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, this ULP Administration will support the Spiritual Baptist faith, the various churches in their celebration of this particular official day of recognition. We would not just pass this day for your official recognition, and not assist you in practical ways in helping you have this celebration properly carried out. I want to give you that undertaking and that assurance on behalf of this House [applause].

Mr. Speaker, it leaves me to thank very much the members of the Spiritual Baptist faith and their Clergy, coming here to witness this very historic event. I beg to move the suspension of the House for the Luncheon interval for one hour Mr. Speaker. We return at 2:45 p.m.

*Suspension 1:45 p.m. Lunch.*  
*Resumption 3:10 p.m.*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I want to suggest that in the light of the acceptance which has been given by the Honourable House, for the business of the House to proceed as we have been proceeding and maybe towards the terminal stages of the meeting of the House today, the statement can be made which we had deferred.

Mr. Speaker, I think what we are on now is the reports from the Select Committee.

## **REPORTS FROM SELECT COMMITTEES**

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

**HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I wish to report that the said Committee had not yet completed its deliberations and our last meeting has been adjourned to sit on the 11<sup>th</sup> April when we hope to complete our deliberations.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I am the Chairman of the Select Committee on the National Lotteries Authority Bill. A Committee which included one Member from the Opposition, the Honourable Senator Leacock, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition was absent and we are almost finished with the Select Committee work. But at the request of the Member from the Opposition on the Committee, he asked that we continue on the 11<sup>th</sup> and that has been agreed to. So the work will be completed on that particular day and we will be ready for the next sitting of the House. I'm obliged.

## ITEM NO. 4 FINANCE BILL 2002

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move an Act to amend the Acts contained in the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order No. 30 of 2001.

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move under Standing Order 48 of the rules of this House, the Bill be taken through all its stages and passed today.

**HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER:** Seconded the motion.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that the second reading of a Bill for an Act to amend the Acts containing the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order No. 30 of 2001.

**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, there ought not to be any lengthy debate on this particular Bill because what we are doing today it is to satisfy the requisites of the law to put into place formally the fiscal measures, which were contained in the 2002 Budget Debate, which took place in November, December last year. As Honourable Members are aware, the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order brings into being by a Statutory Rule and Order, the measures contained in the Budget presentation by the Minister of Finance. And that the law requires that a Finance Act incorporating all the measures contained in the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order be brought to this Honourable House within four months. And we are within that time frame Mr. Speaker. The measures are those which had been dealt with already and which has been fully ventilated and debated and there is really no need for me to do anything more than to present this particular Bill in the light of the Budget presentation and the Provision Collection of Taxes Order. I'm obliged.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Any further debate on the Bill? Mr. Prime Minister.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable House resolves itself into a Committee of the whole House to consider this Bill clause by clause.

**HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER:** Seconded the motion.

*House went into Committee  
House resumed  
Bill reported, read by title and passed with minor amendments.*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move the third reading of a Bill for an Act to amend the Acts containing the Provisional of Taxes Order No. 30 of 2001 and that it 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.*

**FINANCE ACT 2002, ITEM NO. 3 COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY (AMENDMENT) BILL 2002.**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move the first reading of an Act to amend the Commissions of Inquiry Act Chapter 14 of the Revised Edition of the Laws of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines 1990 Edition. The objects of this Bill is to amend the Commissions of Inquiry Act Cap. 14. To widen the power of the Governor General. To set up Commissions of Inquiry. The Bill also permits Inquiries to be held in other countries and provides for the engagement of the services of technical advisers to the Commission.

**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 Standing Order 48 that this Bill be taken through all its stages at today's sitting and passed.

**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 a Bill for an Act to amend the Commissions of Inquiry Act, Cap. 14.

**HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER:** Seconded the motion.

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

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Any debate on the Bill? Honourable Prime Minister.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, this Bill before us is a most important one. It seeks to make fundamental amendments to the Commissions of Inquiry Act, which came into being on June the 2<sup>nd</sup> 1900. After 1900, there have been amendments here and there, but these amendments have not gone to the heart of the nature of Commissions of Inquiry or the powers. But Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, when the original Commissions of Inquiry Act was passed in 1900, it was passed relatively speaking in the age of Governmental innocence. Colonialism was riding high, there was an administration of things involving law and order, the collection of taxes and as time went on, the administration acquired some social welfare functions particularly after the 1935 uprising and then subsequently, as we moved into adult suffrage then self Government and into Independence, the powers of Government and the role and function of Governments have increased tremendously. The Budgets have grown, the State is employing more persons. More Statutory Bodies have come into being. In fact, there were hardly any in 1900. Now they are involved in all sorts of economic activity. And therefore, human nature being what it is, particularly if you are not guided by a public morality, and I am talking here of a distinction between private morality and public morality, but we are addressing here public morality, what you do in your role as a Government official, or Minister. That there are tremendous avenues for misconduct and misconduct which will give rise to personal considerations, of greed and the acquisition of property or wealth by misusing your office or acting in some other way, which would be worthy and meritorious for investigation. Now this Act the one in Cap. 14 it can take care of an examination of Gibson Corner, it can take care of an examination at Diamond, it can take care of an examination of what happened at Pembroke, it may be able to take care even of some things which have happen at Public Works. But even some things, which have happened in Public Works we need more power to deal with what has happened. And certainly the Commissioner needs more power to deal with Ottley Hall. The Opposition may call this the Ottley Hall amendment, but let them so call it. Because we are asking the House to put in the hands of the Governor General, that is to say, the Cabinet in this particular case, the power to appoint Commissions of Inquiry, to go overseas and hold investigations about matters pertaining to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. And also to appoint for the Commissioner upon the advise of the Governor General and where

the Governor General is there, read Cabinet to appoint a Chief Investigator. And I will come Mr. Speaker, to the exact terms. I am giving you Honourable Members the broad sweep of the Act, of this amendment. Because I will tell you, we had intended on this side of the House, in Government, to investigate Ottley Hall by way of a liquidator. What had happened when we got into Government, we met Ottley Hall having a Provisional Liquidator. A Provisional Liquidator is not somebody who is going to examine the history of the problem. To see who did any wrongdoing, who get money and who didn't get. Who thief from who ain't thief. The Provisional Liquidator, that was not the Provisional Liquidator's work. The Provisional Liquidator is a conduit for money to be received and money to be spent. And the Provisional Liquidator has a Manager who receives the money where any work is done at Ottley Hall and the Manager under the supervisory supervision of the Provisional Liquidator will spend whatever little money there is. We had intended and we had raised this with West L B the bank and with SASHIE the Italian State Agency, which are entities involved in this Ottley Hall mess. Because West L B is the lead bank in the consortium of banks which had lent to the Ottley Hall project just over US\$50 million and the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was the first guarantor and SASHIE the Italian State Agency, the second guarantor.

Now Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, we examined whatever documents were available at Ottley Hall because I want to tell you, some documents are missing. I want to go further and say a substantial number of documents are missing. The reason why we want it to have a liquidator, to have Provisional Liquidator, metamorphosed or transformed into a liquidator, is that a liquidator appointed by the court would be able to carry out an investigation, cross examine witnesses and deal with them wherever they may be. And that is what we were proceeding to do. But this Government on these matters, we want to move carefully. We don't want to face any undue problem. So the Cabinet instructed me to hire a Senior Counsel well respected in the region, Mr. Anthony Asterphan of Dominica and upon his investigation and further inquiry and discussion with the Provisional Liquidator and his lawyer, both of them, persons from outside Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, I am talking about the Provisional Liquidator and the Provisional Liquidator's lawyer. That there was a document about which we were not aware, the contents of which we were not aware, which stated that if you appointed a liquidator, if you move the Provisional Liquidator from being a Provisional Liquidator to appoint him as a liquidator all the money which we had owe at Ottley Hall becomes due immediately. So that is the way it was set up. You may draw your own inference as to whether they didn't want a liquidator to be able to examine the history of the problem and to see who get what and who did not exercise which responsibility in an efficacious way. So they perhaps thought those who probably have done things untoward at Ottley Hall believe that that might have been a hook in we gill. But we have executive power and we have legislative power and what we have decided to do, not to proceed with the liquidator because that would trigger as an act as default the payment of all the debt, which you owe. And the debt which you owe there is close to \$180 million now. I want to repeat it, the debt which you owe there is close to \$180 million. I want to say this to you to, that they left us, the NDP left us this debt which as our debt to GDP ratio, our debt to Gross Domestic

Product in the order of 70%. The debt, which we owe, inherited from the NDP was in the order of 70% of all the goods and services created in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in any year. Those are untarnished facts. So when you hear those who don't know running off their mouth and when you hear the sycophants who have come off the gravy train because the ULP has arrived in town, when you hear the hangers on who, many of them in my generosity, they are still being fed bread, they, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, left us this grave problem which threatens this economy. Because if you take away the Ottley Hall debt, what you are left with is a more manageable debt with a debt to GDP ratio of about 50%. People do not understand yet the financial irresponsibility of the NDP Administration in relation to the Ottley Hall matter, close to \$180 million. So that is what we will have to pay if we went the way by a liquidator. So we come now by the way of the Commissions of Inquiry, but if we go by way of the old Commissions of Inquiry Act you have a lot of big fish which will get away. And I want to make sure the net is wide enough and strong enough to hold whale and to hold sprat [applause]. Some say that whale oil stronger than black fish oil well if whale involve, we go have whale in deh, we go get black fish in deh and we go have sprat in deh [laughter]. Now because under the new clause 2(b) there's a new sub 4 which says, the Commissions of Inquiry is empowered to sit, hold hearings or deliberations or enquire in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines or in any other country as the circumstances of the case demand or require. So the Commissions of Inquiry, which we will be setting up into Ottley Hall, will be able to have hearings in England, in Italy, in Switzerland, or wherever the trail leads [applause]. The Government has a responsibility to the people of this country to know where the money gone [applause].

