

No. 2

Third Session

Sixth Parliament

THURSDAY

11th January, 2001

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

THE

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

ADVANCE COPY

OFFICIAL REPORT

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THE

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

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

SIXTH SITTING

11TH January, 2001

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

The Honourable House of Assembly met at 10:00 a.m. in the Assembly Chamber,
Court House, Kingstown.

PRAYERS

MR. SPEAKER IN THE CHAIR

Honourable Nolwyn McDowall

Present

MEMBERS OF CABINET

Prime Minister

Minister of Finance and Public Service

Hon. Arnhim Eustace

Member for East Kingstown

Minister of Justice

Attorney General

Hon. Carl Joseph

Senior Minister

Rt. Hon. Sir James F. Mitchell

Member for Northern Grenadines

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tourism and
Information
Hon. Allan Cruickshank

Member for South Central
Windward

Minister of Trade, Industry and Consumer
Affairs
Hon. John Horne

Member for West Kingstown

Minister of Agriculture and Labour
Hon. Jeremiah Scott

Member for South Leeward

Minister of Education, Culture and
Women's Affairs
Hon. Alpian Allen

Member for North Leeward

Minister of Housing, Youth, Sports, Local Government
And Community Development
Hon. Monty Roberts

Member for North Windward

Minister of Communication and Works
Hon. Glenford Stewart

Member for Southern
Grenadines

Minister of Health and the Environment
Hon. Joseph Burns Bonadie

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Dr. Ralph Gonsalves

Member for North Central
Windward /Leader of the
Opposition

Hon. Vincent Beache

Member for South Windward

Hon. Louis Straker

Member for Central Leeward

Hon. Stanley John

Member for East St. George

Hon. Ormiston Boyea

Member for Central Kingstown

Hon. Michael Browne

Member for West St. George

Hon. Conrad McIntosh

Government Senator/Parliamentary
Secretary Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Tourism and Information.

Hon. Selmon Walters

Opposition Senator

Hon. Dr. Douglas Slater

Opposition Senator

ABSENT

Hon. Girlyn Miguel

Member for Marriacqua

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY 11TH JANUARY 2001

PRAYERS

The Speaker read the prayers of the House.

OBITUARIES/CONGRATULATORY REMARKS

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to take this opportunity to offer congratulations to Prime Minister Panday of Trinidad and Tobago and the United National Congress on their recent victory at the polls.

Mr. Speaker I regret the fact that that country is now in the throes of a constitutional crisis following the elections. Indeed, Mr. Speaker I will remember during our own situation here last year that Prime Minister Panday was part of that CARICOM mission that came to assist us in the resolution of our own difficulties. I will remember, Mr. Speaker, the firm stand he took in relation to the need to protect our democracy and our constitution. Today he finds himself in a situation involving his own constitution. And I simply wish to say, Mr. Speaker that the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines wishes him well as he works to the resolution of that crisis. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like to join with the Honourable Prime Minister to offer congratulations to Prime Minister Basdeo Panday and his UNC team in Trinidad on their re-election to office. I have known Mr. Panday for quite a long time. And we have traveled together to a number of countries including his mother country, India, and in the old days with the MNU he addressed our own conference here. The question in which he is currently embroiled is of great interest to all of us in the region, and raises not only legal constitutional issues, but more broadly democratic and political ones. Some of those issues we have had to address in one way or another in this country, but not with the same sharpness, particularly in that last occasion when certain defeated members were appointed to senior positions in Government. But that is for the Trinidadian authorities and people to resolve and we look on and to give whatever assistance we can to ensure that the matter is amicably resolved.

Mr. Speaker I would like also to offer congratulations at a lower level to Ian Douglas, the son of Michael Douglas former leader of the Dominica Labour Party and the nephew of Rosie Douglas, late Prime Minister of Dominica for his resounding by-election victory in the Portsmouth Constituency, continuing the Douglas' tradition of representing that constituency.

I want to wish Mr. Panday and Mr. Douglas all the best. Thank you.

HONOURABLE JAMES MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker I too would like to add my congratulations to Prime Minister Panday and his UNC in Trinidad and Tobago. I wish to offer in addition one simple comment that it points to the fact in the Caribbean the need for constitutional reform, and if countries are going towards the form of republicanism which has a president it is obvious that president must have his authority with direct elections from the people.

HONOURABLE JOHN HORNE: Mr. Speaker, on this issue I wish to crave your indulgence since we have passed obituaries, but I think it is important, and with your permission I just wish to record our sympathy to the Roman Catholic Church and authorities and the people of St. Lucia on the untimely death of a Nun and a Priest in the most horrible of circumstances. I wish to say that we abhor this kind of violence and disrespect for the rule of law, and I know that this Honourable House would in fact join me in expressing our sympathy and in extending to the Government of St. Lucia our thoughts at this time. We understand the horrific damage that has been done to the country and its economy as well by the adverse publicity since this item has been world news for several days. So, under one hand we record our sympathy to the Roman Catholic Church and the people of St. Lucia, the Roman Catholic community in particular and we also express our support for the maintenance of the law to the Government and people of St. Lucia.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, may I just crave your indulgence so that we can complete on this side of the House our own commendation of the Honourable Minister for raising this issue in the House today. And my sentiments are exactly his own sentiments.

I should indicate to this Honourable House and to the citizens of St. Vincent and the Grenadines that two days ago, I finally caught up with Prime Minister Anthony and communicated my own sympathy and that of our party and my own family and being a Roman Catholic also, on behalf our own community here to him and the people of St. Lucia.

MINUTES

The Minutes of Sittings held on 6th and 14th December, 2000 copies of which had previously been circulated, were taken as read and confirmed without amendments.

QUESTIONS FOR ORAL ANSWERS

1. *The Honourable Vincent Beache (South Windward) to ask the Honourable Minister of Finance to please state:*
 - a. *The reasons for the National Lottery being placed on the website.*
 - b. *The cost of the measure.*
 - c. *The date this was effected*
 - d. *The benefits derived from this measure so far; and*
 - e. *Why after 16 years no legislation is in place for the control, governance and administration of the lottery and when would legislation be brought to this Honourable House with respect to this institution.*

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, the National Lottery is not on the Internet. Sometime in August 2000 the Board felt that some benefit could be derived from setting up a website and the Lottery operation on the internet. In this regard the Chairman of the Board agreed to conduct a study in this regard and in fact had signed a contract to this effect, in the sum of US \$75,000.00. Mr. Speaker, I regarded this in my capacity of Minister of Finance as a major policy change. I was not at all consulted on the matter and I indicated to the Lottery that that contract should be stopped. A payment of US\$18,000.00 had already been made the day before and I have said to the Lottery that they should seek to recover that sum.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to (e) of the question, there is in fact in the Legal Department the draft National Lottery Act and in recent discussions with Cabinet on this matter, the view has been expressed that perhaps we should consider instead establishing the Lottery as a non-profit company under the Companies Act. So we are at this point in time, Mr. Speaker, we are having internal discussion on that matter.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE: In light of the fact, Mr. Speaker, that the Lottery has been going since 1983 or thereabout, and in light of the fact that draft legislation some three or four years ago was submitted from the Board of the National Lottery to the Government, why has it taken so long to decide the modus operandi of this institution, and what greater benefits can be derived from the Lottery being instituted, -- I know it has not been done yet, -- instituted as a non-profit organisation. It is a lottery. It is

gambling, let's call it so, let us not call it any other thing. That is what it is and what greater benefits would be gathered from having this as a non-profit organisation rather than in the form that it is now.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: I agree that it has been sometime since the legislation has been in the draft form. But I think, Mr. Speaker, recent experiences with the Lottery have caused us to think somewhat of what form we should in fact adopt. The fact remains that the proceeds that are distributed are in fact used for sports and culture. The lottery to a great extent has to operate on a commercial basis. I agree, Mr. Speaker, it has taken a long time, but the lottery has operated reasonably effectively, and it has presented its accounts to this Parliament. We have not taken a decision that it should be a non-profit company. We are examining the possible advantages or disadvantages of whatever mode we decide to adopt.

2. *The Honourable Vincent Beache (South Windward) to ask the Honourable Minister of Finance to please state:*

- (a) How much revenue would be realized in this year from the increase in price of diesel by 55 cents per gallon.*
- (b) The current deficit or surplus per gallon on unleaded gasoline as of the 31-12-2000*

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, the projected sales of diesel, -- and this is non Vinlec, I should point out, for 2001 is 1,600,000 gallons which means that the 55 cents per gallon increase will generate receipts of about \$880,000. Most of this sum, Mr. Speaker, will be applied towards the reduction in deficit, and given the projected market conditions for 2001 the net revenue realized we project to be insignificant. With respect to part (b) of the question Mr. Speaker, the latest figures from Shell Antilles and Guiana show that as at 31st December 2000, the malus on gasoline, or the deficit amounted to 48 cents per gallon.

3. *The Honourable Vincent Beache (South Windward) to ask the Honourable Minister of Finance to please give a breakdown of Government's contribution (including statutory bodies and the National Lottery) to the installation and operation of Christmas lights in the State for the year 2000, and the cumulative total so far.*

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I cannot say at this time that I have every scrap of information relative to this matter. What I have received so far relates mainly to the contribution of approximately \$30,000.00 made by the Lottery to the Nine Mornings Committee to assist that committee in its programme in the promotion of Nine Mornings. At that time it had indicated that they would be assisting some 21

locations in relation to lighting, it is also my understanding, Mr. Speaker, that Vinlec provided \$15,000. That is the information I have to date, Mr. Speaker.

4. *The Honourable Michael Browne (West St. George) to ask the Minister of Health, with reference to the constituency of West St. George to please indicate the Ministry's programme for:-*

- (a) provision of pipe-borne water to residents of Ayre Hill (Belmont),*
- (b) maintenance and upgrading of the public bath at Upper Cane Hall,*
and
- © maintenance and upgrading of the public laundry at Dauphine.*

HONOURABLE JOSEPH BURNS BONADIE: Mr. Speaker, the Central Water and Sewage Authority has examined the possibility of providing pipe-borne water to the upper levels of Ayre Hill. The water supply comes from the Majorca source but the elevations, the upper levels have posed technical problems in the supply of water to resident in that particular area. I am advised by the Water Authority that they are trying to resolve the technical problems since it is their policy to provide pipe-borne water to every citizen in our state.

Question (b) Attempts to complete the upgrading exercise to the public bath in upper Cane Hall was suspended in 2000, and I want to give the Honourable Member the assurance that the upgrading exercise will be completed at the earliest opportunity.

Question (c) The public laundry at Dauphine causes the Central Water and Sewage Authority some concern with the excess usage of water which is caused by faulty taps. The Ministry will ensure that regular maintenance is provided after repairs to the existing facility and upgrading of the facility will take place as soon as possible.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

HONOURABLE MICHAEL BROWNE: Mr. Speaker, in relation to part (a) of the question, the provision of pipe-borne water to residence of Ayre Hill in Belmont, will the Honourable Minister indicate what really are the problems in relation to pressure, because we know there is a problem getting the water up the hill, but there is a two inch pipe that goes right across from Pomson right over to Belmont, just at the top of that particular area. I don't know if he has the information, but if he doesn't maybe he can find out from the technical staff at the CWSA. If indeed there is a problem, bring it down the hill from the big two-inch pipe at the top.

HONOURABLE JOSEPH BURNS BONADIE: Mr. Speaker, I will ensure to have the answer to the supplementary question. What I was informed by the Ministry was that once there are so many citizens in terms of numerical numbers, they will move a new system into the area, but the problem really has to do with the elevation and getting the water, what they informed me, and these are the people who are in charge, they will soon overcome what they discovered as a technical problem in providing that water. But my understanding is that once the number of consumers increase they will put in new

pipes and new lines to try to overcome the technicality that presently exist. But certainly I will attempt to provide him with the answers from the Authority.

HONOURABLE MICHEAL BROWNE: Thank you, and I certainly look forward to it, because it is indeed a sizable village in that area, and they have the pipe going across to the top.

5 *The Honourable Michael Browne (West St. George) to ask the Minister of Agriculture to indicate when the lands, bought for the extension of the Belair cemetery, will be made available for burials.*

HONOURABLE JEREMIAH SCOTT: This question was brought to the House before, quite recently. The answer given at that time is the same answer I will give now. The House was informed then that the Ministry of Agriculture and Labour is not responsible for dedication of sites for cemetery nor for burials. The Ministry has indeed purchased the land and made it available. Dedicating the land for cemetery purposes and arranging burials, again is not the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture and Labour, we have made the land available. I would suggest that this question be directed to the appropriate Ministry.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

HONOURABLE MICHAEL BROWNE: The Honourable Minister could enlighten us in terms of whose responsibility it is so that we could direct the question appropriately.

HONOURABLE JEREMIAH SCOTT: I think you are making yourself look very small as a Parliamentarian. You must know that burials and so fall under the Ministry of Health. You must know that, cemetery are the responsibility of Health.

6. *The Honorable Michael Browne (West St. George) to ask the Minister of Education to indicate the current status for plans for the establishment of a secondary school in the constituency of West St. George.*

HONOURABLE ALPIAN ALLEN: Mr. Speaker, it has been a long established policy of this Government to construct a secondary school in every single constituency, subject to demographics. A site has been identified by the Ministry of Education for the construction of the proposed secondary school in West St. George. The Ministry of Agriculture and Labour was requested to assist with the procurement of the proposed site.

7. *The Honourable Selmon Walters (Opposition Senator) to ask the Honourable Minister of Agriculture in light of the discussions held with the SGV Banana Growers Association Board of Directors to please state the measure and or action to be implemented to lift the Association out of its financial burdens.*

HONOURABLE JEREMIAH SCOTT: Mr. Speaker, the Ministry has organised a meeting a week ago with the Management of the Banana Growers Association to discuss this very matter. The Ministry was advised as follows:

That the necessary measures would be taken including restructuring to improve and ensure greater efficiencies in the management of the Association's business. Another meeting is to be held with the Board of Directors during the coming week with a view to arriving at a consensus on the way forward. A meeting has also been planned with the farmers to discuss the Association's strategies and to determine whether or not they will be the best and in the interest of the Association.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

HONOURABLE SELMON WALTERS: Would the Honourable Minister please state whether or not the restructuring of which he spoke refers to the laying off of staff.

HONOURABLE JEREMIAH SCOTT: I not aware that it means laying off of staff. I know that staff will be retransferred to other organizations. For example the extension staff may fall under the responsibility of the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

8. The Honourable Selmon Walters (Opposition Senator) to ask the Minister of Agriculture to please state:

- (a) How many rural agricultural extension offices are currently under construction*
- (b) Where are they being constructed*
- (c) What are the purposes of these offices*
- (d) What are the estimated cost of each of these offices*
- (e) Who are the contractors assigned to construct each office.*

HONOURABLE JEREMIAH SCOTT: Mr. Speaker the former Minister of Agriculture and the Member of Parliament for the constituency of South Central Windward had prepared and laid all the groundwork and made the recommendations for constructing several Extension Offices. One rural agricultural extension office is currently under construction at New Grounds to cover the central catchment area between Three Rivers and Dumbarton. The Honourable Minister had indicated then that with ongoing work on the station at Rabacca, the North would have been well served. In acquiring land for the New Grounds School he had specifically air-marked a site on the acquired lands for constructing the agriculture station. A memorandum to the then Permanent Secretary of Agriculture outlined the purpose of these stations as being "to enhance extension services and to continue demonstration activities for farmers with a view to increasing productivity and improving quality."

The cost of the New Grounds facility is in the region of \$250,000. The contract has been awarded to a local villager, Frederick Browne who won a competitive tender. It is

envisaged that more facilities of this type will be constructed as funds become available. Upgrading exercises are planned for the stations at Enhams and plans are on the way for a facility at Pembroke and upgrading works at Walliabou.

9. *The Honourable Selmon Walters (Opposition Senator) to ask the Minister of Agriculture to please state:*

(a) places in St. Vincent and the Grenadines where Government is currently selling lands.

(b) What are the factors that determine the price setting for the Lands.

(c) Give a break down of the uses for which the lands will be utilized.

HONOURABLE JEREMIAH SCOTT: Mr. Speaker, Government sells lands throughout the State and for different purposes. The prices vary in the different locations. Price setting is a function of the Chief Surveyor who takes several factors into consideration, including existing market price, trends, availability of public and commercial infrastructure and environmental considerations among others. The lands are sold for all types of activities, including housing, commercial activities, specialized developments and all are subject to planning approval.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

HONOURABLE SELMON WALTERS: Part (a) of the question specifically requires that the Minister state the places in the State where lands are being sold. I didn't hear that Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE JEREMIAH SCOTT: Maybe you were not listening. Government sells lands throughout the State. Throughout the State. If you want me to name every village in St. Vincent I will do that. We sell lands throughout the State. Anywhere you want to buy land you can buy.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Would the Honourable Member be satisfied with a printed list?

10. *The Honourable Dr. Ralph Gonsalves (North Central Windward) to ask the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance to please state, by economic sector, the amount of new direct private foreign investment on mainland St. Vincent since June 1, 1998.*

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, the information requested is not compiled in a manner which allows me without much deeper digging to distinguish between main land St. Vincent and the Grenadines. And the information is not available by sector at this time. However, on examination of the balance of payment figures, show net direct foreign investment for 1998 and 1999 (and this is for the entire State,) as \$240.2 million and \$123.6 million respectively. The figures for 2000 are not yet available.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: In as much as these figures are the global figures for the entire State of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, from the vantage point of the Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, would he explain (a) why there has been such a sharp fall in direct foreign investment in 1999 as compared to 1998 and, (b) whether the bulk of this direct foreign investment in each of the years relates to the foreign investment products in the Grenadines.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I shall attempt to answer the supplementary question. I just wish to point out, Mr. Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition had indicated earlier his apologies to me for the lateness of submission, that is why I said in my initial remarks that given the amount of digging that is needed to be done it was difficult for me to in fact come up with all the information. He is now asking me to speculate. I would say, however, Mr. Speaker, without any checking, that I expect that a large proportion of this would result from the investment in Canouan.

DR, THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, may I say just, not any controversial issue, I simply want to acknowledge to the House, the Prime Minister is quite correct, I had telephoned him and tended my apology to him for submitting the questions, I think a day late, because I want to pay the courtesy to someone when I am asking them questions that I comply with the rules, and I am very happy that the question at least if not quite fulsomely was answered; we have some indication. It is a mark of my own respect for the office when I ask questions of anyone.

11. *The Honourable Dr. Ralph Gonsalves (North Central Windward) to ask the Honourable Prime Minister to please state what steps, if any, have been taken by the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to repurchase from the "the Canouan Developers" an block of land, admeasuring 28 acres or thereabouts, for the re-sale to the people of Canouan.*

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker the developers in Canouan, following earlier discussions late last year, have now been formally written to by the Government on the question of the repurchase of the 28 acres. We are now awaiting that reply.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

DR.THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Assuming that the developers agree to a resale of the land to the Government 28 acres of which forms the subject matter of this question, would the Honourable Prime Minister give the undertaking that if this re-sale occurs before March 31st this year or anytime when the elections are called, that the Government would move speedily to get all the people in Canouan, so that there would be a rational and proper and fair and reasonable distribution, taking into account the

requisite of reasonable public policy, and not to have the lands parceled out on the basis of political considerations. So I am asking for the undertaking.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, the developers bought that land freehold, they have in fact spent considerable sums on the development plan and designs for that area. In my humble opinion, Mr. Speaker, I believe we will be talking about a considerable sum of money for the repurchase of that property. It would not surprise me, Mr. Speaker, if we were talking in double figures millions. It therefore raises the question, Mr. Speaker, about the selling price of such lands. So while I cannot give the commitment that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition request, in my view it is unlikely that we would complete that transaction in a short period of time.

12. *The Honourable Dr. Ralph Gonsalves (North Central Windward) to ask the Honourable Prime Minister to please state whether or not the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has been involved in any discussions with officials from the Government of Libya about participating in a Libyan-led financial institution to aid developing countries, including Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and nature and extent of those discussions.*

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, sometime in the middle of October last year, a representative of the Government of Libya, as part of a tour to various islands in the Eastern Caribbean, visited St. Vincent and the Grenadines. During that visit he indicated to the then Prime Minister and to myself that his Government was giving consideration to the establishment of a development bank. There were no details on the bank, but he did indicate that they were likely to be meeting in Tripoli sometime during March 2001. We indicated to him at that time that it is likely that during the period it was up to March 31st that we would be involved in election process and the chances of attending would in fact be slim indeed.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Would the Honourable Prime Minister indicate (a) whether the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is (a) planning in any immediate period to establish diplomatic relations with the government of Libya, and whether that is a precondition for the participation by the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines from the Libyan standpoint the participation of this Government in such a development finance institution.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of any such plans. I think Members of this House are fully aware of the issues that are of international concerns in relation to Libya, and like all countries that now do not recognize that government, we too are looking at those developments.

ORDERS OF THE DAY.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 12 (5), I move that the proceedings on the Orders of the Day be exempted from the provisions of the Standing Order "Hours of Sitting."

HONOURABLE CARL JOSEPH: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

Question put and agreed to.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, may I crave your indulgence, on the Orders of the day 1 to 4 Supplementary Appropriation Bills 6-9, we have not received any documentation, the particulars, in terms of the explanations as required by the Constitution, I do not know when those are going to be received, because these Supplementary Appropriation Bills, have been on the Order Paper over a month ago, [interruption] No, no, we are talking about the explanations as required in the Estimates, what we do have is the Supplementary Appropriation Bill, we do not have the explanations as required by the Constitution, so I would like to know in so far as they have come up a second time, what is the position.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, if that is the case I apologize; but my recollection, Mr. Speaker, is that these were in fact presented at the Finance Committee, but I shall have it checked and rectified.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Bill for an Act to amend the pensions Act Chapter 204 be read a second time.

HONOURABLE CARL JOSEPH: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

Question put and agreed to.

6. PENSIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL 2000

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, Act No. 73 of 1992 amended the Pensions Act in such a manner that persons entering the Public Service as of 1st January, 1993 would received their pension from the National Insurance Scheme, and not from the Consolidated Fund.

Over the last few months, Mr. Speaker, we have held numerous discussions on this matter, and in the latest of these discussions I met with the Public Service Union, as well as the Teacher Union and other relevant bodies to discuss this issue of the 1993 decision. I must admit, Mr. Speaker, that those decisions were very frank on both sides, in particular the Unions presented the view that they regarded the decision taken at that time as unconstitutional since in their view it reduces their pension rights. They

were in fact very concerned, Mr. Speaker, about that particular aspect of it as it relates to the Constitution, and indicated to me at that time, that that has always been their position, so they therefore saw the provision as unconstitutional. They expressed, Mr. Speaker, some concerns in addition and those concerns had to do with their perception of what the size of an NIS pension would be. There was a long discussion, Mr. Speaker on that particular matter, not only on that forum but otherwise. And Mr. Speaker, as we look down the road to the future, it is an issue that will attract our attention from time to time, that is in my view.

There are still, Mr. Speaker, some significant misconceptions as to the functioning and the purpose in the broader sense of the National Insurance Scheme. We have to remember that perhaps it could become much clearer, much later, we have to remember that scheme, Mr. Speaker, is but 14 years old, and we therefore cannot judge the benefits to be derived and the size of a pension that one would receive in later date, because it is not only the maturity of the scheme when it could have been operating for a full working life, if I could put it that way, of an individual, only then would one be able to judge the size of a pension.

I think it is important, Mr. Speaker, that we as a people reflect on this particular matter. A few days ago at the Pensions Appreciation Day, on Monday I had occasion, Mr. Speaker, to make a statement on this particular matter, because I am concerned of the misconceptions and what they could mean in terms of decisions taken now. Mr. Speaker, at the present rates of contribution, if a person had worked the normal working lifetime, and had paid his contribution to the NIS at the maximum which is at \$3,600.00 per year his pension today, assuming no increases in rates of contribution would be \$1800.00 per month, at today's rate. We cannot therefore assume, Mr. Speaker, and make judgments as to the size of an NIS pension based on those who are receiving pensions today, because they were not contributors for a normal working life. There is no one in receipt of a pension today from the NIS, Mr. Speaker, who would have received the pension for a normal working life, and what we are seeking to do, when we make that kind of comment is that we are looking at pensions received by persons from the Consolidated Fund, over a full working life, 33 1/3 years and comparing it with persons who may have worked for 10 years and received an NIS pension. And I want to submit, Mr. Speaker, that in the long run when we have reached the level of maturity in terms of years in the NIS, that the pensions would be easily comparable, I want to submit that.

One other factor which I wish to mention Mr. Speaker, the pension received from the Consolidated Fund is non-contributory, the pension received by the NIS is a contributory fund, and therefore that is often used as an argument, in one case you make a contribution, in another case you don't make a contribution, but Mr. Speaker, unlike the pension from the Consolidated Fund, the NIS also provides for survivors benefits which the Consolidated Fund does not provide for, so in fact a spouse of an

individual would receive on his/her death 75% of the pension, and depending children would receive 25%.

Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that from the Consolidated Fund there are no survivors benefit, so when we make the comparison between National Insurance Scheme and the Pension we have to bear that in mind. Mr. Speaker, we also have to bear in mind that, based on your NIS contribution you are also eligible for other benefits, some of which are not available under the Consolidated Fund. You have death benefit, which is not available and you have employment injury benefit, which is also not available from the Consolidated Fund. So we have to be very careful, Mr. Speaker, when we make the comparison. We have to be careful, and while I understand a lot of the argument being put forward and while I understand that from the point of view of public officers who have joined since 1993, I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that view is short-sighted. I think it would emerge, Mr. Speaker, 15 years from now, that those who have beneficiaries of similar salaries and income would earn more from the NIS pension than they earn from the Consolidated Fund. The actuarial projection show, Mr. Speaker, that it is possible for the NIS at this time without any increase in the contribution rates to be actuarially sound to the year 2008 without any increase in contribution.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, St. Vincent and the Grenadines is the only OECS country which has a contribution rate of 6%, 2.5% from the employee and 3.5% from the employer, all other rates in the OECS range between 8 and 11%, all other contributions. And I am saying even if our contribution rate went to 8% over the next few years, and I expect that over time, Mr. Speaker, contribution rates will change over the long term, and I expect over time, Mr. Speaker, investment income on which a lot of the future benefits of the NIS would be based, investment income would be increased. Indeed, given the demographics in our own society, Mr. Speaker, we are going to have at some point in time, a large number of people who are now considered young, we are going to have a bulge somewhere later down when these people reach retirement age.

Today the investment portfolio of the National Insurance Scheme is \$208 million, and that earned some \$13 million in income during the year 2000. But I am saying, Mr. Speaker, and the point I want to make to this Honourable House, is that down the road we must recognize that the NIS is likely to pay a better pension than the Consolidated Fund.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, given the trends in the world economy, I do not see, and this is my opinion, I do not see any significant increase, indeed it might be a decrease proportionately speaking, in the size of the Public Service as we go down the road, we are moving more and more to private sector and service sector activities. There are more and more calls for privatization of government assets. And, Mr. Speaker as we

move in this sub-region, in the OECS the stock market arrangements, more and more we are developing a culture in which persons would become less dependent on Government and seek to earn more through their own efforts and investment, that is the culture, Mr. Speaker, to which we are moving, and I don't think anybody in this House is saying no, to that. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, that is why I believe that the NIS has a very significant role to play in securing the future of a lot of our citizens. I am arguing here against Mr. Speaker, of taking a shortsighted view, I am arguing here against not looking down the road, we are too prone in our society, and St. Vincent is not alone in this, the Caribbean is not alone in this, there are several countries in the world, developing countries which are in the same position as ourselves, several countries which take that shortsightedness. When you look at East Asians economy, they have a much longer term look at their own future. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, the OECS countries later on this month would be looking at a document, the vision to 2020, they are not looking at a horizon of 5 years as we did in the past, but a horizon of 20 years because in many instances Mr. Speaker, that is possibly more relevant. It may be less exact, but more relevant.

Mr. Speaker, while we discuss issue of this sort and the reintroduction of pensions for persons who join the Public Service in January 1st 1993, we often, Mr. Speaker, do not look at the other side of the coin, and I refer here, Mr. Speaker, to the question of productivity, we often discuss issues related to terms and conditions without looking for commensurate, or even greater increases in productivity and it is time, Mr. Speaker, that we get away from that, it is seen to be politically unpopular, but the reality is, Mr. Speaker, if our productivity does not increase, whether we are involved in agriculture, whether we are involved in tourism, whether we are involved in off shore sector, whatever activity we undertake, Mr. Speaker, if we cannot improve our productivity, then we would be wasting our time. This does not in any way, Mr. Speaker, gainsay stay the fact that people need to have a decent income; but we are saying for that decent income we must produce.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition and other members on that side of the House, and this side of the House as well, have all at one time or the other been concerned about the productivity of the Public Service. And indeed, Mr. Speaker, we are all aware that over time certain norms of operation have developed. And in those norms, Mr. Speaker, and given our constitution arrangement it is very difficult, Mr. Speaker, to deal with issues of discipline. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, many managers in the Public Service regard it as a waste of time to discipline individuals because of the process required is such a long one. The unwillingness of persons to provide information and other factors, all combine to frustrate proper management of the Public Service. And you know we have developed, Mr. Speaker, and I say this without any apology, we develop this attitude that whether someone produces or not, I don't want to cut down anybody's breadfruit tree. Mr. Speaker, our country cannot develop like that. We cannot, Mr. speaker develop like that. The other activities in the Public

Service to which people seek to gain extra income, which I won't go into here, but I am saying, Mr. Speaker, when we are talking about the development of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, we have to have an effectively functioning Public Service. It is not a question, Mr. Speaker, of providing benefits at all time, it is also a question of what we get when we provide those benefits. What do we get for it, what does our nation get?

Mr. Speaker, to me that is the fundamental question. I, Mr. Speaker, in my discussions with the Unions, recognized that in some instances the leadership of some of these Unions have that issue of productivity as a concern. But it is not a popular position to have, and in an environment where some of them are elected they don't want to push it too hard, but they talk about it gently. They try and use as much as possible moral suasion, but Mr. Speaker, it is not having a great deal of impact, we do not have a very productive labour force.

But, Mr. Speaker, we have looked at the issue as a Cabinet, after discussions with the Union sometime ago, I announced that we would be reintroducing legislation in this Parliament to restore pensions of those persons who joined after 1993. But the same time we are doing that, Mr. Speaker, the Public Service Commissions Department is now conducting two exercises, one aimed at getting a meaningful performance management system in place, and one aimed at some further restructuring of the Public Service. Performance Management System, Mr. Speaker, will looking at issues, of course, relating to productivity. And I hope, Mr. Speaker, and it may be a pious hope that we would look this time on both sides of the coin, we would look at the issues, benefits received, and we look at the issue of what how and how much we produce.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I would hope that those exercises would improve the attitude of persons in the Public Sector to the general public, who are there, are there to serve. I will tell you there are many fine Public Officers, but there are a lot persons Mr. Speaker, who do not give the Public their dues. We have a stream of constant complaints on matters of that sort, and I think it is only fair, Mr. Speaker, that Public Officers serve the public with courtesy, with concern.