Now Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, what is it you can inquire into anywhere in the world, the Governor General may whenever he considers it advisable, issue a Commission appoint one or more Commissioners and authorizing the Commissioners or any quorum of them to inquire into and report on any matter within the jurisdiction of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines or the conduct of public business in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines that is in the opinion of the Governor General of sufficient public importance. You notice to inquire on anything, and to inquire about them anywhere, so that if Roller is in Timbuktu we try to find him in Timbuktu and see if would take the evidence there [applause].

Now it goes on, this new Bill section 6 of the principal Act is amended in a number of ways. And a critical way is this;

“The Commission may, in writing, and if authorized by the Governor General, engage the services of experts, investigators, accountants or other technical advisors who it considers necessary to advise and to assist in the conduct of proceedings of the Commissions of Inquiry. And whenever you see Governor General in this Act, read Cabinet. Because it is the Cabinet which will make the decision and under the law, the Cabinet through the Prime Minister will advise the Governor General what to do and anytime the Prime Minister advises the Governor General, the Governor General is bound to follow the advice of the Prime Minister. That is the law, ain't me say so, that

is what the law book say. So the Commission will be able to engage the services of experts, investigators, accountants or other technical advisors.”

More than that Mr. Speaker, the Commission may, in its discretion, appoint a Chief Investigator from among the persons provided in subsection 2 who shall be responsible for coordinating all investigations pursuant to the Commissions of Inquiry. So when we going to deal with Ottley Hall, we have to get a Chief Investigator. In addition to the Commissions of Inquiry a Commissions of Inquiry will then be able to appoint investigators, accountants, other experts and we will have a Chief Investigator, that is what the law says, what we are bringing to Parliament now. That is what the Bill says.

But you see Mr. Speaker, understand what happened at Ottley Hall. The place was down there, they had a nice beach. Not to say it shouldn't be developed, but how you going to develop it. Roller had a company in the United Kingdom called Portland Shipping Company. Portland Shipping Company owned the Istranker, which was a hull a wreck of a vessel. Roller came down here spoke to Sir James Mitchell, tell Sir James, yes man we can build a ship yard and marina down there and I have a beautiful ship which Tito use to go on, the dictator from Yugoslavia, to entertain his third world friends. “A could fix it up and I could bring it down as a cruise ship. A magnificent thing”, he says. Okay let we go ahead”, son Mitchell said. The Roller folk set up a company here name Saint Vincent Yachting and Shipping. Transfer the Istranker from Portland Shipping to Saint Vincent Yachting and Shipping. And this hull called Istranker, which was not even insured because it has deteriorated so much that Lloyds Insurance had refused to take insurance on it for two years before. These are facts which are in our possession. Yet, Roller valued that hull at US\$18 million and say that will be the 51% share in a company at Ottley Hall called CCYY Limited. That is the company to run Ottley Hall, to develop Ottley Hall. And Mitchell said, well I will have to put 49%. His 49% involved the land but he needed US\$11 million more. So he borrowed the \$11 million from Roller, from Saint Vincent Yachting and Shipping but Saint Vincent Yachting and Shipping didn't own anything other than the breakdown Istranker. There is nowhere in the accounts, and since I have been in Government I have searched. There is no document showing that this Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines had borrowed any money from Saint Vincent Yachting and Shipping. It was all a contrived scam. Armed with this house of cards built on a confidence strict, involving Roller and Mitchell, they went to West L B and that is how they borrowed the US\$50.3 million to build down there. Say well we have a company called CCYY. The Government has 49% of the shares. Saint Vincent Yachting and Shipping has 51 and then they get the Vincentian Government to guarantee US\$50.3 million. Get the Italian State Agency, the export agency to be the second guarantor because Roller's company Valdertarro was an Italian company, that how they put it together. And what they built there, they used up the \$50.3 million, they used up more money from the National Commercial Bank, and a coming to that just now, and what they spent down there was in excess of US\$60 million, but it is only worth \$5 million. So way the money gone? Roller then, when he became short of money, wanting to operate down there and to go down Union Island, he took the same Istranker and used it as collateral to get \$8

million at the National Commercial Bank but the Istranker he must remember was part of the shareholding of CCYY. So how could Saint Vincent Yachting and Shipping which has it as part of CCYY the 51% now turn round and use it to borrow money as collateral from the National Commercial Bank? Is a bundle of confidence tricks.

Now Sir James use to defend Roller, towards the end, he say he is a scamp. Well we have to have a Commissions of Inquiry to see who is scamp and who is not scamp [applause]. Because you and I have to know how this money is going to be paid back. Where it went because we have to pay it. I have been holding negotiations, discussions, I been twice to Europe to deal with this problem. Just last week I had communications from Italy because we have hired a lawyer in Italy to deal with certain matters. And we want to see how we could resolve the issue. We have not paid since we have been in Government one cent on the Ottley Hall debt. SASSIE has had to pay both installment so far of interest, which for one year is \$8 million, the interest. You hear me? We ain't talk principal yet. So when you hear people who, those who over there now, who were here, talking about running Government they run the Government in the ground [applause] and we have to now clean up the mess.

I want to say something to our supporters and to the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines generally, when you see we wrote in our manifesto that we will deal with corruption, believe us, we will and we are. There are some people who think the scale of the corruption is like thieving a little piece a change from a Credit Union some where or some Friendly Society in the back woods or something like that. These are some A's thieves at large. And we have to set the machinery to hold the A's thieves. Whale, black fish and sprat [applause].

Mr. Speaker, you will recall that I said to the House sometime that I give instructions to a lawyer to institute legal proceedings against Roller for the money at the National Commercial Bank, because as Minister of Finance, I am the principal shareholder of the National Commercial Bank. Of course, none of the money is mine and rightly so, because I am only the principal shareholder because you put me there. So I gave the instructions. I spoke to the lawyer last week, he cannot find the documents, and he is trying to piece together things. He has to go off to Italy. That is what they leave us you know. You see they did a lot of things by telephone call. Well we will have to get a Chief Investigator and a Commissions of Inquiry to help us figure out who made which telephone calls to whom. And I am very hopeful that Dr. Roller will cooperate with this Government. Because even if it means that it requires that the prosecuting authorities in this country would give Roller the necessary immunity to sing like a bird I want to hear how the nightingale is singing [applause]. I want to say a second thing to the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and our supporters. You have seen how this Government has functioned over the past several months, yes, you have seen how we have struggled, let no one doubt the commitment of this Government to ferret out the corruption under the NDP Administration [applause]. Today is the first anniversary.