Mr. Speaker the reintroduction of the pensions to those who joined the Public Service in 1993 is before this Honourable House this morning, subject to those comments that I made, Mr. Speaker, I wish this measure a safe passage through this Honourable House. Thank you, very much.

HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE: Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with the Pension Bill, which deals with the Public Service. There is a Teacher's Pension Bill, there is a Police Pension Bill so therefore this Pension Bill, which is an old Bill, 1948 really, deals with the Public Service. And I understand the linkage between pensions and the National Insurance Scheme. You know, in the appreciation day held recently, the Honourable

Minister of Finance is proud of the NIS, and so he should be, everything that the NDP administration is proud of these days is what was instituted by the last Labour Government; the National Commercial Bank, the National Insurance Scheme, The Hydro-electric Scheme, VINLEC, where we bought out the shares, where we took over the shares from the Commonwealth Development Corporation, the CDC, and I can go on, so of course, we are all proud, because as someone said, after the first term in office, that first four and half year stint, that the NDP Administration continued what was left there by the Labour Government, if you should draw a graph you would see that it has gone on a straight line, a lineal line, from top to bottom. The facts are there.

The Honourable Prime Minister spoke about monies that are paid for pensions from the Consolidated Fund, is non- contributory, well in a direct link it is non-contributory, but I am submitting that the Public Servants make a contribution, it is for this reason, because of the perks, why Civil Servants salaries are much lower than in the private sector, because of what is there at the end of the day, so although funds are not really taken out to contribute towards the retirement benefits, indirectly they are contributing, they are contributing indirectly, and what we have heard, and what the Honourable Prime Minister has said, I agree with productivity, not that I didn't think he would agree with it, but our productivity ratio started to fall somewhere in the 1970's when the Junta Government decided as an election gimmick to increase the rates for labour, they didn't only increase the rates for labour which was necessary, but when the former Prime Minister, the Honourable Senior Minister now, decided that agricultural workers should only work from 7:00 to 1:00 it started the decline, and this was deliberate, and I will tell you why it was deliberate, the culture in these parts, St. Vincent in particular, is that people go here to lunch at 12:00 so this was calculated, you are not getting anybody to work from 7:00 to 1:00, and as a farmer I know this, because when 12:00 arrives they gone to lunch, so in effect what the former Prime Minister did was to make agricultural workers work from 7:00 to 12:00, plain and simple, and if you want them to work longer you have to provide the lunch but they still taking that time off, and what do you know, when they have finished eating they are sluggish. Everybody knows this, it is not only for Negroes or whoever it is, it is a biological fact whatever it is, and that is why in the older days when I grew up in South Rivers we never had a heavy meal at night, and I use to wonder why, but now I understand because you go to sleep with a heavy meal and it affects your balance or whatever it is, but that decline started then, and we said it in the House at the time, that it would have grave consequences upon our development, because it made our agriculture less competitive. When we work out, I do not have the figures here, a few years ago what did it cost to produce a box of bananas in St. Lucia a lot lower than it was to produce here, because of the labour cost, even though the rates were higher, they work a full eight hours, and when you work it out, the cost of producing the box of bananas was cheaper than producing a box of bananas in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. How are you going to tackle and over come this problem, this lethargy or whatever it is in labour, I won't dare to venture

at this point in time. So I agree with the Honourable Prime Minister, that productivity needs to be enhanced. There is no doubt about that.

Mr. Speaker, the comparisons that are made, and I expect that too much have changed, if somebody is working for 33 years, from age 21 to 55, 33 years cannot go on, there must be changes in the National Insurance Scheme, the benefits, the contributions and so on. But, age benefits pensions do not benefit from the returns on investment funds, and I have been questioning why this should be so, because under the Act benefits, what it states here is what the rate of age pension should be, it is here, Section D, age benefit, let me read what it says;

“that the annual rate of age pension shall be 16% of the average annual insurable earnings of the insured person to which shall be added 1% of his average annual insurable earnings for each complete 25 weekly contributions.”

And it goes on in excess of the first 150 weeks and after 500 weeks it goes up by another ½%. But sub-section 2 states quite clearly that in no case shall age pension exceed 60 per centum of the average insurable earnings of the insured person, nor less than the weekly rate of \$40. So this is set, and unless we change it, whatever you contributing there, plus the employer's, because contribution here means, and it is strange you know, Mr. Speaker, contribution the interpretation for contribution here, let me read it, contribution means the total of an employer's and an employee's contribution. So when you talk about contribution here for an insured person you are talking about the total. So you cannot get more than 60% regardless how long you work or whatever. You cannot get more than 60%. Now I am not questioning to a certain extent that, I am questioning, that when you make the returns on investment, I think I have here the financial report of 1999, of some \$10 million or so, that profits, let me call it profit so people could understand, on investment. Now I expect those are used, or part of it, or some of it could be used for the other benefits like maternity, et cetera. Although Mr. Speaker, I cannot remember now exactly, I am not quite sure whether there is built into that 5, 6% as it is now, whether there is a certain percentage of that losing for sickness, maternity or so, but nothing in the Act, I would look for it and I would be glad to be corrected, that states not the financial regulations, not the determination of questions, not the classifications, there is a whole lot of regulations I have gone through, possible I have missed it, where there is anything spelt out to show that the returns on investment, that they are going to benefit the age pensioners. But you know, Mr. Speaker, it is strange, I was looking for the interpretation for contribution in the parent Act, and I could not find it, I could not find it at all; what they have here, I will show you how difficult it is, in the parent Act, the interpretation that they have for contribution in the parent Act, means a contribution under this Act, that is the interpretation. Contribution in the parent Act means a contribution under this Act. So I say well okay, let me go to the contribution regulations to see if I'll find an interpretation

there, so on booklet 1, I didn't leave this, they amended all that we have left there, all of what we left there were changed up by the former Attorney General, Parnel Campbell, and the present Attorney General, Carl Joseph, can attest to that I am sure. He can attest to that because he was a member of that committee. But in the contribution regulations there is nothing there that gives you anything. But you know where you find it Mr. Speaker, you find it in the benefit regulations, you would have thought that if you want something for contribution, it would come under contributions, but it comes under benefit. So in the benefit regulations we find here the interpretation for contribution. And in here it says contribution means the total of an employer's and an employee's contribution. But you can understand this, I only bring this out to show you how difficult it could be, especially to laymen like us, lawyers maybe are able to determine this more easily.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance states that under the Consolidated Fund there is no survivors benefit. That is true, and that there are survivors benefit under the NIS, that is true again. I remember that the little interjection I asked what happened if the widow or widower, had worked and contributed and was also receiving a pension from the NIS, well, what it says here, Mr. Speaker, that in the benefit regulations part 5, miscellaneous, section 58, this came out in 1984, you would have realized that, imagine the scheme came into being in 1985, 1986 thereabout, but we never got the benefit regulations out until 1994, we talk about 8 years, but the scheme was going, and we made row in this House, we spoke about it, we said bring the regulations to the House, because under the parent Act it states that any regulations should be brought to this House. They have not brought any of these to the House you know, none of these have been brought to the House to be debated. It was done by Executive fiat. But, what it says here Mr. Speaker, "that notwithstanding that a person is at the same time entitled to two or more benefits under the Act he shall be paid (a) the benefit first awarded or (b) the other benefit if it is payable at a higher rate." So you see even survivors get a benefit. If you are already receiving one, entitlement to it, you worked, you contributed, and the widow or widower died the surviving spouse can only get the higher of the two benefits. That spouse doesn't get the two benefits. I want it to be clear so that people could understand. Also, if the man dies and he leaves his widow, and she is under 50, whether she is incapacitated or not she can only get survivors benefit for one year. I have a case in my constituency now, she can only get survivors benefit for one year. There is no differential between if that person is 49 years old, and her husband had waited another 6 months to die and she would have been 50 she would have gotten it for life, these are some of the areas we are saying that needs to be looked at. So if you are 49 or 48, and your husband die you can only get the 75% of his pension for one year, despite what he might have paid. You see, Mr. Speaker, what bothered the Civil Servants was that (a) under the NIS there is no gratuity, and for the same reasons I set out, if the person dies, and his wife is getting pension, all she gets maybe is the difference from what her pension was, and what his pension is; and if her pension was

higher, then she continues to get her pension, she gets nothing. With the gratuity at least you can get off. And we have been saying that we think the NIS should look at this again, and I have to admit that when we did it we did it we never thought about gratuity at the time. But as time went on these things come to be realized. So that when you retire there is no big thing why it cannot, after taking actuarial advice on this, I am not saying that you must just go and do it Wily Nilly, why you should be able to opt for a reduced pension, like you do in the Civil Service, and a gratuity. And I am sure that the actuary would be able to advise in this respect. Because when he dies, and if his wife dies shortly after, and do not forget that we are retiring at 60, and those children are over the required age, and nothing is paid, so you see even if you could have had a gratuity, that has happened in cases here with the Civil Service, then at least that could be a bolster to help out for whatever it is.

The question, Mr. Speaker, was when the comparisons were made, the Honourable Prime Minister said you cannot compare because there is no doubt that even a Permanent Secretary, for instance, who retires opt for reduced pension, get a gratuity, that her pension as of now is still higher than what would be paid from the National Insurance Scheme.

Now, the Honourable Prime Minister stated some time ago that the life of the scheme, I think he said that you would pay something like \$37,000 but he did not include employers part of it, if we put in the employers part, we are going to have maybe another 40,000 something dollars, which is going to bring it up to \$77,000, \$80,000 dollars, I do not have the exact figures. So when that is worked out, even with the full contribution, that a Civil Servant is saying that they are going to be worse off.

Now, I am not an actuary, I have not worked out the whole thing, but to say that as the time goes on it is going to get better, of course, it is going to get better. But as the time goes on you would have to pay more, plain and simple; as the time go on, you would have to pay more. And I think this part of the problem, and this is why I think the Civil Servants were saying we have a constitutional right under the Constitution, whether this is so or not, I don't know. And that you ask us to contribute, but you have not put anything else in place to lessen the impact of our contribution. And those are the facts. And this would have gone on, you know, despite all the misgivings, and all what you feel is unfair, it was going on since 1993. We would not have been here debating this matter, if the non-contributory pension for Parliamentarians were not increased, this would have been going on quite happily, nobody would have bothered, nobody would have minded, so it is the NDP administration that has brought this back up as an issue, plain and simple, it was not an issue before, and even at the time when they were told, do not pass this Bill, if it had been shelved as it had to be in the end, it still would not have been an issue. But in the usual NDP manner, you create the problem, you try to solve it, and you beat your chest and say well we have solved it, we have done you a good. That's is what it is you know, all along this has been their modus operandi, all

the time, you create a problem, and when that problem gets out of hand, you say no, no let us try and solve it, and then you say, "well you see what good boys we are." We had a problem and we solve it, the fact is, Mr. Speaker, had it not been for the Opposition and the ODD, these pension rights and benefits would not have been reintroduced and given back to the Public Servants and Teachers, plain and simple, no matter what you say, and the Teacher and the Public Servants, they are not ignorant to this, they know this. It is like the doctor cutting off your leg, you know, and he dresses it nicely and he bandages it and it gets better, and he says you see, I have done a good job, but you have lost your leg. I have done a good job but you already lose your leg. So this is what is happening. Mr. Speaker, and all of this because no advice is being heeded. We are Parliamentarians, we are here to represent people, and if the people say they do not want certain things within the constraint of the law, it is our duty to try to reason with them and let them know why it is to their benefit.

When we introduced the 3% sometime ago, I am sure that everyone knew that that would have been to the benefit of the masses, but they say they didn't want it. We were forced to withdraw it, but at least they say they didn't want it and we withdrew it. Similar situation because it was passed into law, we didn't heed the voices and the cry of the people, and we paid for it, and I would have thought that a future administration would have learnt from that, I will tell you one thing that we in the ULP would learn from all of these, and we would make mistakes, there is no doubt about that, because you cannot go through life without making mistakes, but I can assure you that we are not going to make similar mistakes, that's a fact; so that we support the reintroduction of the benefits.

I just want to draw, Mr. Speaker, just for information not questioning or saying that we are going to vote for it, but Section 14 of Cap. 10, I am not sure that this is done properly, because as I said I am no lawyer, Section 14 here in the interpretation and general provisions, state, "that where a written law repealing in whole or in part any former written law, is itself repealed, such last repeal shall not revive the written law or the provisions before repeal unless words are added reviving such written law or provisions."

Now in the amendment we have in the Bill we have repealed Section 1, we have repealed a repeal. But we are now adding for the avoidance of doubt, the provisions of the principal Act shall apply to persons entering the Public Service, whether before or after the first day of January, 1993. Now I am not sure that this complies fully with what is written here, because you can't just repeal, without words of revival, but I leave this, to the Honourable Attorney General, to deal with; and because in any case we are supporting this we are not going to make any big song and dance of it, if I am right is that I think we should set the matter right, maybe do some other amendment here, to bring this thing back into its proper context. Because we don't want some time down the road, five, ten years from now somebody comes and says well you can't get the

pension because it was not done properly, and it is not there, because this can happen. So I am only throwing these things out for what it is worth.

Mr. Speaker, we on this side, the ULP members on this side that is, will support this measure because we think that it is something that had to be done, the question of productivity I think this is going to take more than just speaking in this House, it is going to have to take maybe a lot of dialogue, a lot of discussion, and maybe a lot of other things. Pride, being built back into being a Vincentian etc. Because you know, Mr. Speaker, we are the worst in the OECS, I said so before in this Honourable House, and the Honourable Minister of Finance told me that was not so, he brought figures to tell me it was not so, but let me read out, I have the CARICOM Prospective, June 2000, and they give you a list of tables here, let me just read them out quickly so that you can understand what I am saying; population in poverty, Antigua is 12%, Barbados, 8%, Dominica 33%, Grenada 20%, Guyana 36%, Jamaica 16%, St. Kitts/Nevis 15%, St. Lucia 25%, [pause] waiting for it? St. Vincent is 37%, higher than all the others. These are the figures that came here and they say this come from CGCED, et cetera. Human development ranking the only one that is lower than us is St. Lucia, we are ranked 75%, St. Lucia is ranked at 81%, all the others are higher than us. Unemployment rate, as a matter of fact we here that we only have 20%, Antigua is 7%, Barbados 11%, Dominica 10%, Belize 11% and Belize the last time there was 33%, not that I am leaving out anything, Belize 11%, in the population poverty, Belize was 33%, we are still 37%, we are still higher, but coming down, Grenada is 16%, Guyana 12%, Jamaica 16%, St. Kitts/Nevis 12%, St. Lucia 18%, St. Vincent 20%, Trinidad and Tobago 12%. We are higher than all the other in unemployment. GDP per capita, well we have gained something now because we are the lowest, we are the lowest now but that means we are the worst. Not because we are the lowest, in this fact means that we are better off, it means we are worst off, because the GDP per capital, Antigua/Barbuda in US dollars is \$8,300.00, Barbados \$7,890.00, Belize \$2,610.00, Dominica \$3,010.00, Grenada \$3,170.00, Guyana is below us at \$947.00, Jamaica \$1,618.00, they are below us as well, St. Kitts/Nevis \$6,130.00, St. Lucia \$3,410.00 and St. Vincent \$2,420.00, so in the OECS we are the worst, we have the lowest per capita per income, we have the highest unemployment rate, we have expect St. Lucia, the worst Ace DI ranking, and as far as poverty is concerned we are the highest. And you wonder why people, and why Civil Servants are saying we can't go with this. It is true, that the rates for NIS in St. Lucia and the others are higher, but there are a lot of factors that you have to take into consideration, their economy is better than ours, their cost of living is better than ours.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: The Member has five minutes more.

HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE: So you cannot just compare and say because the other countries have a higher rate of insurable earnings, that we are the lowest, therefore we are good. There are a whole lot of other factors that must be taken into consideration.