This morning I announce in this House, that I want back the land from Sir James, or you pay the money for the value of the land. Same thing with Toussaint, the same thing with Jerry Scott well he easier because we holding his gratuity, the same thing with John Horne and there are others [applause]. You know, when many of our supporters talking to us and saying, well why you ain't doing that, why you ain't doing the other, my response always, time longer than twine, because as I said this morning, we had to put the Government on a sound footing and clear up the economic mess. It is not cleared up yet completely. We are moving there bit by bit. That is number one to put it on a basis so that we can create jobs for people, develop the educational system. We didn't want to start to set up Commissions of Inquiry, ask back for land as soon as we get in for the simple reason Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, had we done, there would have been a hue and cry, why you don't start to fix up Diamond Dairy, why you done pay the workers their Severance Pay at Rabacca, Wallilabou and Richmond? Why you don't put the computers in the schools? Why you don't try to start up the Call Centres? Why you don't go and get the money to build the Library, which you say and the National Stadium? And for the Cross Country Road and the Peace Memorial Hall and for the money for the Windward Water to give the people in Park Hill up Village, Firebun, Dundo Hole all the way round to Mt Grenan? You would have asked why I ain't getting money to help to fix the road going up by Long Bubby Stone? Why you don't start to get the money for the Windward Highway, for the Learning Resource Centre, the Hub in St. Lucia, the money from the Kuwaiti's to help with the Airport, to save, to pull back the money, which had been lost from us from the World Bank, which we now going to send up somebody next month to do the final negotiation for the \$6 million in relation to fixing up down at the river and sea defences, down by Layou is a big one US\$6 million. Then when September 11<sup>th</sup> came, we have to look for the recovery loan of just over US\$3 million, which we just negotiated. I sent a letter yesterday to the World Bank for the Ambassador to sign on our behalf. In fact, God is with this Government, because as soon as I put my signature on the letter I was told that the Officer from the World Bank was on the phone. So I say, Mom I am just signing the letter to you, to tell you who would sign it. She says, "well that is one of the thing she was calling me about." God move my hand and her voice at the same time [applause]. If I didn't do and if the Cabinet didn't do and the Government didn't do, all these things what we have done, fix up the schools \$5.5 billion, put all that in good shape. You would have said, "but Comrade, you ain't do all things dey first before you get round to Mitchell them and Jerry Scott and John Horne and why yo don't get round to the corruption in Public Works and so on and so forth. People would have said that and it would look as though we had some revenge and vendetta and malice in we mind going at people. But no we bear bob, we tek time, we put we things in place and then when we ready to move as this Government has shown, it has a capacity to move with startling swiftness which bedazzles the Opposition [applause]. And the amazing thing, I had to speak about it this morning, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, and the point of contact and relevance to this debate is that, on the context, is that they feel that we are soft on matters and that some can take advantage of us. But don't ever misinterpret the turning of the left cheek and the right cheek so you would slap it up, to believe is a mark of weakness, never ever [applause]. You see, dey say, you can tease the tiger, you can tickle it, you can do all kind a thing but the lion and when it ready to move, it pounces. Today the

executive power of the land has fashioned a Bill to bring it to the legislative power here in Parliament, to lay the basis for us to set about to investigate Ottley Hall. You see, this is going to cost us some money you know. Because we have to investigate, we have to appoint investigators. We have to appoint a Commission of Inquiry.

But Mr. Speaker, under this Act you know, the Commissioners acting under this Act shall have the power of the High Court to summon witnesses, examine witnesses and parties concerned, call for the production of books, plan or other documents or subpoena any other evidence as they consider necessary for the conduct of the Commissions of Inquiry, we sweeping wide and we going deep. But I don't want when we get this assented to by the Governor General that I hear people saying, well when you appointing the Commissions of Inquiry? We will get somebody good. You forget that we have five years. And I know some of you are more anxious than me, but on this matter, we have to move with deliberate speed. You have to put the faith and confidence inside of the Government. The worriers who have led you thus far as to what we are proceeding to do. They must be think that when we working late on nights and going to work early on mornings is paper we looking at? Well if they think so, they are mistaken. When the Commissions of Inquiry into Ottley Hall is announced as it will be announced, if the Opposition ringing bell for something that things coming soon, the Commissions of Inquiry coming soon. They could ring bell for that, because the net is going to be wide and strong to catch whale, black fish and sprat.

Mr. Speaker, this Commissions of Inquiry Act, the amendment, which we are putting here, is to deal with a new class of vagabondry, which has emerged under the NDP Administration, levels of corruption unseen in this country. When I got into office I wrote, I got the Public Servants to find out, I wanted them to do what is called a transport audit, to look at the abuse by certain former Ministers. They come and they tell me all sorts of things. Well you know, when I issue one set of instructions and they are not done one way, when you think I gone to sleep on those, I come in another way. So those who believe that they use and abuse Government vehicles including Allan Cruickshank [applause] he says that I am spiteful. There is no reason for him, for me not to give him his gratuity he said, except to say he is not yet 55 and he will wait. But I don't understand these fellars you know, the estate workers waited for 17 years, they can't even wait 17 months. They waited 17 years, but they can't wait 17 months. They "troops" their teeth about the estate workers but they are all about, I get money for them.

Mr. Speaker, we have taken a series of measures in relation to internal corruption already. Simple things, you would notice that you don't see any vehicles for Government driving up late at nights and on weekend anymore. You are not seeing that, you are not seeing them families at church or girlfriends at Sugar Hill disco, no, you are not seeing that anymore. What you are seeing is a scrupulous conduct. There is not one single person on this side who drives Government vehicles. And they if they are found driving Government vehicles after work they would have to explain to the people, because when I asked them and they give me an explanation I am not taking that to the people you go and tell them. Don't look to me to

cover for you with that, because the policy of the Government is clear, absolutely clear. You are getting a 75% duty free for you vehicle, you are getting a travelling allowance, don't go and use Government vehicle and put down your own [applause] that is vagabondry and thievery.

Mr. Speaker, we have signed, we are the only country in the OECS that signed the OAS Convention on official corruption. It's here before this Parliament. We Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, we are the ones who go out for strict accountability and it pains me to see people like Bassy Alexander writing this week that \$2 million from the \$5.5 million can't be accounted for from the school programme. Because you know where he got that from, he got that from Lynch and he got that from Eustace. Nobody asked the Minister of Works anything you know, and that passes for journalism in this country. You know, it's amazing, just a few weeks ago the European Union Ambassador called it a smashing success the \$5.5 million programme. When he spoke at Marion House, he called it a grand success. The particular accounting officer on that programme has all the cheque stubs which were paid out but in certain cases, she did not have them, the contractors sign the contract, which was an error on her part and they were called back in. They say that thieving is going on up at Peace Memorial Hall, as of March the 8<sup>th</sup> that project, the basic project is \$400,000. The project is on time and well within the budget. As of March the 8<sup>th</sup> just over \$180,000 was spent. The roof, which has been ordered from Trinidad sixty odd thousand dollars, we have every confidence that it will come in inside of the budget. In fact, I have asked that extra things be done. Like for instance, I want the young ladies and gentlemen to practice dancing in that facility until the other one is complete, so that one of the wall floors, you have to put some spikes up and put wood on top if it because if you dance just on concrete or on tile it humbug your ankle and your back. I have been so advised. That will cost a little more. But the way in which persons who were supposed to be reputable journalist write this thrash. They judge this Government and this Prime Minister on the basis of their low standards. And with perniciousness they seek to poison the minds of people. Well I want to hear when the Commissions of Inquiry starts to act, those who are NDP inside a holes I will see how they will come out. A bet yo they are going to tell me let sleeping dogs lie and I will say, lie to bite me again [applause]. A dog, which is sleeping for so long, must not be permitted to rise again [applause].

You know, Mr. Speaker, and I am at it and since I am at it may as I say it all on today. Keith Joseph by name who is employed out the Community College part-time but who finds every single excuse to traduce this Government and to attack the integrity of this Government including the Prime Minister. For instance, he said on radio that I had a Customs Officer by the name of Tannis transferred because Tannis charged me duty on an item, which came in at Christmas time. Keith Joseph sees me anytime he wants to see me, he could call me anytime, I am so accessible to all of them including those who want to bite my hand and bite me at other places.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the facts of the situation in that matter is simple. Without even my knowledge the Tourism Office in London send a clock on some marble with a metal of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines with the topography of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on the top of it. Not for me, it's address to the office of the Prime Minister. The same day when the police officer went to clear a matter an item which came in care of Ralph Gonsalves, Frenches, that's a private thing now, a machine for me to go on to keep my weight in order. When in fact, they were told by the Custom that there is another package there, pay our duty for this item, which came to my home. I was called and said that the Custom's Officer a little package you know, I showed Dougie 'Nose' Joseph the journalist, it's inside the Cabinet Room, the box is still outside by the Prime Minister's Office where the secretaries are, so anybody can come and photograph the little box. Box long like from there to here. That box even if it belongs to me I should have paid only \$15 because this Government gave the relief that if you have a small box or a small barrel is \$15. If it has stuff for the home including any little plaque or decorative element, duty free, just a handling charge of \$15. This particular Custom's Officer was told well it's for the office of the Prime Minister as you see, Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves, office of the Prime Minister, he told the officers, open it, they open, he saw is a plaque, he say take out the whole thing. When they say you see..., they say take off the wrapping. The police officer took off the wrapping and he charged \$147. I was called about it. I say I wouldn't allow \$147 to spoil my Christmas. I send the cheque, but I will not tolerate a disrespect to the office of the Prime Minister where it was not mine and even if it were mine, it should be only \$15 and I ain't even claim back the money from the Government, you go inside of the Cabinet Room, you see it lie down there. Keith Joseph comes into that Cabinet Room two, three times, sat there with me and holds meetings, I have entertained him as a friend, I have spoken to him as a brother, but he turns behind and behave like he is a rabid dog attacking the Prime Minister for something for which the Prime Minister is holy innocent. I have to take turn on today 28<sup>th</sup> to speak about journalist of that type [applause]. I have turned my cheek right and left and it is now my turn to speak. Well I ain't get no more cheek. They going beat me over me forehead now and me stomach and all over me body.

Mr. Speaker, Keith Joseph I still consider my friend. Bassy I still consider my friend, but Bassy often writes things which he hear, the thing come to him, but he can call me and ask me about it, he can call any relevant Minister, but by speaking like this next week when I am away trying to get money out of Kuwait, they are going to attack me behind my back. And when they see me they are going to smile and grin, I know the modus operandi, I know it. I want advice on something I call Bassy, he is my friend, but he has to be responsible as a journalist. Keith Joseph has to be responsible as a journalist. Jerry George has to be responsible as a journalist [applause]. If they want to behave like E.G. Lynch, behave like E.G. Lynch. They gonna say that Comrade is thin skin, but I tek it all the time I ain't say nothing. Should I not speak? If you prick me do I not bleed? This Commissions of Inquiry (Amendment) Bill has not been devised out of anger or out of malice, but out of careful deliberation to ensure that transparency continues. Those who don't like the power of the people well they can say what they want. The Opposition has dwindled in support when the

exposure begins on their..., when we start the Commissions of Inquiry well the people will see even more what they already know as a consequence of the transparency of this Government. This Bill I am sure will have a safe passage. I'm obliged [applause].

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs.

**HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, just a couple days ago in every Jewish home, Jewish families sat down to their sada meal, one of the children would asked, why is this day different from any other day? And the father usually answers because this is the day which the Lord by a mighty hand that brought us out of the bondage of Egypt, it is called the Passover. And I asked why is today different from any other day? It is because it is the first anniversary that we are celebrating our freedom from the bondage of the NDP corrupt Government [applause] and it calls for celebration because we are free. For seventeen years we have had a Government whose middle name was corruption. An unconscionable Government and it pains my heart to know that there are people who otherwise you would look upon as sensible people, who can still defend all the corrupt acts from this previous Government and regardless of what this Government does they would say they ain't see the ULP doing anything.

But Mr. Speaker, much has been accomplished for the past year. The Prime Minister has alluded to the fact that we have been very patient and many of us in the Cabinet have been pressing him because people have been pressing us and asking where is the fulfillment of the campaign promise that you are gonna bring those who have committed these corrupt practices to justice. And indeed the mills of God might grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly fine. And sometimes we have to take judgement one by one, two by two and we call them by their number. And the Bill before use Mr. Speaker is one that would turn the searchlight on the actions of the previous Government. Is like a baygon piece of legislation. Because when we start to spray, the Opposition is nowhere to be found. They disappear Mr. Speaker, under the guise, the vain and senseless excuse that they are not coming into the House as long as the Honourable Minister of Tourism is sitting in the House. Now anybody with any kind of common sense will know that ain't make no kind of sense at all, excuse the grammar. The Opposition brought a so-called motion of no confidence with no strategy, poor tactic. The motion has not been disposed of as is common. We have experienced that while we were in Opposition. That these motions, sometimes you have part of the debate now, and part a little later. But the motion having failed, the Opposition ought in a democratic way to accept the verdict of the House. That is the only democratic way that that could be done, but instead of that they called themselves staying out.

Mr. Speaker, I have a word of advise for the Leader of the Opposition, because I am sure he is some place in a corner listening to us. He has embarked on a path that is not sustainable [applause]. He is putting himself out on a limb that he would feel embarrassed to come back in. He cannot keep up staying out of the House because he dares not risk the challenge of Bye-elections, because they would be completely wiped out [applause]. I know what their

tactic might be, they would sneak back in here and probably spend a little time for the prayer and then leave and say well they have made an appearance so they do not have the six requisite absences, which would trigger a Bye-election. Or they may come back and say well the people beg them to come back. I know they are fashioning some way of coming back because they have embarked, as I have said, on a path..., put themselves out on a limb that they would have to come in here sheepishly and face the Minister of Tourism once again [applause]. But I want to tell the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues that they can run, and they are running from us, but they can't hide. It is unfortunate that the other members of the Opposition are following a Leader who is not really a politician, who does not have the political acumen to lead. And those who want to follow Arnhim Benn Laden [laughter] can rest assured that we are going to smoke them out of every cave in Afghanistan [applause].

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Who is Arnhim Benn Laden Honourable Member?

**HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER:** That's a fictitious name Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Point taken.

**HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER:** No matter where they hide we are going to flush them out and they have to come in here and face us.

Mr. Speaker, this idea that they don't want to face Rene Baptiste is just a vain excuse. The fact is the Opposition has been weak, they have not shown any political acumen and every time we sit in the House even when they ask question, it boomerang on them and they take a licking even for their own question that they asked [applause]. So they cannot withstand the weights and the competence of the Government because they are shown up in such bad light that I believe they are embarrassed, and I am sure the leader of the Opposition is embarrassed. And it's unfortunate that the other Members are following him and if they have any common sense at all, they will find themselves back in here. Because the two others who are elected, they may not have a seat if we have to go in a bye-election. The Leader of the Opposition cannot accept the decision of this House. The Leader of the Opposition cannot accept the will of the people. He was Prime Minister and certainly the people have said well they are not satisfied with that, they want new leadership and in an overwhelming majority they have rejected him. I know it's painful for him to feel that he is rejected but they have rejected him and they have elected a Government that looks after the interest of the people [applause]. A Government that has brought a new vision, a new era in good Governance, in transparency, certainly we have shown by the very fact that we have the television crew here and our proceedings are being broadcast live that we want democracy, transparency and openness to be the hallmark of our Government. We have shown that we have a zero tolerance for corruption and certainly we are conducting ourselves in a manner that tells this country that their affairs are in good hands by having a ULP Administration.

Mr. Speaker, I am wondering how the Opposition would have been sitting on the other side, certainly some of them would have had their eyes closed in a pretense of sleep, or with their hands and eyes on the desk. Because this piece of legislation, this amendment to the Commissions of Inquiry would have put them on the spot, that if indeed what they have said is true, that would support any measure that is in the best interest of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, then they would have had no choice but to support the measure before us at this time. But I am sure they would have wanted to plea the fifth against self incrimination because they know that what this Bill seeks to accomplish is mostly what they have been guilty of for the past 17 years [applause] and they would have been grossly embarrassed. So the easy way out is to stay at home and to listen on their radio to hear the proceedings of this House. But as I say, we gonna flush them out, they are going to come back here and they gonna face the Minister of Tourism right here [applause] and we will be waiting for their excuse [applause].

The mover of this motion, the Prime Minister, has indicated that the purpose of this amendment is to widen the power of the Governor General to set up Commissions of Inquiry. This Bill also permits Inquiries to be held in other countries and provides for the engagement of the services of technical advisers to the Commission. The scope of the Bill is much wider. To inquire into and report on any matter within the jurisdiction of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines or the conduct of public business in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. That is in the opinion of the Governor General, of sufficient public importance. So the scope is wide: to report, to inquire into, and report on any matter within this jurisdiction. But apart from that the extent of it is wider, for not only in Saint Vincent but as section 2(b)(4) says, in any other country, or let me read it. The Commissions of Inquiry is empowered to sit, hold hearings or deliberations, or inquire in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines or in any other country as the circumstances of the case demand or require.