And so Mr. Speaker, I just wanted with those few words to show why it is that we in this country are in the state that we are. We have 36,000 children leaving school every year and we looking in the NIS book there, I do not have the time, to show you the employment per category, the fact is that after 16 years, this is what we have come to, we have gone from maybe the top in the OECS to the bottom, and this why when I spoke about the graph, the linear going from top to bottom we can understand what I am talking about. We support this Bill, it is for the good of the Civil Service, the other one that is coming too, and so Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, we have heard this morning an interesting debate being joined, a debate of much importance, even though the Bill itself is a very brief Bill. We have heard very interesting speeches both by the Prime Minister, who is responsible for the Public Service in the Government, and also from the Honourable Member of South Windward who is the spokesperson on the Public Service, and who holds responsibility on this side of the House for the ULP in matters touching upon the Public Service.

I think it is important in this debate, to re-emphasise a particular submission made by the Honourable Member for South Windward, submission which is relevant to this particular Bill, the Bill in respect of amending pensions for teachers, and the one which this Honourable House passed sometime late last year in respect to the members of the Police Force. The legislative victory represented by the passage of the law last year, to return to the policemen their ten and twenty years, and the two Bills today to return to Public Servants the requisite gratuity and pensions arrangements, which the New Democratic Party Government had taken away from them as of January the 1st 1993 in respect of the entrance to the Public Service after that period; that the victory which is represented by these laws either has been passed or brought and will be passed today, it is a victory arising from the popular democratic struggles of April and May last year. Let us lose no sight of that. That is fundamental, had there been not the popular struggles, which has in some quarters been reduced in very mechanistic way, to road blocks, as if that alone constituted the struggle but those who wish to fool themselves about that may continue so to do, that the Police, the Teacher and the Public Servants, and the masses of Vincentians demanded a return of their pension rights. So I think we must never lose sight of that, that the NDP Government here, acting to bring these pieces of legislation through coercion, the pressure brought about by the struggles last year.

Mr. Speaker, we will not doubt here that there were all sorts of intensions to consider these matters, but the public knows, and they know in their hearts that the true situation is that they were forced to do so. Now, however, the good result comes about, we may not be too concerned in the narrow confines of the Bill, but when the verdict is delivered, by the people of this country on these matters, the verdict

undoubtedly, in my opinion and in the opinion I submit of most right thinking persons in this country, the verdict would be that the popular struggles have won the victory.

Mr. Speaker, there are certain technical aspects of the debate, which have been well canvassed, and I do not want to go over the terrain which has been tilled by my Honourable friend from South Windward, I would like to join the debate at another level, in another direction, in which the debate was cast by the Honourable Prime Minister, that is to say, to look at pensions not only as numerical indices to be awarded for work done, but to look at pensions and remunerations and productivity and to extend those to matters relating to training and education, and the structure and role of the Public Service and the structure of Governance in the country. But, Mr. Speaker, the point of relevance and contact has not only been established by the Honourable Prime Minister, but is itself evident from the nature of the subject matter itself, and therefore, the Bill creates the opportunity for us in this Parliament to articulate further, a series of ideas as to how we can make the Public Service better than it currently is. I think as always in these matters, Mr. Speaker, it is useful for us to have a historical synopsis of the position of the Public Service in this country over the last one hundred years. The 1935 uprising, a Colonial Public Service had been structured in a way to collect taxes, and to provide law and order functions, and in a very limited way to provide other kinds of social policy benefits in education and health, but fundamentally its focus was the collection of taxes and the maintenance of law and order. That prospective was shattered in the 1930's uprising throughout the Caribbean, and Colonial Government had to respond to the demands of the people, and we began to find, consequent on the Moyne Commission Report which investigated the disturbances, not only here but in the other Caribbean countries, and the passage of Colonial Development Welfare Acts, the Public Service began to go beyond the areas of collection of taxes and the maintenance of law and order, both in terms of the structure and the personnel, and to address issues of larger social policy. Then after the Second World War, Mr. Speaker, and with the very authoritative writings of Sir Arthur Lewis, with the evolution of the thesis out of the Manchester School, of development in the region with unlimited supplies of labour which has been caricatured as industrialization by invitation, but the concept and the thesis were far richer than that. In this country, and in other Caribbean countries, laws were passed providing for incentives in the area of, you used to call them Pioneers Industries Acts, the Hotel Aids Acts, ordinances they used to be called prior to the independence. And therefore, a new and different kind of Public Servant and Public Service were required to be evolved. At the same time, issues of planning arose and embryonic departments of planning emerged, central planning units were set up in many of these islands, the problem though, is that every time a challenge occurred the Public Service was slow to respond to the challenge, and the Public Servants ill-equipped to deal with the tasks presented by the new challenges, because what you had happening, some of the old Public Servants had to be put in the positions within the planning department where they themselves did not possess the technical capabilities, or indeed the attitudinal

orientation to deal with new circumstances. Then, Mr. Speaker, as always in this region, we seem to evolve structures to suit the pressures from the external, those embryonic, the institutions of planning and matters of welfare-ism were over laid at independence with the requirement to interface with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, so that a new kind of planner, a new kind of statisticians, a new set of structures had to be emerged and evolved to cope with those new demands of independence; and again we were slow to respond. In some countries, and in fact, even in St. Vincent, but not quite so much in St. Vincent, where you had some countries like Trinidad where you had a fairly well developed state capitalist economic model being pursued by the PNM Government under Dr. Eric Williams, we have co-operative socialism in Guyana, and Democratic Socialism in Jamaica, but here in St. Vincent you had the State becoming involved in the economy more, and the management and ownership of the economy, a new set of structures and personnel were required, we took over the electricity services for example, it was run by a Colonial Corporation. We bought large tracks of land and had to set up the Agricultural Development Corporation. The Housing and Land Development Corporation, new set of institutions arose, but they arose, within a competitive political framework, and very often the persons who were selected and who have been selected in the recent past to man these institutions, many of them invariably were political hacks, and that their principal qualifications in leading managerial positions and board positions were the closeness to the leader of the ruling party, or to one or other important political personages in the political party which formed the Government. Of course, there are important institutions within our country where this has not applied, for instance, VINLEC where we know that the current manager of VINLEC is a person of excellent managerial skills and ability and he has a team with him, we have seen that in the case of the Central Water and Sewage Authority, and those are shining examples which will come to my mind. *[Interruption]* No, I am giving you an objective analysis so that we can clear the path forward, because fundamental to this analysis which I am offering is this, that we have always been late in responding to either the domestic challenges or to the external ones, so that we have to play catch-up, and very often when we play catch-up we play catch-up with piece meal reforms, like for instance, we seek to play catch-up with very limited administration reform or with the PPBS system, the Performance Budgeting System.

The questions which we are now faced with in this extant period; we have greater demands being made for more privatization, for example, in the last budget, both political parties, the NDP and the ULP were represented in the respective positions, the Prime Minister and myself, have supported some privatization of the National Commercial Bank, the Government has advocated perhaps the consideration for the privatization, maybe in stages, may be in some limited way, of VINLEC, there are others that may see privatization as being in VINLEC of privatizing production in some way and put it in the National Grid, but we control at the Centre, the distribution, whatever the formulation there is clearly a requirement in the Public Service for new

skills and new structures, new frameworks to address these particular policy decisions, which are not policy decisions taken out of the air, but which are responses to what many informed people are demanding, and then there is the question of globalization in all its dimensions, information technology, the question of liberalization of trade and so forth, the nature of the negotiations which are required to be done, for instance the issue which arose out of the banana question, and now would arise out of the free trade area of the Americas, these are even different kinds of skills, and personnel, and structures required than those which have dealt with the manning of State agencies in the past, so the problem of the form of the Public Service when we view it historically, and the reason why we are viewing it historically, not to be pedantic, but to extract from the history the salient considerations for the determination of policy and the implementation of the policy as regard to Public Service.

But you see, Mr. Speaker, before I come to some suggestions as to how we can proceed with the reform, and I have made the complaint, and I think, the Bill of particulars in the indictment can be drawn to show that the NDP Government has moved very little too late in respect of Public Sector reform, and many circumstances have conducted themselves in a way which that very method has under-mined the efficacy of any limited reform measures.

Let's take in the Public Service itself, the principal institution for the recruitment, promotion and training of Public Servants, is the Public Service Commissions, but the NDP has had from the very beginning a highly partisan political figure heading the Public Service Commissions, it makes no sense that you seek to have political free reforms, or any new appraisals systems to be put in place, because you take Dr. John the head of the Public Service Commissions is a scholar, brilliant man, lawyer, and an intellectual, and therefore a person normally someone of merit, and I do not question his patriotism and his love for his country, but he has such an abiding antipathy to the ULP, and persons in the Public Service who supports the ULP and such exaggerated preference for the NDP, save and except for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Now, I will give an example, every week he writes a political column in the newspaper, every week, and for the last year and half, two years, three years, every single week, in fact, he writes two columns now, and any day I pick up his column, and my name is not in it, at least 15 times, I am disappointed, any time now, because it is an expectation but to traduce the Leader of the Opposition, and being Chairman of the Public Service Commissions is improper, but what is worst as I have seen in his column, he has made judgments about Public Servants, adverse judgments on people like Otto Sam, a teacher, Fitz Jones, even on P. John, and a number of other persons, and you are substantiating my point, now how can you talk about a reform in that context, how can he, being the Chairman of a principal agency, in the Constitution for recruitment and promotion of Public Servants, how can he do that?

Mr. Speaker, the Constitution of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Section 2 (b) state as follows:

“A person shall not be qualified to be appointed as a member of the Commission if he is or has any time during that period been the holder of an office in any political organisation that sponsors or otherwise supports, or that has at anytime sponsored or otherwise supported a candidate for election as a representative or a member of any local government authority.”

Well, Dr. John has repeatedly said that he is not a member of the NDP, he doesn't have a party card, and therefore, he believes that he survives the strictures imposed by Section 77 2 (b) of the Constitution, but Mr. Speaker, with the greatest respect, is that even if on a narrow legal reading of that section that he may have survived it, the point is that it is simply improper, in the way in which you function within the Public Service, so that when the Minister of Finance, the Prime Minister, who is also a patriot and who loves his country, those matters I have no doubt, but when he seeks to go about, to have reforms, conducted in the Public Service, they are faced with a particular bottle neck of that particular type. And I want to show the inter-relationship between all these factors.

Again, Mr. Speaker, looking at certain existing provisions, you take the provisions in the Constitution addressing the issue of the Public Service board of appeal, and the Public Service board of appeal addresses the matter for all Public Servants, and teachers, and policemen and policewomen, if you are disciplined in any way and you want to appeal to the Public Service Board, this is a matter that may well affect your career, your livelihood and that of your family, but up to today, 21 years after independence, there are no regulations made as to how to proceed to the Public Service Board of Appeal, and the regulations to govern the conduct of the Public Service Board of Appeal. For example, Mr. Speaker, you know, under the Police Act, the provision which gives the Commissioner of Police the power to dismiss a police officer, if he is of the view that he is no longer an effective or efficient police officer, whatever, I can't remember the exact wording, but that is what it means in effect, and you can be accused of all sorts of things as a police officer, if the Police Commissioner says you are dealing in drugs, or they see you buy a new car or something of the sort, and they get rid of you. They may be in certain circumstances even what is called an orderly room enquiry, but when you put in the appeal to the Service Commissions Board of Appeal, you have no right under the law to get the minutes or the decisions from which you are appealing, and the circumstances of those decisions, so you put in an appeal, and when you get to the Public Service Board of Appeal, when you get there you have to ask the Chairman of the Public Service Board of Appeal if the hearing can be adjourned for you to get a copy of what should be yours by right, if in fact there is appropriate legislation or regulations, so we need to address those

procedures, and those things that are already existing in the law which we can deal with, but we are not handling them properly. Matters of accountability, regulations are there to deal with issues of accountability in the Public Service, but we see successive reports from the Director of Audit indicating, problems of accountability.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, we have to address Public Service Reform to deliver the product broadly which is called Public Management. There is private management in the sense of private sector management, but we have to deal with what is happening in the Public Service, not as a routine Civil Service operation, but we have to address the question of reforming the Public Service as those it is dealing with, managerial functions and all which flow from that particular perspective, because as the Prime Minister says, there are many individuals within the Public Service who do not perform to their optimal capacity, but the framework and the structures which exist very, very often prevent them, or restrict them from performing to their optimal position. So that we cannot divorce the performance of Public Servants from issues relating to training, promotion, the structure of the Public Service itself; and indeed the structure of governance. The Public Service has certain - what is the commodity they deliver basically - they deliver services, that is the commodity they produce, services. In particular sectors of the Public Service, they may also produce goods, or at least State agencies may produce goods, but they produce commodities which have a value, and the Public and the general public are the consumers, and they must be seen as that.

There is something that pains me greatly at Christmas time, I walk down the streets a few days before Christmas, I think it was on the 23rd and I saw a scene at the terminal stages of the 20th century in a civilized society which I hope I never see again. You had about 150 workers, citizens of this country who were outside of the Treasury Department to collect their claims. They were being herded like cattle, the doors were shut against them, and some were inside and therefore, the workers who were inside clearly didn't want all of those to come in, and there was no space for them to come in, and yet they wanted to get in, because they want to get their money because it was Christmas. Many of them upon inquiry were cursing and bawling because their fingers had been squashed against the doors, because the policemen there had to provide a measure of security, so the policemen were in an unfortunate situation, they were in a no win situation, the people on the outside in a no win situation, the people who are inside waiting to go to the counter and the poor Public Servants are there, I mean it is just plain horrible, surely, it is not beyond our ingenuity to address in a reasonable and structured way, straight forward problems like this. I don't know other depots at which to pay them. A more timely preparation of the claims, I am sure upon an inquiry there will be practical and reasonable solutions.

The Public Service also, Mr. Speaker, suffers from the incubus of its colonial heritage, there is a spirit in it which hovers, which is still rooted in colonial norms and

bureaucratic delay, that is a matter for altering structures, and it is also a matter of training. I know many persons are enamoured about an executive President in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, to give the president, unlimited power, to hire and fire, particularly at the top and the levels, just below that is not going to solve the problem. That is a mirage that is not going to solve the problem, apart from the fact that that is not fair or reasonable in a democratic society. There are many models for the Public Service reform, and I have sought, Mr. Speaker, to do a study of many of these, among those which I find quite attractive is that advanced by Professor Edwin Jones, who is professor of Public Administration and Public Management at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica, who advances the model of popular participation in the Public Service, which involves naturally the decentralization, it involves linking with local government to have certain things that could be done in the local communities be done there, and less centralization because what I am looking at Honourable Members, I understand what the Prime Minister was seeking to do, with his attempt to have particular key result targets and to do some performance appraisals, but the prisons in which the Public Service have been lodged for the last 50 years cannot be broken out of cannot be torn down by these limited or piece meal measures. Something far more comprehensive, or all embracing and inter-relational. I think we have to bring to the Public Service a new spirit of openness, but that requires a particular approach from the political directorate, and a restructured form of Governance. It requires constitution reform in many respects. I can never understand why the citizens of this country find it so difficult to get information, routine information from the Public Service. In Canada there is a Freedom of Information Act. In the United States there is a Freedom of Information Act. Barbados, I don't know if they have passed the legislation yet, but I know it has been proposed. For the release of information on request, a journalist and other citizens, other people, are matters which are purely routine, but they are spoken about as secrets. Now many times politicians; have an interest in keeping the information secret, but what they do not realize, though, it may satisfy them politically; it hampers them in the long run, because where the Public Servants performance and conduct in public policy is not put under the scrutiny of the Public through the release of information, they themselves, the Public Servant, they find that there is no reason for them to really produce, because there is not an openness. You see, in a private sector organisation, when there are problems, at the end of the month, or quarterly reports, and the bottom line isn't looking so good, there is a revamping from the top to the bottom, because the consumer is speaking by keeping his or her dollars in his or her pocket. But I can't go anywhere else to get a passport other than the Passport Office. I can buy a motorcar other than at Mitshubishi, other than at Star Garage. I can buy a shoe at Bata or at Grand Bazaar. But I could only get a passport from the Passport Office. I can only get my entries cleared at Customs. And that is an area, which is fraught with a lot of problems and difficulties, within the context of what I am talking about.