Mr. Speaker, what this means is that those who have committed criminal offences wherever they are, we can send people to investigate and hold hearings from them. Sometime ago at a meeting like this, I happened to be in the Speaker's Office when the Prime Minister then Prime Minister, the former Prime Minister James Mitchell brought up a conversation with me on Dr. Roller. And I asked him where is Dr. Roller, he says, the latest information he had was Dr. Roller was in Russia. Well whether he is in Russia or whether he is in Afghanistan, whether he is with Osama Benn Laden, wherever he is, we are going to smoke him out and ferret him out and try and get the information. And certainly, it is in his interest to cooperate. For those who are accomplices, accessories to the crime, those who have receive kickbacks and if they are those who allow Dr. Roller to escape here for fear that he would spill the bean, well we might very well have the information. And those who are afraid of prison, there will be a new one in my constituency so that [applause] every morning I can go up and peep on them in the little hole and see how they are doing. Former Prime Minister James Mitchell, one of the NDP Conventions says they would name it Louis Straker Prison. Well when and if he gets there I am going to name it James Mitchell Hilton Hotel [applause]. For those who have committed crime must pay the time for their crime. And I will be too pleased if they name it

Louis Straker Prison, I know that some of them are in my prison. I will have them locked up under my arm and elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has spoken extensively about those who seem to take certain liberties with peace and people. And I do not listen to them because I do not want to give these propagandists, I do not want to give them their satisfaction or the honour to make them think I listen to the garbage and the thrash that they put out day after day. But people tell me that the fellar J. B. Lynch (J.B for jail bird) [laughter] and the fellar Keith Joseph whom I met for the first time, I have never met Lynch. If I saw him there I wouldn't know him, but the way he talks about me you would swear we were chummy and he has some secrets for me. Somebody pointed out Keith Joseph to me down at Barrouallie recently when they had the dedication of the Pavilion down there. I have never been introduced to the man but somebody would think from the way he speaks that we were friends and he hold secrets for me and he knows me well. Well the people of Central Leeward they know me well and they have elected me to represent them and to be their spokes person. We have about four years to go before another election and whether J.B Lynch or Keith Joseph want to come and be the spokes person for Central Leeward I challenge them to begin now and to come down to Central Leeward and get in the ring and let the people elect either of them to be the spokes person for Central Leeward. But as of now I am the duly elected representative for Central Leeward and I speak on behalf of Central Leeward [applause]. I was told that Keith Joseph beg the people in Barrouallie to sharpen their cutlass so that when I come down there they would dispose of me. I have been down to Barrouallie umpteen times and what I get is nothing but hugs and kisses. Of course, there are those who might want to display their ignorance and their hatred, but generally speaking, the people in Barrouallie show me nothing but kindness and love and I have won every polling station save one in Barrouallie and every polling station in Layou and the one polling station in Buccament and the one in Keartons. So those who want to stay in the dark take the liberty at snipping in the dark if they want to be politicians come in the ring and be politician. I know they will make the excuse that they don't want to be politicians, because nobody will elect them to be dogcatchers much less to be representatives of the people. So let them come in if they want to challenge me and it is very rare that I will even respond in such a public way because I don't want to elevate them to make people think that we are on equal footing. And so I ignore them Mr. Speaker, because I think this is the, if they know insult at all, this is the greatest insult that I can heap upon them by ignoring them except for this one time and I hope that I wouldn't have to say anything on this subject again.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill before us whereas in the previous Act, section 6 speaks about appointment of a Secretary. The amendment to the Act now speaks of appointment and engagement of a staff. We want to have a Commission that is a formidable Commission, not a Mickey Mouse Commission, not a wishy washy Commission. We want to have a Commission that would undertake its job with thoroughness and so it must have staff, not just a Secretary. And the amendment speaks about engaging the services of experts, investigators, accountants, technical advisers who it considers necessary to advice and assist in the conduct

of the proceeding of the Commissions of Inquiry. And the Commission may authorize or depute the persons engaged in subsection 2, to inquire into any matter within the scope of the Commission of Inquiry. So thorough is the work of the Commission, that the Commissioners can deputize, depute its authority, to these technical advisers, investigators, so that they have the same power because we don't want anything to slip through the sleeve of the net. As the Prime Minister has said, it would catch whale as well as sprat and everybody, whether you are little man or big man those who have committed a crime, those who are guilty of something must be brought to justice. There are those who would consider it a small matter that this country has been left in a state poverty, I have said it time and time again what has been bequeath to us as the new ULP Government, and I have challenged the NDP Members to controvert what I have said or what I am saying, that for the past 17 years they have brought this country down. That we are the lowest in the OECS in terms..., we have the highest unemployment rates when we took office. The highest incident of poverty, the lowest per capita income, for 17 years we have wasted time and there are some people who never even travel as far as Bequia and in their ignorance they will tell you we are doing well because they compare themselves with themselves. And when you go to the other Caribbean countries and you see what is happening and realize that we are at the bottom of the barrel, some of them wouldn't even believe it because they don't know any better. And sometimes I can only groan in spirit because where ignorance is bliss sometimes it is folly to be wise. And sometimes you cannot convince them because they are so steep in ignorance that they do not want to know the truth or to be enlightened. Some of them are suffering from political..., not only amnesia but glaucoma that they can't even see the truth if even you were to hold it up to their nose, they don't want to see it. And when you find people who are supposed to have a certain level of intelligence speaking in a certain manner and behaving in a certain manner, your heart sinks within you because you expect no matter how bias a person is that he would be able to have some measure of objectivity and see that we have wasted 17 years. And I can understand why the Prime Minister appears to be in such a haste, in such a rush. Why he has to spend so many hours, why Members, my colleagues here, must spend hours day and night in the exercise of their duties. It is because it embarrasses us as Vincentians to know that the NDP Administration has brought us down to the bottom of the barrel and we must work hard because we have an excellent theme here on the Government side, comparable to any within the Caribbean. But we have to come from afar, and because of that, we must work a little extra harder to bring our country out of the hole left by the NDP. I have heard the Leader of the Opposition making brag about his great wisdom and his experience in Economics. Mr. Speaker, in these small islands sometimes a fellar has a smattering of education and he would swear to Almighty God he is the brightest person in the whole world. Because he hangs out with certain people and certain people give him difference and who don't know any better they think he is a genius, but when he is peered against people and you see what is happening in the other country with his peers when you see what has happened to us at Ottley Hall where he was the chief adviser to the Prime Minister where is the genius Economics that has been able to see through all these perils and guide us in the proper course. You can talk much and because some of us judge a politician by talking we think that some people are smart. But when we look at the actions of the previous Government and those who have advised the

Government over the years and taken over from the Government, we realized that they have led us down the primrose path to hell and they can only use a lot of rhetoric. And they themselves are only one to brag about how smart they are and what great economist they are. If they were such great economists we would not be in this shape that we are in, we would be far better off.

Our Tourism, Mr. Speaker, is not what it ought to be, because the NDP Government took a deliberate action that it would not pursue Tourism because it did not want to spoil the culture of this country by a few hippies coming in here and tourist ship coming in here that only indulging the three P's, post card they buy, and a Pepsi and they P in Saint Vincent. And so they not want Tourism and we are now starting way back of the other islands. For 17 years or prior to 17 years before they got in office, they talk about the infrastructure of an International Airport and Mr. Speaker, they have done nothing about it and lately the Prime Minister talked about \$1 hundred million which he had in his pocket already for the airport. And we haven't seen that \$1 hundred million any place. Maybe we need to investigate that and see whether it's still in his pocket [applause]. Since 1989 Prime Minister Mitchell has been talking, the NDP Administration, talking about a 250-bed hotel and golf coast at Peters Hope, Mt Wynne. And 11, 12 years after they did not have a single investor with any interest in the area, fooling people and people allowed themselves to be fooled by these people.

Mr. Speaker, for 17 years or prior to that the NDP Administration promise the country that will set up an Integrity Commission and bring in Integrity Legislation in this country. They had 17 years in which to do it and when we saw them doing nothing we brought in our own Integrity Legislation soon as we got into this House, a resolution. And they laugh it to scorn. They said they didn't want any Integrity Legislation as a matter of fact they were afraid of it, as jumbie is afraid of Holy Water. Because they were afraid and I heard that there was discussion to that effect that if they were to bring in Integrity Legislation, half of them will be in jail. And so Mr. Speaker, nothing was done to curb the insatiable appetite for greed and corruption that the NDP Administration had and they carry it a little too far Mr. Speaker. Because two years ago, when they could not be satisfied and when they thought they would get away with anything, they brought in the Pensions and Gratuities Bill. And certainly they thought they would have gotten away with it, but the people of this country said enough was enough. And though the present Leader of the Opposition and John Horne went on radio and television and they said that they were sorry, they didn't understand that the people was so exercise about this matter. The people said we would not accept any apology. The harvest is past, the summer is ended, they were weighed in their balance and they were found wanting.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition taunts me at time, and he says I am No. 8 in line deposing the Prime Minister and I am glad for that because I am loyal to my party and the Prime Minister. But he was No. 2 man and while he was on radio and television saying there will be no new elections, the Prime Minister had a call to us when we had our party caucus up at Beach Mount begging us please come down to Grenada. So the Prime Minister even though he was No.2 man he knew as much as if he was No. 12 man. Because while he was

saying that there will be no new elections, we had word already what was going to happen. The Prime Minister beg us please come down. We went down to Grenada and as Moses stood on the banks of the red sea, ready to carry his people on the liberation movement so in some strange way the Prime Minister took the Leader of the Opposition not on the banks of the red sea but on the beach of Grand Anse there. And if we were walking on the very verge of our liberation movement and when the Leader of the Opposition came back, he said we were going to have elections in March. The Prime Minister begged that we carried it out to May because he wanted to celebrate his birthday in office. But the Leader of the Opposition told him no, he couldn't sell that and he had to settle for March. So that we came back here, much to the consternation of the now Leader of the Opposition because he was embarrassed to know that the then Prime Minister James Mitchell had left him in the dark and we signed an agreement whereby we would go to the poles in March of 2001. And so Mr. Speaker, that brought an end to corruption.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister had spoken this morning about the insensitivity, and that's a word used by the Leader of the Opposition the whole day in this meeting today. But they know when to use these words conveniently. It was the act of insensitivity for the Leader of the Opposition to call the election just on the verge of Easter last year and yet accusing us of meeting here on this what he calls Holy Thursday. An act of insensitivity not to listen to the nurses and the doctors and all those who had told him that he was going on the wrong path and he went.

Mr. Speaker, for many years there has been a Convention; adopted since 1996, call "The Inter-American Convention against Corruption." Saint Vincent and the Grenadines did not sign against corruption. It didn't sign it and they couldn't sign it. There are certain acts Mr. Speaker, which this Convention condemns. As a matter of fact, the preamble to this Act which we would sign sometime in the near future, is that the Member States of the Organization of American States, convinced that corruption undermines the legitimacy of public institutions and strikes at society's moral order and justice as well as the comprehensive development of peoples. Persuaded that fighting corruption strengthens democratic institutions and prevents distortions in the economy, in proprieties, in public administration, and damage to a society moral fibre. This Convention speaks of the standards of conduct for the correct honourable and proper fulfillment of public functions. And these standards shall be intended to prevent conflict of interest. I have gotten back my thoughts Mr. Speaker, when is said it is insensitivity for the previous Government, NDP Government to have bought public lands at 40 cents a square foot. Mr. Speaker, anywhere in the world anybody with any reason, any measure of sensitivity would tell you it is conflict of interest for the Government Ministers to buy lands from themselves in Cabinet. How could Caesar buy land from Caesar? But because of their greed they bought lands from themselves and not only bought lands from themselves but at 40 cents a square foot. Whereas poor people in this country had to pay 5, 6 up to 12 dollars in some cases per square foot.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** The Member has 9 minutes.

**HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER:** How many?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** 9 minutes.

**HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER:** Mr. Speaker, we had to do something. The people of this country demanded that we do something. And no amount of crying poverty whether it's by Allan Cruickshank or whoever they are. They are trying to cry poverty to gain public sympathy. They had no sympathy for the poor man when they took lands at 40 cents per square foot [applause].

Mr. Speaker, we have to root out corruption and we have to set an example ourselves. And we want the people to hold us accountable because if there is any Member on this side who indulges in the practices we condemn, certainly the people ought to ask that we don't run them again and probably ask that we get rid of them. We must hold ourselves up to a higher standard. And at times some of our supporters want us to go back in the same old, they say, well them fellars use to do that how come you can't do it. And we tell them no, we can't engage in the kind of corrupt practices that they were doing. Those were not people of any moral fibre, but we have pledged ourselves to give this country honest, open Government and we intend to do that. We do not expect to be in office here everyday of our lives, but when we leave here we must be able to hold our heads up high, look ourselves in the mirror, watch our fellow Vincentians without being ashamed and they would say, there goes an honest politician, there goes a man with integrity: and that's what we have pledged ourselves to our people. This Convention against corruption would fight against those who take public property for private use. Those who have used public vehicles, I use to see a number of them when I go down to Richmond, used it for picnics, they used it for church, they used it, the taxpayers fuel, the gas in the tank, but they are a higher class. They would just use it whenever they wanted to. When they have a rough road to ride on, they think their vehicles couldn't stand the rigors of the road so they would use public vehicle if that mash up is only taxpayer's money. We must bring them to justice and no amount of crocodile tears can make me feel sorry for them. Mr. Speaker, we want to make sure that we have a Commission of Inquiry or Commissions of Inquiry that would go at the heart of corruption. This amendment should strike terror in the hearts of the NDP Members. Those who know they are guilty of something because though we were gentle and though we were a little bit laid back, not laid back really, but giving them a chance, they misinterpreted our patience and they started to go on the platform and say, if we had committed corrupt practices, how come there isn't any Commission of Inquiry?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** They talk too soon [laughter].

**HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER:** Monkey say cool breeze.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** They talk too soon.

**HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER:** They didn't know that the day of reckoning would come. We may not act according to their schedule, we may not do things according to their plans, but we move with deliberate speed and those who have to return money to the Government or those who must forfeit the properties that they have gotten. Those with ill gotten gains, it will be taken away and they would understand that dishonesty doesn't pay. It catches up with you; there is such a thing as retribution.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is a wonderful piece of amendment that has been brought here. It is good for us, it is good for the Opposition, it is good for the whole country because it brings honesty, integrity in public office and it brings to justice through the inquiry those who are guilty of violating the secret trust that has been placed into their hands by the people of this country. And I trust Mr. Speaker, that we would so conduct ourselves within the confines of this legislation, so that when the time comes we would be like them away from our record. But that we can face our record with equanimity knowing that we have served the people well, honestly, and through hard work. Mr. Speaker, I wish this amendment a safe passage [applause].

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

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the two speakers before me outlined quite clearly and distinctly what the measures in this amendment seem to do. We have to change with the times Mr. Speaker. And what was good as an Act for a Commission of Inquiry 50, 60 years ago certainly would not be good today, is no doubt about that. I took part few years ago as a witness to a Commission of Inquiry headed by a Guyanese Judge Mr. Mc Kay and even then I saw the limitations of this piece of legislation. Because the legislation in itself had no teeth and as the Commissioner then explained the first day of the sitting, was that the only thing the Commission could do or charge anyone, witnesses or who ever it is with was perjury. Unfortunately, although Mr. Toussaint purgured himself then, and this is not the first time I am saying it, nothing was done to bring him to justice for the perjury.

You see Mr. Speaker, we were left a very, very bad hand to play. The Opposition Members when they were in this Honourable House, do not want to hear this, a very, very bad hand. And we the Vincentian public in its innocence elected and elected a group of, I don't want to say scoundrels, but a group of persons who were not fit to Govern this country. And for those who might say, that I am harsh or I do not know what I am saying, let me just refer to the Ottley Hall Bill, the Act, Act No. 54 of 1992. And when you understand what happened with that Act you would understand that they were not fit to represent people in this Honourable House. Because Mr. Speaker, when you elected to this Honourable House, you elected to ensure that you give proper representation and that the people whom you represent not only your constituents but the country as a whole. Especially so, if you are a Prime Minister, that you are supposed to look first and foremost, after their welfare. But what do we have in this

Act? Let me tell you what it is. Act 54 of 1992 and this is an Act to authorize the making of Governmental Agreements for the development of Ottley Hall. This is fine, as it says here nothing wrong with it, but is what is in the body of the Act that creates the problems. Now in the first instance, this Act came into being on the first day of July 1991. This is what it says in the Act. It says this Act may be cited as the Ottley Hall Development Act, 1992 and shall be deemed to have come into operation on the first day of July 1991. It looks very innocent on his part, but when you look at the date of the Act Mr. Speaker, this Act was assented to on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September 1992. Fourteen months after they said it should come into operation. So it was given retrospective effect and one asked the question, why is this so? But you know why it was so Mr. Speaker, because they had already made the arrangements and the agreements and whatever else in 1991. And so in 1992, fourteen months after those Members of Parliament on the Government side sat over on this side and passed this Act. But you know what is in this Act Mr. Speaker? Now let me read it out because it's clearer. Section 2(3) Mr. Speaker states:

That without prejudice to the forgoing the Prime Minister in his capacity as Minister of Finance is hereby authorized to sign on behalf of the Government of Saint and the Grenadines such agreements and undertakings as may be deemed appropriate to effect any or all of the following matters.

In short, what they did, they gave up their rights as Representatives and Ministers to confer absolute power on James Mitchell who was then the Prime Minister to do whatever he wanted to do as far as Ottley Hall was concerned. And it goes on further Mr. Speaker to say, one of the following matters that he had absolute authority over was to guarantee a loan aggregating 50 million, US\$329,500 for the development of Ottley Hall. And this was to be paid to CCYY because you might remember that CCYY (Caribbean Charter and Yachts Yard holdings) was the company that owned Ottley Hall of which we were supposed to have 49%. And so this loan was to go to CCYY and the Prime Minister in his single capacity had the sole right to decide what terms and conditions he would agree to for this loan. And that is why you see Mr. Speaker we are in so much trouble now with Ottley Hall. Now, Mr. Speaker, he can give other kind of guaranty that he wanted which happened and one might remember that the present Leader of the Opposition then and he had a hand in this you know because I think he was the fiscal adviser to the Government at the time. Either he was the fiscal adviser or he was the....,

Now Mr. Speaker, the Act goes on to say, I am not reading the whole Act because it takes up time. Short Act but it takes up time. It says that he should guaranty on such terms and conditions as may be deemed fit the performance of any obligations or the repayment by any party of any loan or the discharge of all-financial and other obligations by any party.