So, Mr. Speaker, I believe that I have given enough insight into the nature, history and complexity of this problem. I am not providing here in Parliament a pat solution, because on many of these issues further details have to be provided. And these are subjects if I may say so, without appearing in any way immodest, matters upon which I have written on several occasions.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if I may just raise a question, and perhaps in your winding up you can address it, and I know a number of persons have raised it in this country before. And particularly as the state machinery becomes more slimmed down, and there is a need for a greater movement of skilled and quality personnel between the Public and Private Sectors, the question of the transference of Pensions. It is an issue; I think we should give consideration to. It is not a simple issue but it is an issue to which we can find practical solutions. I said this at the University of the West Indies when I taught there, there was a scheme, it was a contributory scheme, it was either, it was what is called an FFSU, it's a superannuation scheme, it worked out with other institutions, other universities, other places, other workers. And they insured with an insurance company or more than one insurance company. And I had basically two options from which to choose, I could choose an endowment plan, which is like a life insurance policy, but with a difference, or I can choose a system called annuity with profits. And where ever I go I can keep myself in the scheme. Because it is a contractual arrangement made with the insurance companies where the university is simply the executing medium or agency acting on my behalf. Well, the sort of options offered you, you can have a private endowment police, life insurance, but you can take your annuity with profits, that if you want to leave the scheme at any time, with your annuity with profits you can take your money and go, and I am not an expert on the field of pensions, I have read about them, because that is an area itself which is an area of highly skilled expertise. Maybe they have others many in this house, who are experts on the question of pensions. I don't know whether the Honourable Prime Minister is, he is shaking his head, like me, he must have read on this subject for us to have, - we need to understand the possibilities which are inherent in the new era.

So, Mr. Speaker, in winding up, because I know that you are going to tell me shortly that I only have a few minutes more, I want to simple restate, that the issue of public management is critical to the development of this country. The issue of Public Service reform is fundamental to our advance, and we have to address it sensibly, urgently, in a comprehensive way, not in a piece meal fashion, and not in a way which simply throws blame on individual public servants. And to consider some of the other areas of the pensions which we have all been discussing here this morning, so that we can see at the end of the day, we can have a better Public Service, with the aim of improving the quality and standard of lives, and the lives of our people, and the better delivery of services positions us better in this changing world, where we are, and to take care of the persons who are involved in the Public Service, and to have them develop themselves far better than the current situation.

Thank you, very much. I obliged.

HONOURABLE JOHN HORNE: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I find it necessary to repeat the purpose of this Bill, and indeed the objects and reasons, and the Bill says it is an Act to amend the Pensions Act Cap. 204, and the objects and reasons are this Bill seeks to amend the Pension Act Cap. 204 to reinstitute the payments of pensions under this Act to Public Officers entering the Public Service on or after 1st January, 1993.

Mr. Speaker, in presenting this Bill, the Honourable Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, leader of Government business, was at pains to point out all of the ramifications of the reinstatement, and in doing so he linked it with the other side of the coin as he put it, the significance or importance of productivity. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members would recall the number of times in this House that I have talked about productivity and the need for performance appraisals. I listened as the Leader of the Opposition spoke, of the importance of reform of the Service, management structure, and he seemed to emphasize amendments to the re-organization of the Public Service Orders. But I want to go further Mr. Speaker and say until we have serious Constitution reform, we will be literally spinning top in mud. We inherited a British System which the British themselves have discarded, it is up to us, but I will say again, Mr. Speaker, when my Government had all the seats in this House it could have changed the Constitution in the case of an entrenched tours requiring a two-thirds majority in Parliament, or a two-thirds majority in a referendum, whatever, it was very likely, but it didn't happen, but it is good that it didn't happen, because anything as Constitutional change cannot be done unilaterally, there must be constant exchanges. There must be interactions, there must be a determined effort on both sides of this House to see that this country gets a better and a more relevant constitution.

I recall the Honourable Prime Minister saying, and if I am wrong, and it is the Leader of the Opposition, I am sure you will tell me, I made a note here where someone said the leadership of some unions had questioned the productivity as an important concern, ah yes, it was the Prime Minister, but he had, but it was not a popular position to take, I don't think anyone of us could have any quarrels with that. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that there is need for a much broader system under the Public Service Commissions, it has to be restructured, it has to be much broader in scope, and it has to address every aspect of the Public Service. It tries within its limits to improve training and to promote training. But I turn my attention, Mr. Speaker, not just to training, but the development of the Public Service, with regard to efficiency bar as at it was called, the development of the individual to take on greater responsibility and allowing each one to get to another level, through training and through examination, and through diligence, but Mr. Speaker, one of the major problems I have in this House, and let me say again, as I have said in this House, I do not care the colour of an individual politics in the Public

Service, I really don't care, and when I say that I know people would misinterpret that, each one of us has a right of our opinion, and who ever we want to support, and I can't be vexed with anybody who doesn't support my Government, I cannot be, and if I am I would be displaying that level of unprofessionalism that we find so prevalent here today, and I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that both government and Opposition have a responsibility to so enlighten certain people in key positions that when it comes to the performance of their duties, they do it without fear or favour, they do it dispassionately and above all, professionally.

And I am going to give an example in this House, Mr. Speaker, of professionalism. In 1984 when the New Democratic Party took office, there was a gentleman in the Public Service, and I am going to name him, he was at the time Permanent Secretary to Prime Minister Cato, Mr. James Pompey, and when the people were celebrating all over the town, people were saying, some of our own supporters were saying, watch that man Pompey he is a Cato man, when the Honourable James Mitchell took office as Prime Minister, that efficient Public Servant presented the incoming Prime Minister with a statement of the current state of affairs, very professionally, Sir this is what the situation is, so, so, so, so. Needless to say, the Prime Minister was impressed, and if you followed the developments of that gentleman there after, it came from hard work which he did in a very professional way. And there is where I have a problem. Nobody is going to tell me, that a Public Servant who is in office, in a particular Administration, refuses to carry out the instruction of the Government of the day, if you don't like it, leave it. If you have a moral problem, you can express that, but you are there to carry out the policies of the Government in office, whoever it may be. And that is where the line is drawn between professionalism and what masquerades today as efficiency. I shared the view espoused by the Prime Minister earlier, where he said there are many highly capable Public Servants, but there are some who lack this understanding of what professionalism is.

Mr. Speaker, I am all for people to get their pensions. If they get two, or one, whatever is in place I have no problem. But I think the Prime Minister was at pains to show what the actuaries have been saying for a long time, and that is over the passage of years, the NIS was expected to return a pension, much better, and I do not refer to the ancillary benefits, I am talking about the direct pension benefit, better than what had obtained and what has been available through the consolidated fund.

But, Mr. Speaker, I have to turn my attention to certain remarks made, and I am sorry that the Honourable Member for South Windward is not here, I hope he is in the gallery or somewhere and is hearing me. Because when the Honourable Leader of the Opposition got up and spoke about the efficiency of some Heads of Statutory Bodies, and the efficient manner in which some of these boards have been working, I wonder where the Member for South Windward has been all these years. And Mr. Speaker, I am going to show him exactly what I mean. The Honourable Member had the audacity

to talk about VINLEC, when he lived in an era when the word VINLEC was a bad word. Nobody had faith in VINLEC. VINLEC cheques were bouncing all over the place, and were the last place where anybody wanted to work. They were outages ad nauseam. And you never knew when you were going to get back electricity, and the food in your fridge was spoiling. VINLEC reached to a point where line losses, that is of energy generated at plant and before, reaching the consumer were of the order of some 30%. VINLEC went through a refurbishing process, and VINLEC brought down their line losses to 7% and now they are the envy of other providers of energy in the Caribbean. But that did not happen when the Honourable Member of South Windward was here. So I was glad when the Leader of the Opposition enlightened him, as if he did not know. And what about the NCB of long ago which was packed with Ministers of Government on its board. And he talked about NIS which was National Providence Fund, a shade of what its successor the NIS is today, and I don't need to preach for NIS, its is clear as crystal, and the Honourable Prime Minister did an excellent job in explaining the healthy state of NIS today. NPF was a shade. He talked about Statutory Bodies in CWSA, again the Leader of the Opposition was clear to point out to him the quality of management and organisation within the CWSA today. In 1984, the CWSA was \$10 million in debt, and a Government that brought in water metres did not have the guts or the courage to introduce the water metres. But the water meters were introduced and all hell broke loose, but soon some people learned that rather than pay more they were paying less, because they were now paying for water consumed, not the standard charge whether you consumed water or not. In other words, if you went away for three months and closed up your house you still had to pay three months water rates at the rates set at the time, now you pay as you used, as you consumed. And I will go further to say the CWSA is in such a healthy state that it was able to build that building on the road to Leeward for some \$2.6 million without borrowing a cent; from a position of being \$10 million in the red in 1984. I don't want to say much about the Commonwealth Development Corporation, but I have my own beef with them, and I would simply say this, when VINLEC was part of that institution, I suppose it was a business ploy, but VINLEC bought poles from Guyana Timbers Limited, in Guyana, poles for the distribution of electricity from them at inflated costs, and where is Commonwealth Development Corporation today. Somebody invited them recently, I think it was Dominica, invited them to come back in, and they are regretting it now, they are regretting it.

I come back to the question of productivity, Mr. Speaker, in my view productivity should always lead to increase revenue, ultimately better remuneration to workers, and increase in national savings as a result. But maybe Services Commissions, or maybe the Government should embark on a more comprehensive education programme, backed by training, the training has been in place within the constraints of finance and training has been accelerated, there can be no doubt about that, training in every area. As we talk about training, I also want to take up the Honourable Leader of the Opposition on this issue. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition made an attack on

the Chairman of the Public Service Commissions, Dr. Kenneth John, in a forum in which Dr. John cannot respond, he can't get up in here and respond to the attacks leveled at him. Well, he could do it yes, and he is entitled to do it. And I have no problem, Mr. Speaker, I have no problem, if a man blows holes in your theories, if he blows holes in your utterances, and does it based on fact and reasoned argument, who can be vexed with him. Let me say this, there are die hard supporters of the Opposition who have been sent off for the finest training abroad, and I would say in the UK in particular when in my view they did not deserve it. Let me add to that, that I as Minister of Education, when I was there have made recommendations to the Public Service Commissions under the same Head, and my recommendations were never accepted or followed, what could I do? The Public Service Commission is a preacher of the Constitution, and you can't question it, but my problem with the Public Service Commissions, notwithstanding that it is a preacher of the Constitution, I believe that there must be some dialogue, don't ask me to make a recommendation based on my judgment, balanced judgment I might add, and then you ignore it. Why do I make the recommendation at all, if you have a problem, say to me, well, what are the strongest arguments you can put forward? and well, these are my arguments, let's see how we can come to an agreement. Point is, I am making a point here, that if you think the Public Service Commission is biased in the direction of my Government, I know numerous cases in which I can say otherwise. Maybe that is how it should be. Maybe then the person is being objective, since both sides are aggrieved. You know, I look forward, Mr. Speaker, to the time, when all of us can display the ability to be dispassionate in our judgments and in our assessments, for me, I want the best, no matter where it comes from, but I need a commitment of professionalism. I recall in education circles, when I talked about performance appraisals and how important I thought it was, there were objections, mumblings, grumbling, all over. And there was at a point a genuine argument, Mr. Speaker, and it was this, if you are so adamant with performance appraisal as an imperative in productivity in an enlightened society, then if I am appraised and I disagree with my own appraisal, the appraisal made of me, then I must have an appellate body to whom I can approach to give me "a second opinion". You know, I remember once in an institution in which I was involved, a particular manager didn't want me to respond to him at all, I could not question or criticize anything, and after I had done a stint of six months in a certain area of operations, and I was complimented for my work, I was removed from that and put on to something else. Subsequently, an issue arose, they were dissatisfied with my successor, in the job and wanted to put me back in the same place, I said I had enough of that, it is time for me to move on, as I have already been doing, and I was told, "Don't tell me what you must do, I can do anything I want," and that person for a local situation wrote to the head office in the region recommending that this person be kept down the line somewhere, discarded; do you know what the answer was, we cannot understand the sudden deterioration in this clerk's work, may be he needs a change of scenery, arrange for him to report to another country by such and such a date.

Now, here was an appellate body, I did not even appeal, but here was a dispassionate body, outside the confines of a particular country who went only according to the records and based there judgments on the records. So I agree it is important to have some appellate body, and I think now that the Public Service Commission has been promoting the new performance appraisal system, they have given the parties concerned the assurance that there will be due process, there will be the possibility of recourse. But let's face it, we are in the 21st Century, Mr. Speaker, every step of the way today, we would have to go by the rules, we will have to play by what the international norm requires. Look at the kind of serious vetting applicants for high office across the world must go through. Can we escape that approach?

So, Mr. Speaker, the changes that we need to see instituted here have a constitutional basis. The antiquated systems we have now like certain aspects of Public Service Commission operations must change to suit the times. Training must be an absolute priority, in every area. Let me say this though, in defence of the system as regards training, the training committee that exists, and meets usually under the Chairmanship of the Ministry of Education, is much more and much broader based than just education. It has representatives of all the sectors, agriculture, tourism, health and the environment, education, finance, it has private sector representation, trade union representation, because bear in mind, the training offered to these countries is not only related to Government, its related to the private sector as well, training from the OAS it may come to us, it may come to Cabinet would we simply pass it back and say you make your decision on the information before you. That is the nature, and it is good, but so often we tend to forget that private sector training is also offered by various international agencies. So in effect pensions on one side, pensions on one side of it, but there is also something else in return, out put, what is your out put? Is it being assessed, and where does it fall within the range of people in particular jobs, and what they are doing? And then what do you do? Yes I agree with the Leader of the Opposition. The system is antiquated in so far as where people are not performing the system tends to keep them covered, protected, shrouded, and where people are going the extra mile and need the incentive and the encouragement to show recognition of their performance, the system does not allow it. The time has come, and I am sure it will be there, and we have seen signs of it, the others like me, feel strongly at this point and I will say it again, I don't care the colour of another person's politics, I respect them for their opinions where they come to working in a particular system, do it professionally, make sure you justify the remuneration you get, but above all, anyone who has a reputation which he or she values should not at the drop of a hat throw away that reputation, because once thrown away, it is a very difficult thing to recover. And that is where we marry now professionalism, integrity, reputation. So I certainly, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to see this Bill, as far as I am aware, the Bill relevant to the police came out, I understand in that case it was an oversight, but reintroducing it when a 10 year period still allows those who joined nine years ago to qualify, so they would have lost nothing, even though they join nine years ago.

Mr. Speaker, I am satisfied that you will see, so long as both sides of this House agree, that you must get down to the issue of Constitutional reform, I believe there is hope, a lot of things can change, above all we can restore discipline, there is a break down in understanding of how far you can go in terms of rights and privileges bestowed on you are from where you going over the edge and breaking the law. We have got to make a clean break, to use an old expression, foot can't go above head, unless you, or head standing of course, so Mr. Speaker, I certainly wish this Bill easy passage, as I know it would get, because there can hardly be anyone against it, but as I say rights carry responsibilities, the right to do what you think is your right doesn't give you the right to prevent others from enjoying what they are suppose to enjoy and all of us would not necessarily enjoy, the same things.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much. I think now is a good time to interrupt for lunch.