Well those were some of the powers vested, well not vested, legislated in this Honourable House by Members of the Government then. Fourteen months after they had already had the agreement with Ottley Hall. And when we got the agreement, and in that agreement it stated

that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was the prime obligor in this guarantee. I remember the Honourable Arnhim Eustace said he was going to sue me for libel if I said it again and I said again, and again and again. But he couldn't sue me for libel because truth is a defense in libel, a complete defense. And it was there but they try to hoodwink the people to say that we were not the guarantor but that SASSIE, the Italian exit company was the guarantor. I am not saying that SASSIE did not guarantee some things, but the agreement was quite clear that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines we were the prime obligor as far as guarantee in that loan was concerned. And we even went further in that agreement where they even took out diplomatic immunity from our buildings and houses or whatever it is, consulates and embassies that we have that they could siege any of those if we didn't pay up this debt. But further Mr. Speaker, they also granted by legislation to grant fiscal monetary procedural and other exemptions, concessions and allowances on such terms and conditions as may be deemed fit. Now this power that is concentrated in one man's hand you know, this is what his other colleagues voted for to give him this power so that as Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, he can do all these things. He doesn't have to revert back to the House, he doesn't even have to go back to Cabinet because he was the defray and he was granted that by people like Jerry Scott who you see crying now and Allan Cruickshank and the others, and I wonder how they really look people straight in their faces and not be ashamed. So I knew that the Opposition was not going to compare. This question about the Minister of Tourism, they trying to put a mask more than a smoke screen. Everything they saying now about the Minister of Tourism, they said on the platform during the election, but yet she was elected.

But you might remember Mr. Speaker, that when we were in Opposition, we had the Government running out of this House [applause]. Made history where the Government couldn't take the licks from the Opposition and had to run out of this House. Well if they are in Opposition now, what do you expect? They couldn't do it when they were in Government, how can they stop now to take it now that they are in Opposition. So I am not surprised that they want and would use any excuse not to come to this House.

But Mr. Speaker, let me finish off with this Act so that people can understand why we have to do what we are doing and because we are meticulous and because we don't want to make any slip ups we make sure that when we move, we are moving with certainty and legality. The Prime Minister told you, but he didn't tell you to what extent, that a whole lot of documents are missing. Files are missing, you can't find the evidence and obviously if you can't find the evidence, it is going to be very difficult to prove the case. The whole of them, Ottley Hall is only one, Colonial Homes only one. The IFAD Project is another and I can go on and on. But you see Mr. Speaker, and I have said this before, the Chinese say that when fish starts to stink it starts from it starts from its head and if the head which was Government stank then obviously, the body will stink as well. And when you set the examples that you can be corrupt then you are telling the lesser mortals, those under you, you are giving them licences to be corrupt as well.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister then under this Act and I am wondering, I haven't discuss it yet, whether we shouldn't repeal this Act because I am not quite sure whether it is still effective. But maybe we should at this point in time. He also had the authority to authorize a transfer by way of conveyance of lands at Ottley Hall not exceeding 40 acres together with the fore shore at Ottley Hall Bay by way of a lease for 99 years renewable to such party or parties and on such terms and conditions as he sees fit, not the Cabinet sees fit you know, as he the Prime Minister sees fit. And they even gave him power where he can delegate some of his powers to other Ministers and other persons. And we have Members, people who are elected here by Vincentians to represent them and this was the type of representation that they can give.

So that Mr. Speaker, the amendment to the Commissions of Inquiry Act should really have come before. As the Prime Minister said, some or many years 1902 or something like that, I think it's 1900, so we talking about 102 years this has been in existence. A little bit of amendment here and there. So it had no teeth. We are now giving teeth to this legislation where we can go outside to inquire, we couldn't do that before. We didn't have any authority to do this, they laugh at you. They streupe their teeth according to the people and say, don't waste my time. But I know that some of them are quaking in their boots because they realize that somebody has to pay. When you invest in excess of \$2 hundred million and 4 or 5 years after, a very reputable form of auditors and accountants valued the assets and the most they can come up with is that they gave a figure they couldn't even be sure, to show you the state it was in of between something like US\$8 million and US\$18 million. Let us take the highest figure, so we are talking about EC\$54 million roughly or little less than that. Where is the rest of the money? Where did it go? It certainly didn't go in my pocket, but it went somewhere. Somebody has to pay somebody has to give an account of this because is the taxpayers who have to pay this. Unless we increase fiscal measures, because that's the only way we can get money here, except we beg for it. Then the same persons are going to come round and cry and say all who doing this putting up cost, but they left us with it. And then to add insult to injury, they knew what they were doing, you know, they not stupid, they did not appoint a liquidator. They took the other way and appointed a provisional liquidator and the laymen who don't know, say what is the difference? But I think the Prime Minister in his address explained the difference and had hidden that we didn't know about: that if you fire the provisional liquidator, and appoint a liquidator, then the whole \$118 million become due and you got to pay it. You see how they tie your hands and when I tell you that we were left with a very bad hand to play, not a face card in it [laughter] no face cards at all in it. So they knew what they were doing. And I know you gonna hear a whole lot of cry now about the lands that they bought at 40 cents and those that they bought at whatever it is and you would hear maybe some of our own supporters say, well it's gone already leave it. But you see examples must be set. Because if you don't do this there is..., you know I worked with CDC (Commonwealth Development Corporation) when they did the hydro scheme, south Rivers, they came in, it was CDC at the time. And they were ripped off by about 3 or 4 accountants, they never charged anybody. Once they found them out they let them go. Well you are encouraging the people to steal because the most that can happen to you, you get all

the money and you go about your business. So if the examples are not set and I hope Boisdien will be ready in time, I really hope Boisdien will be ready in time. And when you have Allan Cruickshank crying that he is broke. I was broke I never cry to anybody and so most of us here was broke at some time or the other. When he had the use of three Government vehicles, three, and he can't say that's a lie, three, two to carry his children, one to carry him. Using it with no concern to the public and you know what hurt the people? You have three Government vehicles driveling down the road and they won't pick up one soul you know, not even school children. And now you have the gall to come and say that you broke and you want your money. But we have very short memories. In 1984, and Ken Browne is still, alive Mitchell didn't pay Ken Browne, I am not even sure if he got his gratuity yet, he can't get his pension because he ain't 55. It took him something like 4 years before he paid it. But we didn't go and cry, Ken Browne didn't go and cry to him. John Thompson had to threaten to go to court because he was 55 then to get his pension and gratuity. And you know for what, because John said that the three Diamonds he changed on the flag were his three daughters. Well I knew what hurt him. Maybe the numbers of daughters John said were wrong. You understand what I am saying? So he held it against John and Arthur Williams, who is still there, remember he was charged for misbehaviour in public office, couldn't get his retirements benefits until he was 55. So what is all of this, we have very short memories, but you see, I have been in here for over 30 years you know and I went through all of this, so I know [Laughter].

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** You have the institutional memory.