Before we leave, Members who were present last time received a copy of the photograph that was taken, there were some expressions of dissatisfaction because quite a number of members were absent, even in the formation that was used, and so we are attempted to have another photograph taken this afternoon, the resumption is 3:15 p.m. if we can come back at 3:00 p.m.; please pass the message on to Members of your side who are absent so we can have as many persons as possible, or all if possible, I know that the Member for Marriagua has indicated officially that she would be absent, but if we could get every other Member present it would be a better representation of the Parliament.

Thank you very much.

HONOURABLE CARL JOSEPH: Mr. Speaker, I move that we now adjourn until 3:15 p.m.

HONOURABLE ALLAN CRUICKSHANK: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

**SUSPENSION OF SITTING – 1:15 p.m. (Lunch)
RESUMPTION OF SITTING 3:30 p.m.**

HONOURABLE ORMISTON BOYEA: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when that photograph that was just taken is published, I know one thing that would be said of the Members in that photograph is that we all have very good analytical skills. This morning if you listened to the debate, the analytical skills were first class. As a matter of fact, when I listened to the Leader of the Opposition, until he got to the future, I

thought it was one of his better presentations, in terms of going over the history, the one hundred year history of the Civil service and how we came to be where we are. Where we seem to run into trouble is when we come to drawing conclusions and going the way forward. The Leader of the Opposition was very biting when he said pensions, remuneration, productivity it would take more than that to make the Public Service better than it is now. All those things have got to go together, it is just not pensions. I agreed with him fully. When he talked about what was Civil Servants of the 1930's collecting taxes and maintaining law and order again that was very incisive, and he led us to the point where today, with privatization and globalization we need more than that. And as I turned my page to write what we needed, the Leader of the Opposition went off to talk pure politics and personalities in the form of the head of the Public Service Commission, and there I didn't bother to record what he said, because I didn't think it was worthy of what he was saying before. I think he had led us very nicely to the point where he said different types of skills are now required and when I waited to hear the skills that were required I heard a mouth full about my friend Kenneth John.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is where we run into trouble. The Prime Minister, and Minister of Finance, this morning went through an excellent, detailed analysis of the NIS; and he pointed out that we don't in our arguments compare apples with apples, we compare a ten years service with a thirty-three year service, and he went on in a much kinder and gentler way to talk about the public service, he is learning a lot, the last time I heard him talk about the Public Service he sounded as though he wanted to get into a fight with them, but he is learning, he is being coached; and he said more than he usually says, he said in a different way, and therefore it was not offensive. I thought his handling of that leading up to the productivity and the two new initiatives that we need, again were very good.

The Member for South Windward in his usual style gave the history of the lack of productivity in St. Vincent, and I agree with him; agricultural workers working from 7 to 12 might not be the best thing for our country, the problem is as a people we cannot take the sun all day, and therefore the solution was not shortening the hours; the solution should have been shortening the hours in the field, our economy should have been based working in the field in the mornings and processing the products that we harvested in the afternoon, in a cooler factory environment, we should have been adding value to the crops that we reaped in the morning, but none of us could work from 7 to 4 in that hot sun, and therefore the solution wasn't to send people home at 12:00 or 1:00 as he said happened during the Junta Government, the solution should have been to open some processing plants so that in the afternoon we could come out of the field and go into a better environment. But none of this, and I come back to the conclusion that Leader of the Opposition credited to the member for South Windward, to quote him, the legislative victory re: police and public service pensions, that victory he said arose from popular democratic struggles last year. Well, I don't know whether there was any winners, pensions are still not what they should be, yes, they might have

stopped politicians from getting better pensions but that wasn't the exercise, the exercise should be to get those people who don't have a good pension better pensions, and I am predicting that if we don't tackle this thing on a holistic way, the hooliganism that you saw in the street last year is going to turn to real uprisings. We need to do something in our country to build our economy rather than just to play around with pensions, because even today, I'm sure the Minister of Finance will say that if we were faced with the sort of devaluation that Guyana has, no matter what good pension you have today it is not going to be any use to us.

I happened to be in Guyana when those things were happening, and my hotel bill for one night was higher than a bank manger's salary for the month. And therefore, I am not so sure that just this number; if we don't fix our economy to such a way that we can guarantee sustainable development, the arguments we are having over pensions would be meaningless. If we can't get a pension that is going to be tied to cost of living, then we are going to be in trouble sooner or later, so we really need to see what is wrong with the economy as a whole. Not just pensions. This is the argument we have been having for all these years. What are we doing about the economy that will ensure sustainable growth? And to do that, I believe my party has the answer. We have spent the last six months doing a matrix of the sort of things that you have to tackle because, productivity does not come just with training, and with remuneration. If you train civil servants today and you don't show them the bigger picture, of growth of social improvement, it is not going to work. It is the same problem we have with training in the private sector, if you keep training people and they can't see the jobs for which they have been trained. The training goes in one hand and goes out the other, we have to have a holistic approach to our development. And therefore I was pleased while the Minister was delivering his opening remarks to receive from the Caribbean Development Bank a paper which, believe me, is very similar to the matrix that we have been working on for the last six months. Those of you who got that would recognize that, you know, in it somewhere it quotes Prime Minister Arthur for saying unless we can reengineer and restructure societies, our economies, we cannot guarantee a future for people. But we cannot just do one part of the equation without tackling the other parts. We have a matrix of how this construction should take place. What are its strategic objectives in terms of our long-term development? I think the Minister ended on the Far Eastern Countries that were looking at 20-year development while we were struggling to look down the road five years. We have in this country to look at longer-term development. Nobody has been tackling early childhood education because children at age 4 would not vote for another 14 years, nobody has been tackling the real problems of our society that would lead to more comfortable pensions. Nobody has been looking at anything that is going to take you more than five year to accomplish. And so I welcome this effort by the CDB to try to put some order in helping us to move into a new economy. I welcome the matrix, and I am encouraging the Government that when Sir Neville and his team arrives here next week, to get all the Ministers to that one seminar, and let them understand the complexity of what we

are trying to achieve. Because you cannot just talk about anyone part of the thing in isolation. We have to look to see the rippling effect of whatever policy we introduce. Productivity does not come by paying better pensions. Productivity comes when people are working hand in hand. As a matter of fact I don't see how you can lay off people in the public sector, to make a more efficient public sector if the private sector is not ready to take them on. Because all you are going to do is create chaos, you are going to send people to sit on the bridge, and these are not dummy people you are going to send intelligent people, to sit on the bridge, and there is going to be social unrest. So we have got to do the whole thing together. If we are going to slim down, and I know a lot of people don't like the term public sector reform, if we are going to even attempt that, before we attempt it we have got to make sure that we have a structure in place where we are going to absorb those people into more productive work. When I look at the civil service, and I look at the atmosphere in which they work, how they could produce with a PPB system that would ring 60 times before there is an answer, I don't know. In this modern day of communication; I checked it the other day, I was trying to get Mr. Opinaldo some contract he has up in Largo Height, and it rang 60 times and there was no answer. Well, after the tenth time there should have been an automatic ring off. We cannot continue to work in a public service that has to depend on PPBX that it manned for the whole sector. We have got to create managers and sections in the Civil Service where the people are managing the Civil Service. Any Public Service Commissions that has allowed that atmosphere to continue for so long is not worth its salt; my criticism of Dr. John wouldn't be any partisan politics, my criticism is that he shouldn't take the job unless the Government is prepared to reengineer the atmosphere in which civil servants work. You can't trust a civil servant with a phone on his desk that he could ring 9 and get an outside line, then he is not worthy of the job he is doing. And therefore we need to do some deep-seated, deep-rooted changes, drastic changes if we are going to become efficient in this country.

We talked, and the Leader of the Opposition talked about transferability, I am sure he didn't want to mention it, but I am sure he heard that from me first. I have been dealing with that subject now for 25 years. That we are not going to make any progress in this country, unless a man's pension could be transferred at the same condition to his new job. And the story I normally give is trying to recruit somebody who works with Barclays Bank who is age 40, 41 and he is telling me to hold on 15 years until he was due for his pension. So I must keep this seat open for him for 16 years until he was due for his pension. We can't do that. If we are going to have a flexible economy that could lead to efficiency, we got to tackle these so called little things. The little things like telephone, little things like transferability of pensions. These things have got to be tackled if we develop a productive society, we would be able by good investment in everything to guarantee everybody in this country a pension of two-thirds of his final five-year average. In other words, this 18 hundred dollars sounded good when the Minister said it, but we should be able to guarantee people two-thirds of their final five year average as a pension. Because our society is not kind to old age. In other

societies you get free transport, you get reduced drugs, you get all sorts of other perks as a pension. In our society, the older you get the more expensive cost of living becomes. You work for a firm and you are allowed to travel. You suddenly retire and you go and see your family abroad you are faced with airline tickets. So the cost of old age in St. Vincent you cannot afford to take a fifty percent (50%) cut in your salary. Some people have not yet paid for their mortgages when they retire. And they still have mortgage payments. So we have to live in this society, the only solution is to try to build a better economy. We have to try to put the pieces together to build a better economy. And when you look at the matrix that the CDB or the IDB, or both are asking us to follow, you know, the things they are pointing out about training of your public service is just vital, we have got to sit down and look at this matrix as people who want to run the economy, and to look at the macro economic environment and what the public sector has to do to achieve that. You look at competitiveness, and what does the public sector have to do to achieve competitiveness. You look at vulnerability to natural disasters and you have to look and see what sort of training, what sort of expertise you have to give your public servants to do that. So, we have a lot of work to do, just argue about productivity and pensions are not sufficient. We have to go to the root of the problems. The root of the problems in our country is that we have to restructure our economy, we could no longer live by exporting raw crops, we have to add value to the things we dig out of the ground, otherwise we would not be going to get a sustainable standard of living in the future that would make your pension worthwhile.

So I am saying to the Minister, yes, I hear what you are saying about the NIS; and I believe that a lot of the kafuffle that was made last year in March was because people did not a hundred percent agree with that 1993 decision that one day the NIS would probably be better than pensions from the consolidated fund. But I believe as I go along it is going to take some decisions about whether we are going to focus all our investments locally, whether we are going to take blue ribbons stocks in developed countries in order to keep the earning capacity of that NIS money up, these are some of the policy decisions that we have to take in the near future. Are we going to pay our pensions to a different currency? All of these things are things I think we should be debating when we are debating this Pension Bill. Are we going to go along and say that we are satisfied with 5% earnings on pensions, is that sufficient to take care of natural disasters, or are we going to be brave enough to put a certain percentage of our money somewhere else. There is a school of thought which says we should leave that money here to go into our own productive sector. Would our own productive sector be pledged. And we cannot expect high growth rates at this early stage in the export economy. We have to be very careful. We have to be careful because of the fickleness of some of our sectors that we depend on. It was only in December, during the budget debate, that I raised the question, my criticism of the budget was what was left out, and particularly, I criticized the leaving out of any mention of airport development, well it didn't take long to come to pass, it wasn't even the middle of

January, not even a month later when American Airlines decided they are not coming in. Something to do with the FAA. I mean you look at what has suddenly happened to you, suddenly overnight, and its not to the big hotels, it is not to Canouan and Palm Island and so, it is our own hotels here in St. Vincent. All of a sudden their rooms went down, less than 20% occupancy, because one carrier has decided not to come in. And the reason for them not coming in when you look into it, when you get down to talking to the people in Washington, we have a lot of little difficulties, parking on the apron, touching planes, when they are trying to park, the insurance risks in damaging somebody's plane wing, private jets have been denied the opportunity to stay here overnight so we have lost good customers who are regular visitors to this country, because their private aircraft, there is no room on the apron to keep them overnight, and yet we are arguing, the argument seems to be between an international airport or nothing. We in the PPM have been urging people that air access is a process, we have to continue the process of improving air access, one day it would suddenly dawn on us that we have to move to that next level, but we have not exhorted the level that we have at the moment. There is no way, and I said this during December in the Budget debate, that we could go through two more Christmases using the Airport Arrivals hall as it is. There is no room for baggage. You can't form a line to Customs, if there are two or three planes on the ground, and yet we are arguing should it be Argyle or Kitchen, before arguing that the point, that we must increase what we have now, we must make a bigger apron so planes could park and overnight, we must make a bigger Arrival's Hall, all of these things come back, if you want to know, Mr. Speaker, my point of reference, it comes back to the public service, it comes back to whether as the Leader of the Opposition says they are capable of planning and not just collecting taxes and providing law and order. Are we planning correctly? We know the number of planes that have to park at Arnos Vale Airport, and it has amazed me that somebody has not yet lost an eye, because those planes are parked along side the walkway to the Arrival's Hall, and all sorts of projections from them. Some of them the wing is at the height of the eye level of a human being. How somebody has not run into one of them and injured themselves, I don't know. But it seems that we are boasting that we have local small aircraft, and we line them up one behind the other. At the same place some of them are starting while passengers are walking pass them. These are the sort of lack of planning that show the lack of productivity in the public service, and it is these things that we would have to address, because the day will come when pensions would be a small part of our dissatisfaction, our dissatisfaction would come whether we could get monthly salaries, that is already happening in some Caribbean Islands, there are not assured, public servants are not assured that there is money in the kitty to pay their monthly salaries. We are glad that we could be debating pensions. So we have to buckle down in this country we have to put our heads together. We have to stop this fight that is going on, and see if in some way we could tackle the real problems of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and those real problems were marked in December when the Leader of the Opposition pointed out the erratic rate of growth, up one year down the next, we have not been able to sustain above 5% growth for three years on a row,

and until we can do that, until we can get 7% or 8% growth sustainable, year by year, we are not going to meet the expectations of our customers which are the young people of this country. The youth of this country are expecting a lot more. Their expectation levels have been raised through communications with wealthier countries. We can't bottle them up and bottle up their expectations. Their expectation levels are raised and unless we work hard, unless we plan well, we are not going to meet their expectations, and they are going to be dissatisfied customers. So I am saying whatever it takes let us use that analytical skill that we seem to have to go one step further. Let us sit down sometimes in seminars and try to come up with solutions among us, because in years to come nobody is going to talk that the Government side of the house did this and the Opposition, they are going to say that bunch of fellows whose picture was taken at lunch time did very little to advance this country. Did very little to advance the well being of the young people and the elderly and the social needs of this country. So let us not take pensions in isolation, let us consider our whole economy and which way the country is going, and see if we can improve it. I am much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE ALLAN CRUICKSHANK: Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a very brief comment on this Bill that is before us, which seeks to amend the Pension Act Cap.204, to re-institute the payment of pensions for public officers entering the Public Service on after the 1st January 1993.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance gave a very comprehensive overview of this situation, and he was very explicit, and we know exactly why this was necessary, and I have no right at this stage to comment on it. But I just want to comment on a remark made by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, it is not a remark, it is more than a remark, I think it was usual point of view, a famous lecturer's usual on the constitutional aspect of the present holder of the post of Chairman of the PSC, and he pointed out to me, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, I can't remember the point he was making but he said 'save and except', he probably felt that I am one of those who suffered at hand of the PSC, but I think he made a mistake, it was not this present one, it was in 1975 PSC that I suffered, but he is fully aware of that, that one would recall that there was a change of Government in 1974 and 1975, and I was already accepted by one PSC to pursue studies at the University of the West Indies, and in the transition period certain things were supposed to be done and so on, and I was excited about it, getting ready to leave this part, and actually to go into his department to study, because he was a lecturer then and so, but I want to share with you, Mr. Speaker, to show you how people are different. I recall going in for an interview at the PSC at that time, I think one Mr. Sutherland was the Chairman, that Public Service Commission comprised of people like Mr. Chippy Browne, a fellow Ballantyne, I can't remember his Christian name, I think he had some outstanding moustache or something like that, and Soso, I think those kind of people, but what I want to share here is to show how things can be different. I recall the first question

that was thrown at me “where you come from?” I said, “I am from Diamond Village, on the Windward side of the country.” Second question “Do you know Oscar Allen?” I said, “Of course I know the gentleman Oscar Allen.” Then somebody said before I could answer said “So, oh, you are one of the boys, you are black power to?” I said, “what do you mean by that, Sir, of course I am black.” He said “So what you come here for?” That was the fourth question. Just like that, I am not talking about any polished language; you are black power, you from Diamond Village, what you come here for, in 1975. I felt so embarrassed, Mr. Speaker, I knew what was coming, I knew what would have been the result. It was just a matter of confirming something, I don't know politically whether I was entitled or not entitled, of course, I wasn't from Mespo, Park Hill, or Rose Hall, or Biabou and so on. That was the level of understanding of the PSC in 1975, in PSC interview. I hold no brief for anybody, you know, the present Chairman can tell about my position when it comes to him. I won't go into a lot of details here, but the point I want to make here, Mr. Speaker, is that victimization, promotion, performance, and what have you in the public service should not be labelled or should be pointed out to one particular individual. In other words, not because Mr. Such and Such is chairman that does not give the right to teachers to go to school late and to teach one subject for the whole day; or for surveyors who received scholarship from the same Chairman, and who are now chairpersons of ULP party groups to go out into the field using Government tools to do their business all the time, and come back in the same Surveying Department Office to conduct their business. Whether you change the Chairman of the PSC, when you have people with those kinds of attitudes, and I am just quoting two examples, and I can go on because I have the experiences; and I know what I am talking about.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, if you look here, in a lot of Departments now you have more masters, more mistresses, more doctors, than anything else, but are they doing any research? Are they doing any work to really support that sort of problem? You have this thing going, I mean, if it is because of qualifications or because of the Members of the PSC why when you go into certain Public Service Departments at 9:00 a.m. they tell you they are not ready yet, or as the case that was pointed out at Treasury during Christmas time. I am saying that some of those acts are deliberate. People are supposed to prepare their claims, people are supposed to do certain things by certain time but it gives them pleasure to see people suffer because it is Christmas, and they take pleasure, some of them to sit there and see people suffer. On the other hand, you have excellent people who work to the best of their ability without fear without favoritism or what have you, but what I want to say here, Mr. Speaker, it is unfair to really single out any individual in any case whether at the training level, the training department of the PSC or whether and blame them for anything. But you know, as I listened to the lecture delivered by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, what he was saying in fact you know if you listened very carefully, regardless to words whether they come from the University of West Indies or what; what he was saying in summary is that the Civil Service is playing the fool, and the Civil Service needs to be reformed

and restructured. You think about it. That is exactly what he was saying. But he was choosing his words very carefully, because he doesn't want anyone to accuse him to say he is going to down size the Public Service, or he will get rid of anybody who needs to be gotten rid of, but it is clear, the fair is you need a modern civil service, I am sure that word was used, you need people who would grapple with the WTO, who would grapple with the modern and you change your policies you need somebody, you need people who can understand your policy. So, when you become new Prime Minister you need a new civil service, you need people who can understand your conceptual framework and can work within that framework. You understand, Mr. Speaker, you need people who can deal with these issues, and when they get instructions they must understand. People must understand the programmatic reform and the platform and that sort of thing. They must understand, and if they don't understand now, they better begin to tremble, and get themselves prepared for the outward bound, Mr. Speaker, but it was coined in the language, the typical whatever, but it is clear in the outline in the hundred days programme, so you better take warning.

Mr. Speaker, this Pension Act, I support it as it is, never mind that I have given 16 years service to teaching, and I don't think I will get a cent for that. And I understand that my colleague friend there, position as a Senator, also there would be nothing for that, unless things change later on, but we can't afford to be selfish, we have to be satisfied and still thank God for small mercies, but the point is that pensions can be reduced as has happen in certain countries. Pensions now in Guyana and in Jamaica and in Latin America and to certain extend with the devaluation still in Trinidad and Tobago, pension means nothing to some people. I understand, a good friend of mine told me, that Sir John Compton, who gave forty years to the Public Service in St. Lucia is receiving approximately EC\$2500 for pension. I am just saying these things to say that whereas the intention of this is good, a lot of these things can be reduced to paper if other things are not put into place; and I agree, I totally agree with the Leader of the Opposition for his overview of this Act, having written extensively and authoured books on this same subject of pensions and so on, and the new shape of the new Civil Service, which I read regularly, and I agree with him, that that is the new type of Civil Service, because there are a lot of people whom he knows and I am sure he will say in due time, wasting time, all around, who really preventing people from going forward in a more meaningful manner, but we have to remember also that whereas claims and counterclaims and credit and discredit are given to what occurred to this day, during this time, we can go on and debate, but what I do know in history, one of my sons who is now 16 years old had an experience, he had to go and write a subject, CXC, and I told him he should not go because they would spot him, because he is Mr. Cruickshank's son, that one looks like me the most, walking with his open hand, and his toes and so on, and that kind of thing that is typical of the Cruickshanks or me, boasting walk and so. And the little guy said to me "daddy they can kill me, I going." He walked from Calliaqua he told me, he got into school and they cancelled the day, I

think it was French paper, but eventually he still went back and he got top grade, and he is doing French now for A' Level, and he said to me, very serious young man, that he would never forget this incident in his life, and he would never forgive. And as a matter of fact he has given that message to pass on that he would never forgive anyone who has done that to him at an early stage of his life.

Mr. Speaker on that note, I wish to give somebody else a chance to comment on this bill, but really we should look at some of these things in a broader picture, and I wish to commend this Bill for safe and easy passage through this House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE JOSEPH BONADIE: I wish to just briefly support the measure brought before this Honourable House. And to remind this House, as the Leader of the Opposition, that the measure before the House today came about as a result of events that took place last year. Events, Mr. Speaker, that in some people's minds has left a bitter taste in our country. And I wish to pick up from where the representative for South Windward left off, and to state that if you are living in a country where people in the country are supposed to benefit from certain measures which have been implemented, measures, Mr. Speaker, like the National Insurance Scheme, it might be politically expedient to want to down play the importance of the National Insurance Scheme in the general scheme of things in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, but when one looks at the population, but when one looks at the composition of the population, one must understand that what was attempted by the previous government when the National Insurance Scheme was introduced in the form of the National Providence Fund, and further expanding to the National Insurance Scheme, it was meant to provide for working people of this country who are outside of the Public Service, and opportunity to receive some form of remuneration when they reach retirement age, and it was given in the first instance in a lump sum when it was the National Provident Fund, upon obtaining the age of 60. The National Insurance Scheme expanded that programme. But, Mr. Speaker, nothing at all was wrong with what was attempted in 1993. To ensure that every single person fall under the National Insurance Scheme, the inequity in the system was that a person who was a public servant had to retire at 55, and that same person would have been contributing to the new scheme, but could not draw from that scheme until they were 60, which meant that for 5 years a person within the Public Service would have retired, but would have had to wait, so there are people who would be drawing two pensions. They are going to be people who are going to draw one. And I agree wholeheartedly with the point made by the representative for South Windward, because I made that point earlier during a previous debate, that some provisions should be made for persons who would receive one pension, to at least have an opportunity to opt for the gratuity and a reduce pension under the National Insurance Scheme. And some of the points made, Mr. Speaker, were worthy of some considerations. There are only three of us in this House presently, as it is constituted, that participated in any meaningful manner in the introduction of the Scheme to St.

Vincent and the Grenadines. The representative for South Windward, the present Attorney General, who at the time was an adviser in his capacity as a Public Servant, and myself. And we sat down, Mr. Speaker, with the technical people who were brought in from outside to advise and to put together this particular scheme, and worked day and night to ensure that persons in this country, upon attaining retirement age could draw a pension. It never existed, in a sense it was something new to the mass of people in this country, and it is nothing, Mr. Speaker, that was not anticipated, in the sense that people had already grown accustomed to the National Providence Fund. And this is a contributory scheme, but the scheme it self, in a sense in its infancy could not do all that a scheme of that nature would be required to do over the long run, or the long haul. In the United States of America, we listened sometimes to debates, to Congress, about the future of the pension scheme, the social insurance scheme in the United States of America; where some people are scared that funds are going to be exhausted for the simple reason that the bulk of the persons working are now being regarded as what they called the baby boomers, who have reached the age now to retire, to draw from the fund. So you have the majority drawing from the Fund, and a minority putting into the fund, so everybody is scared because people feel that you will run out of money.

Mr. Speaker, in St. Vincent and the Grenadines we are in a similar position in that as a result of modern medicine, as a result of better health facilities, people are living longer, so you are going to have people who are going to live as long drawing from the National Insurance as they lived putting in, so we would have to depend on those who are going to come in the future to ensure that you could continue to draw. And a very important point was made, and that point has to do with the investment of the funds. And I think it is important that we commend the people who are running the National Insurance Scheme, because of the wise investment of the funds that would take this country into the future, and to provide for persons who are going to be older. Next generation that is going to be contributing to that fund must insure that it is invested wisely and there is room, Mr. Speaker, for persons who have retired to have an enhanced pension as a result of the increase in the funds which have been set aside and invested in a proper manner. They should benefit. And I think it is foresight on the part of the Minister of Finance in looking at what had been done with the funds of the National Insurance, and recognizing that there were persons who fell in no-mans land, persons who were told to contribute to the National Insurance so who could not benefit, and in his wisdom decided that such persons would receive a pension, which was called an old age pension. And those persons, Mr. Speaker, are reducing in number, because those were the older persons, and as they die the numbers are reduced. But that initiative was important, and it was important, in the sense because of wise investment the funds were available to provide for persons who fell through the crack. A public servant is a privileged worker in any society in the Caribbean, not only in St. Vincent. Privilege, and I am not going to get in to any discussion relating to productivity, because in my mind, at this time and at this stage, that's an exercise in

futility. We all live in this country, we all know what we experience, and I am not going to put my neck on the line to say that politicians have criticized people for doing A, B, and C.

Mr. Speaker, it does not matter what period, or what era, the service is the same, and it is because of the mentality of the people they have. We have groomed people in a certain direction, and I have been a trade union leader all my life. I have fought for workers. I have put forward cases where I have called on people that I represent to be more productive, and was not afraid as a leader to admit that workers that I represented in this country were not as productive as they could be, but I found a way to introduce measures whereby I put it, in this way, that if you provide the proper incentive, workers would respond. And that is the way how we have go about it, talking about it, exposing it, does not matter. You pick up the phone, you dial a number, but it is ringing, but the person who is answering on the other side is preoccupied with something else. So the phone can ring, it is working, your answer no urgency, that's the way of life within this country.

Mr. Speaker, I lived in Canada, I represented workers in St. Vincent, workers in Dominica, St. Lucia, Antigua, St. Kitts, Monsterrat and the reaction was the same. I sat down with farmers and I said to them you are complaining about the way the workers react, about their productivity, about them getting up in fields, taking a rest, five minutes they going for water, Mr. Speaker, I said you could get them to work faster, you can get them to pick more fruits, you could get them to pick more cabbage; but you have to put the proper incentives in place. I said you tell me how many boxes of cabbage an individual, whether it be a Canadian or a West Indian, would cut in a day, and the farmers said I expect 100 boxes of cabbage, and I said well let me introduce a scheme, anything over 100 boxes of cabbage would be paid for at so much a box, and I am happy to say, Mr. Speaker, that that programme is still in place, and not only 100 boxes are being reaped, but 250 and 300 without any sweat, because the people have the capacity to produce, but they must feel that in the production they are rewarded. That is what we have to do, and that is why coming out of the days of slavery, you hear people in the countryside talking about task work, for those of you who don't know it is very important, and it is different from a days job, and you can do a task in half the time you take to do a days work in this country. I represented workers in public works at the crushing plants, and sometimes a hundred workers working shifts at the crushing plant would crush 13 loads of stones, those of you who don't know, and I introduced a shift system, task work, because many people the ordinary man and woman who goes outside there to work also have other chores, people have cattle they have to go and milk, and mind and I say to them, if you can do ten loads of stone, crush it at the crushing plant you can go. The Ministry agreed at 6:00 a.m. workers came out and by 11:00 a.m. they were gone. They finished doing ten loads which they used to take a whole day to do, because they can go and milk their cows, they can go and change their cattle, they can go and do something else, because they feel that they have given

and they can do something else with their time. So productivity increases and went up, but the people figured that they had something they were getting in return.

Mr. Speaker, pensions cost money, when people retire, having contributed, and they have gone home, and they can walk this town and draw pension, I have not known of one occasion in this country where pensioners who retired in the Colonial Times have complained that they have not been able to receive that pension. That is what we have to do. That is our task, to ensure that we have a government that could provide for the future of this country. I got up in this Honourable House, and said when the police pensions were reinstated, that the Government was going to reinstate the pensions for the teachers and for the public servants at the time it was not politically wise to say so, because the public servants and the teachers were saying do it one time, and I said that it is automatic, that once pensions have been restored for the police, it will have to be restored for the teachers and the public servants. The Honourable Minister of Agriculture, and Labour got up and reiterated that statement, yet there were the doubting Thomas who figured that it was just a statement, and that there was no commitment on the part of the New Democratic Party administration to do that, and the representative from South Windward made the point that, had the Pensions Bill not come before this House in 1993, Pensions Bill removing Public Servants from the Pension would still be in place, because nobody was criticising what was done, seven years had gone and nobody was criticising. Now the opportunity is right and anybody with common sense would have seized that opportunity, but it is not to be believed that what was done by the Government by the administration at the time was something wrong, because what you want is equity in this society, equity in the system, whereby in forty years from now everybody would be drawing a pension from the National Insurance Scheme across the board, that is what is required. And the provision of a gratuity, as was being suggested by the representative for South Windward, would be available to every single person in this country, because that is the object of the scheme. And when talk about the National Health Insurance Scheme, it is an off-shoot of the National Insurance Scheme, it is an offshoot, when we talk about maternity leave, that is an off-shoot of the Scheme, because what we want to bring is a national programme, so that every single worker, whether he be in the public service, whether he be in the private sector, or whether he be independent can know that at the end of the day they can stretch their hand forward and receive a pension as if they were living in the United States, if they were living in Canada, or if they were living in United Kingdom. And Mr. Speaker, what is even more important is that we have signed what we call a reciprocal agreement between the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Government of Canada, whereby whether you work up there or whether you work here, you are entitled to pension wherever you live. So it is in that context, it is in that context that we have to view the national scheme, and the importance that is attached to such a scheme. So that reciprocal agreement is important, so that you can retire here in this country and go to live in Canada, you can leave here and go to live up there and having contributed down here you would be

entitled with the benefits up there, that is how far we have gone, so it is not a “Kaba kaba” scheme. It is not a scheme that grew up overnight and will disappear tomorrow, it is a sound scheme put on sound footing.

So Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend this Bill, and I would like to say that the teachers, the public servants, and persons who are going to benefit, and the people who are not benefiting, Mr. Speaker, and it must be noted for the records, were people who came into the system from 1993, the new people who came into the system in 1993. All old public servants working prior to that would have still maintained their pensionable status. So I would like to commend the scheme. I would like to commend the reintroduction of the Pensions Bill. And, Mr. Speaker, if you have to do something, you do it, irrespective of the criticism, irrespective of the trying to save face; you stand up like a man and you put it forward and you reintroduce it. So the young people of this country who are within the public service. They are the ones who are going to benefit from this measure today. Those who have been working before, they have it already. And remember a lot of people cannot see the wisdom of a pension's scheme because they are young. They can't see the wisdom, in terms of why should I be paying this. But one day, they are going to become old, and what is going to happen, you are going to be benefiting from two pensions. Two pensions, which is a privilege which is denied to people even in some of the most developed countries of the world. You know what they call it in Canada and the United States, you put aside your RRSP. Every year you take a certain contribution and you get a tax break, and you put it into an account to enhance the pension that is provided by the state, because your employer might not have a private pension's scheme, so you put aside every year, and the government gives you an exemption, but you can't touch that money. You have to leave it until you retire, so you get your pension and then you get from your RRSP which you have put aside for yourself. But we are going to provide two pensions, and whichever successive government is in office will provide the same because it is something that is passed on.