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Exactly [applause] is over 30 years I have been in here, so I know. So when they talk they forget all that happened. So I don't bother because we have told them that, we told them that. When we try to get the rules of the House amended because there are certain areas in there that are not in our context now. It is not applicable really to good governance. They amended twice you know, Mr. Speaker. And both times the only amendment was to reduce the time that Opposition Members have to speak. Well not only Opposition some Government Members as well. Because you might remember that in the beginning there was unlimited time. I have no problem that we put on some time limits, and then he amended it to say that only the Leader of the Opposition will have unlimited time. And then when I spoke here for three days plus, he amended it again to say the Leader of the Opposition should only have 4 hours, remember? Yes. So that on our anniversary today Mr. Speaker, it is fitting that the people should know why we are bringing this bit of legislation and why it took us so long. Because the Prime Minister famous for saying, we are a country of laws, and we cannot come here, do not expect us to come here and make the laws and then to go out there and break the laws or help to break the laws. I would not be part of that. Today is a golden anniversary and tonight the reds would be glittering [applause] because there is a rally to celebrate the anniversary that would be held at Unity Square. And the party is paying for transportation coming in from the other areas where we are going to celebrate and give further accounts of our stewardship. This is how we are. We say that we must have open Government. We begged the NDP Government to

broadcast what happens in Parliament and even at one time when the Speaker, the Honourable Monty Maule took it upon himself to say that he was going do it. Prime Minister Mitchell as leader of the House said, not over his dead body, he is not having it. But we could understand why he didn't want it because when you listen those Ministers of Government speak; the NDP Government at that time I am talking about, it didn't make sense. And he was afraid that they would be shown up and it will affect them negatively. So we are urging all those who I know, even NDP supporters, who realize what we are doing, who see the way the country is going, who understand the problems we had and the debts we had to pay. I heard the Honourable Arnhim Eustace saying that we should use the money to put industries to create employment. They were there for 17 years they didn't do it you know, they didn't it. But not only that, did he want us not to pay the university where they were on the verge of throwing all our students out of Mona and Cave Hill and St Augustine. When that is going to be, investigate to you know, don't make anybody fool you, we can't find the files most of them. We paid \$1 million for each and every traffic light you see put up there. Six traffic lights \$6 million. When we check it out they tell you in Canada even with the studies and so on each traffic light cost about \$180 thousand Canadian dollars and not this nonsense like we have here. They are not working now; they haven't been working for a long time. But whose hands were in this, Jerry Scott. Where did it come from? From Holland, so they talked and they forget what was happening and what they had done and they missed one important point Mr. Speaker, especially Allan Cruickshank, is that they say when you going up do not kick those whom you meet because you are liable to meet them when you coming down. You understand? [Laughter] Down kick those you meet when you climbing the stairs,

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Ah truth.

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Because you are liable to meet them when you coming down [applause]

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Wisdom my brother.

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** You see Mr. Speaker; it is all well and good. I know this is bound to have an easy passage. I know it is going to have an easy passage because not like the NDP Administration where Ministers of Government would come here and don't even know what Bills are coming to Parliament. They have been telling us this, they never knew about this before; they never saw it until it came. Well we don't operate like that, we meet as a Parliamentary caucus, and we discussed the Bills. We discussed what Bills we must bring to Parliament, as a matter of fact I can tell you, maybe can't prove it now, that a lot of the Bills they brought and passed in Parliament were not legal because Cabinet, one of them told me quite a few times, have never approved those Bills. But it didn't matter because he had the sole right to do what he wanted to do.

Mr. Speaker, I have been here a long time. The thing has been aired considerably and we have to go to this rally later where we know we are going to expect a very large crowd. When we had the Heritage Rally at Calliaqua before the rally came off, the J.C.B yo called him?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Jail Bird.

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** J.B.L, said we are going to Calliaqua because we don't expect to get anybody that's why we went to Calliaqua. But now that they saw the crowd, you haven't heard a word about it otherwise. The people are not stupid and I think this is the mistake that the NDP is making. They under estimate the intelligence [applause] they under estimate and continue to under estimate the intelligence of the public. And it will be to their detriment.

Mr. Speaker, I am urging all to come tonight to listen for further information from those of us who you elect and who you elect to do a job and I am sure that any right thinking person would agree that given the hands we had to play, and the conditions under which we had to play them, that some people might think we are magicians to achieve that much within the period of one year. And so we urge Mr. Speaker the public to come to Unity Square. I wish this Bill an easy passage. Thank you [applause].

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank the Members of this Honourable House who have contributed to this debate. I accordingly move that this House resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House to consider this Bill clause by clause.

**HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER:** Seconded the motion.

*House went into Committee.*

*House Resumed.*

*Bill reported and read by title has passed with no amendment.*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that a Bill for an Act to amend the Commission of Inquiries Act, chapter 14 of the Revised Edition of the Laws of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines 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.*

## **COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY AMENDMENT Act 2002, ITEM No. 6 THE CARNIVAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION BILL 2002.**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Minister for Culture.

**HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the introduction and first reading for an Act to provide for the establishment of the Carnival Development Corporation for promoting carnival and other related activities in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and for connected purposes. The Objects of this Bill, this Bill seeks to establish the Carnival Development Corporation (CDC) for promoting carnival and other related activities. Part 2 of the Bill establishes the Corporation and makes provision for establishment of a CDC Board. It sets out the powers, duties and functions of the CDC and the Board. Clause 5 states that the CDC shall be the sole body with responsibility for organizing and managing carnival except where the board licenses any other appropriate body or agency to operate carnival festivals. Clause 11 provides for members to declare any interest they may have in an application made to the board or any contract or any proposed contract to the board. It further provides that the members shall not participate in any discussion or vote on the issue before the board in which he has an interest. The other provisions in this part, deal with staffing, remuneration, protection of Members and the issuance of policy directions from the Minister. Part three of the Bill deals with the funds and borrowing powers of the corporation. Clause 22 provides for reserve funds to be established for specific contingencies. Provision is also made under clauses 24 and 25 for the accounts of the corporation to be audited. Part four of the Bill deals with general provisions. Clauses 27, 28 and 29 provide for exemptions to be granted to the corporation from stamp duty and other charges, which may be required on certificates, receipts, instruments or other documents issued by the corporation, from Income Tax and from import duty and consumption tax on equipment, software, advertising and promotion of materials, stationery etc that the corporation may need in the conduct of its operations. Under clause 30 of the Bill, provision is made for offences and penalties. Further provision is made for the contents of the minutes of meetings of the corporation to be admitted into evidence as proof the event stated in the contents of the minutes. Clause 33 provides for regulations to be made.

It is hoped that this legislation would enable the CDC to better manage its operation and produce bigger and better carnival activities to enhance Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Tourism drive and cultural activities.

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

## **ITEM NO. 7 INTERNATIONALLY PROTECTED PERSONS BILL 2002.**

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

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the Bill for an Act to implement the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crime against internationally Protected persons including diplomatic agents 1973. The Objects and reasons Mr. Speaker of this Bill seeks to implement the convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crime against internationally Protected persons 1973, which Saint Vincent and the Grenadines joined last year by depositing its accession with the Secretary General of the United Nations.

**HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER:** Seconded the motion.

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

#### **ITEM NO. 8 ACT AGAINST THE TAKING OF HOSTAGES BILL 2002.**

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

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the first reading of a Bill for an Act for the implementation of the provision of the International Convention against the taking of Hostages 1979. Once again Mr. Speaker this Bill seeks to implement the Convention against punishment of crime against Internationally Protected Persons, which we in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines joined last year by depositing our accession to this Convention with the Secretary General of the United Nations.

**HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER:** Seconded the motion.

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

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to say to the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines that the comprehensive statement which I wanted to make on the first anniversary of our Government would be made on the next sitting of the House which would be the 17<sup>th</sup> April if the Honourable Members accept that date. The reason Mr. Speaker is that we have to off to the rally at Unity Square, which has been advertised. I want to apologise for those persons who going to be there to say to them that I would be late because I have two other functions to attend, but I would be there on time to speak. It's a very good thing to see that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines this weekend are host to the Caribbean Customs where we have six hundred persons coming in,

they are in already, then over two hundred persons for the Income Tax, the Regional Income Tax Tournament and then on Monday the 1<sup>st</sup>, the Davis Cup Competition opens. I know Mr. Speaker the Davis Cup Competition is possible because the Government has given its support and though the Tennis Association didn't inform me until the beginning of January that they needed two more courts, \$500,000 I found for the two courts you wouldn't have seen in any report or hear it on any radio station including the state owned radio station that the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has put \$500,000 to build the two additional courts. I think the public would understand that from what has taken place today, that some of these things in which even states institutions are behaving as though they are opposition institutions, but that was coming to an end. I believe in fairness and when the sports programmes at 705 have no fairness well you begin to wonder. You can say what you want; make whatever comments you want so long as you give fairness. There are two sides to a story they must be presented. And I want to welcome all persons from the Caribbean who are here who are coming for the Customs and for the Inland Revenue Competition and all the people from the Caribbean and Central America who are here for the Davis Cup and I want to wish everyone a wonderful Easter. Some of us unfortunately have to work on Good Friday after going to church others are a little more lucky. I want to thank everyone who has come to this meeting today, particularly the persons who are not Members of this House who have come and sat in the gallery for the whole day. I want to thank them very much. It's an exercise in Parliamentary Democracy that the people themselves must be present and hearing and of course, it is live on television and on two radio stations, which are innovations in this country.

Mr. Speaker, the 17<sup>th</sup> April is the Anniversary when the ULP Government first came into Parliament to take the Oath and I think it is fitting that we adjourn this Honourable House on the Anniversary day our first day in Parliament after we won the election. I accordingly beg to move that this House do stand adjourned until Wednesday April 17<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 O'clock in the morning.

**HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER:** Seconded the motion.

*Question put and agreed to.  
House adjourned accordingly at 5:55 p.m.*