So, Mr. Speaker, I wish to explain to those persons who would want to usurp and feel that they are the ones who returned the pension. The pensions are being returned because of circumstances which arose. And I wish to say at this point, Mr. Speaker, before I sit, that it is a shame that in the scheme of things, that no provision would be made for the wife of the former Prime Minister to receive a pension. That in all the talking we must be able to come up with something since all of us are in agreement that something must be done to provide that lady with a pension. When we look in the mirror, Mr. Speaker, and we try to play righteous, I am sure we are not seeing our own reflection in the mirror, we are seeing the reflection of something that is evil and you, yourself know what you see when you look in that mirror, because you cannot, you cannot, Mr. Speaker, be pointing a finger and not be going the whole mile.

So I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, that I am very happy in deed in having the opportunity to vote on this measure, to ensure that when the roll call is called, regardless of what anybody would say, I know that I am present and I was one who voted to reinstate the pension of young people coming into the public service. I commend the measure, Mr. Speaker, for easy passage in this House.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: We have had a lively and informative debate on this particular issue. In summing up the debate, Mr. Speaker, just a couple of issues I would like to respond to, and first of these, Mr. Speaker, relates to a statement partly addressed by the Member for South Windward, in which rightfully he claimed paternity for the NIS. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, he said all the things I am proud about are things that were brought about by the Labour Party. Well, Mr. Speaker, if that is the case, Mr. Speaker, I don't see anything wrong with it, what I do know, Mr. Speaker, is that the NDP came into office in 1984, and the NIS on the 5th January, 1987. [Interruptions] Let me finish, don't prejudge me, let me finish. Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge the paternity is embryonic, in its most embryonic stages, but for the last period from '87 to 2000, Mr. Speaker, the New Democratic Party Government created the environment and the management arrangements under which this successful scheme has operated. It is all good and well, Mr. Speaker, to claim paternity, several people in this country claim paternity, but who minds the baby? Who minds the baby? And I am saying, Mr. Speaker, in this case that baby has been brought to the stage of competent adulthood under the New Democratic Party Government. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, it has become such a success that we now have visits from the other schemes in the area who in some instances, preceded us, coming to learn from the operations of the National insurance scheme of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the member for South Windward is labouring under a misconception when he referred to the utilization of the investment income of the scheme as it relates to the age benefit. Mr. Speaker, it is vitally important for us here in this country that we do not have that misconception. We would like, and the law provides for a maximum of 60% as he referred to the law. But there is a clear and direct relationship between the investment income and the payment of all benefits, including the age benefit under the scheme and I would explain why.

Mr. Speaker, in the year 2000 just completed, the contribution income received by the scheme from employers and employees were \$17 million, the income from investment was \$12.96 million. There is no way Mr. Speaker, as time goes on, unless we have very high and very unacceptable contribution rates, there is no way that benefits can be paid based only on contribution, it is not possible. It is even less possible, Mr. Speaker, as we go down the road, since we have a great bulge in our population of young people who would all becoming into retirement age around the same time. And therefore it behooves us, Mr. Speaker, given the demographics of our country, to ensure that we maximize investment income. So there is a clear and a direct

relationship between that income and the pensions that are paid; and I will go further to explain it, Mr. Speaker. I pointed out, when I was speaking, and the Member for South Windward added to it, that a person at the present rate of contribution who works a full life would have contributed \$37,535.00 to the Scheme. What I did not go on to say, Mr. Speaker, is that in its first year of pension he would receive in pension \$21,600 out of that \$37.00 that he paid in the first year. So in one year and seven months at current rate into its pension, by the seventh month of the second year of his pension, he would receive back in pension all the contributions he made for his entire working life. If you include, Mr. Speaker, the employer's contribution then, by the end of year four of receiving his pension, he would receive back all the employers contribution, and all of his own contribution, and therefore the funding for the balance of his life will come from the contributions and investment income of others. So there is nowhere, Mr. Speaker, indeed the only way to ensure that the scheme remains viable requires the maximization of our investment yield, or the yield on our investment income, and I think we should not lose sight of that particular fact. I think very often it is lost on us, because we have been contributing for a long time, we suffer what some economists call money elusion. We believe that because you did this every month of our working life it is a large amount of money able to carry our pension, but it cannot. The evidence indicates that it carries our pensions for the first year and seven months of our life receiving them. So I want to make that point, Mr. Speaker, very clear.

Mr. Speaker, the issue was raised by the Member for Central Kingstown about transferability; I think it was mentioned also by the Leader of the Opposition, it is a vital issue, because it limits the movement of skills in this economy, the example was given of a banker whom the Honourable Member for Central Kingstown was desirous of recruiting, he gave an example. If you take my own life, Mr. Speaker, as an example, I was a permanent secretary at age 31 or 32, I could not conceive of myself staying in the same job until I reach 55. So I moved on. I had to give up whatever pension rights I would have had, but, Mr. Speaker, under the National Insurance Scheme the transferability is obvious. It is part of the process, because whether you are in the private sector or the public sector, if you are paying the NIS, then you are free to move, there is no loss, and it facilitates, Mr. Speaker, the movement of skills throughout the economy. And in addition we have been entering into arrangements which allow us to do that on a regional basis, so those public officers who have concerns over the NIS must also recognize that that same institution, that same scheme, that same system, allows for the opportunity of transferring from one area to the other, from one job to the other without loosing any pension benefits, and these are important considerations, Mr. Speaker, when we discuss the issues, very important considerations. And I again repeat, Mr. Speaker, sometimes we are shortsighted by the way we examine these types of issues.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with a lot of the analysis made by the Leader of the Opposition when he presented the historical development of the public service, I have no problem

with what he said at all. I recognised everyday the limitations inherent on our present system in terms of how we wish to pursue whatever development part is chosen. The lag effect of the skills required to accomplish what we need to do. But, Mr. Speaker, I want to say this, but we have a new type of development in this regard, and I am not casting any blame here on any particular individual or group, there is a new aspect of that which is very dangerous and very counterproductive, and that Mr. Speaker, is what I referred to in this House before as the politicization of the civil service, and therefore the difficulties inherent in getting implementation going. So even with the skill lags, Mr. Speaker, even with those we have been adding to the problems, adding to the difficulties associated with getting policy programmes and projects implemented, and these are very serious issues and have been shown, Mr. Speaker, in the presentations from Member of Central Kingstown and from the Leader of the Opposition, what you are talking about here is the economy. How it is to move forward, that is what the whole discussion in effect is all about, whether in fact this Bill deals with pensions, that is what we are talking about, the development of the economy of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, putting that economy on a sounder footing. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, I think we all need to look at what we are doing. What roles we are playing in the process of moving our economy forward. I know in the cut and thrust of the political arena there are going to be times when people take positions for purely political reasons. At the end of the process, Mr. Speaker, at the end of it all have we made a contribution to the further development of this country, and the people of this country? That is why we are put here. That is why, Mr. Speaker, the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines have given those of us in here that sacred trust. They have said to us, we trust you and you to carry our country further along the path to development. That is what we are here for, and I would like, Mr. Speaker, that we go along to see more and more of this type of debate that we have had here today, which is much more positive in terms of looking at the issues and the solutions required.

Mr. Speaker, I am intrigued by the comment made by the Member for Central Kingstown and that relates, Mr. Speaker, to the issue of the utilization of the investment funds of the scheme. Our investment portfolio is very heavily skewed towards the local economy, very heavily skewed, we don't have more than one, or maybe two percent couple investment portfolio invested outside of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. And in a sense, Mr. Speaker, it is a reflection of certain conservatism, a certain fear, a certain lack of the skills required in management. And in a sense it presupposes if we are to change that, that we have to get professional fund managers to carry out those exercises for us. The question that one has to ask: to what extent are we willing to allow a professional fund manager, albeit within guidelines, to what extent are we prepared to allow such a manager to invest the portfolio of the scheme which is paying the pensions of future generations, and it takes a brave man, Mr. Speaker, it takes a brave man to say for instance, I will invest 50% of the investment portfolio of the NIS in say, the United States. We have so many schemers and

scamps, one has to be extremely careful, and I think, Mr. Speaker, that the history of the schemes in this region points us in a certain direction. I believe that in the case of Barbados, which has the largest scheme probably in this part of the world, no more than 5% of the investment portfolio is allowed outside of this region. Mr. Speaker, it got to be a reason for that. And while I appreciate that presentation, I myself would wish to take a sort of conservative approach within that kind of context. You know the hallmark of a National Insurance Scheme deals with one safety; 2. liquidity; and 3 yield. But notice, safety is number one, in other words, it may be better to get 5% on 95% of the portfolio than to get 25% on 50% of the portfolio which cannot be guaranteed. I understand the arguments, but one has to be almost by definition, conservative in one's use of those resources. So I welcome, Mr. Speaker, the ideas and discussions at this time. I remember attending a meeting of the Minister of Finance of this region a few months ago, and there was a presentation, a matrix of things to be done for national insurance schemes; and right down to the corner I saw the words fund manager. Well, that is the only thing I intervened on. I said the scheme in St. Vincent and the Grenadines would not be going to any fund manager, and either it is deleted, or enter the reservations of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I think it was deleted. So, Mr. Speaker, we have to be careful. I remember as Chairman of the National Insurance Scheme, being criticized for not agreeing to utilize US\$15 million out of the fund resources in the banana industry. I believe that I was right.

Mr. Speaker, I want to deal with one more issue. Others have dealt with it. I think Minister Cruickshank dealt with it very effectively. You cannot allow ourselves, Mr. Speaker, because of our concerns of a particular individuals who may have a different political persuasion to utilize and castigate them into places like these when we are dealing with matters of this sort. I cannot support, Mr. Speaker, that kind of approach. Because, Mr. Speaker, no one individual, even if he is not well intentioned could be derailing this process. And I think we do a disservice to ourselves and this Parliament, when we take that kind of approach in dealing with these matters.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I see that the Member for Central Kingstown has joined now with the Leader of the Opposition of this House in the unity on the question of the erratic rate of growth. Well, I take that to mean that something is going on, that we don't, know about. Something has to be going on. There were a lot of compliments, Mr. Speaker, passing this way today, I don't understand why, but I noticed it, I made a careful note of it. I simply wish to say, Mr. Speaker, that if I put it this way, the Member for Central Kingstown was diffusive in his praise of Leader of the Opposition in his presentation. I am agreeing with what you said, it is just that I found that today he gave a little more than usual, you know what I mean, and I wondered what was happening. I hope the member for East St. George has taken note.

But, Mr. Speaker, I had occasion in this House, not too long ago, to tell the Leader of the Opposition that I would accept his advice on matters of law, but not on matter of

economics. And I want to repeat it. I am now extending that statement to the member for Central Kingstown, I will take his advice on matters relating to business operations, but not on economics.

Mr. Speaker, I would not go over the arguments again. I will not go over the arguments, I think they are well known. But, Mr. Speaker, I think basically we have raised a number of issues which are of critical importance to the development of this country in this debate. And all of which I would do at this time, Mr. Speaker, is to move on to one single area which I think has not yet been touched on.....[inaudible] Mr. Speaker, in the circumstances I move that this House resolve itself into committee of the whole House to consider this Bill clause by clause.

HONOURABLE CARL JOSEPH: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

***Question put and agreed to.
House went into Committee.
House resumed.***

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that the Bill be read a third time by title and passed.

HONOURABLE CARL JOSEPH: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

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

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: I wish to at this time to make a proposal/suggestion to this House that the four Bills, including the one that we have just passed essentially all deal with the same matter, and that is the restoring of Pensions to those who joined the Public Service, the Teaching Service and the Police Service after January 1993. The issues are the same basically, and I wish to propose for consideration that we take the next three together.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: The proposal is recognised. Are there any responses?

DR.THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, this proposal will save us time.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, very much. Then we shall consider the three remaining Bills jointly along with the one that was just passed. Introduction to the Bills.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker I beg to move that the Bill for an Act to amend the Teachers Amendment Act Cap. 214 be read a second time.

HONOURABLE CARL JOSEPH: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

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

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Bill for an Act to amend the Police Officers (Transfer to Undertakings) (Amendment) Bill Cap. 210 be read a second time

HONOURABLE CARL JOSEPH: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

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

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Is there any debate on these Bills.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated a while ago the issues that we ventilated here in this Parliament, so far for the day, all essentially relevant to these same four Bills. The main difference, Mr. Speaker, is in one instance we are dealing with teachers, in the other instance we are dealing with police officers, and the third instance public officers; and in the terms of the transfer to Undertakings Act we are dealing and trying to cover the situation in respect of persons who have been transferred to other bodies, therefore insuring that those same rights are restored and maintained.

In the circumstances, Mr. Speaker, I do not propose to add anything further to what I said in the presentation on the first Bill that was dealt with here today, and I wish these three Bills a safe passage through this House.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Is there any debate? If there is none we would proceed to the committee of the whole House.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House resolve itself into Committee of the Whole House to consider these Bills clause by clause.

HONOURABLE CARL JOSEPH: Mr. Speaker, I wish to second the Motion.

Question put and agreed to.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Chairman, I wish the Committee rise and the House resumed and the Presiding Officer report to the House.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members it is my pleasure to report the three Bills, an Act to amend the Teachers' Pension Act Cap 214, the Bill for an Act to amend the Police Officers (Transfer to Undertakings) (Amendment) Bill 205, a Bill for an Act to amend the Public Officers (Transfer to Undertakings) (Amendment) Cap. 210 has successfully passed this stage of the House.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Bill for an Act to amend the Teachers' Pension Act, Cap 214, an Act to amend the Public Officer (Transfer to Undertakings) Cap. 210, and an Act to amend the Police Officers (Transfer to Undertakings Act) Cap. 205 all be read a third time by title and passed.

HONOURABLE CARL JOSEPH: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

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

5. NATIONAL CULTURAL FOUNDATION BILL 2001

HONOURABLE ALPIAN ALLEN: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Bill for an Act to provide for the establishment of a National Cultural Foundation for St. Vincent and the Grenadines be read a second time.

HONOURABLE CARL JOSEPH: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

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

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I will entertain debate on this Bill at this time but I need to inform you that refreshments are provided here, so whatever your wishes are, if you wish to debate now or after the refreshments. We will take the introduction and before any response we can break. So you may start the debate.

HONOURABLE ALPIAN ALLEN: Mr. Speaker, the idea of a National Cultural Foundation has been around for quite some time. Indeed it was discussed on several occasions, and in several quarters during the time of my predecessor, the now Minister of Trade, Industry and Consumer Affairs.

There are in this country, Mr. Speaker, a number of activities of a cultural nature that take place annually, both on mainland St. Vincent and also in the Grenadines; carnival, nine-morning activities, music festival, best village competitions. There is in the Grenadines the Easter Regatta, in Bequia, and in Canouan and Union Island. There is also in recent times in the Grenadines, the Blues Festivals. The prevailing idea, Mr.

Speaker, is that a body be established that would be responsible for these and other cultural activities, and for cultural development generally in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

On page 2, Mr. Speaker, section four we see stated there the functions of the Foundation. The functions of the Foundation are to stimulate and facilitate development of dance, literature, music, drama, fine arts and culture generally. To develop, maintain and manage theatres, libraries and other cultural facilities, and equipment provided by the Government; to organise cultural festivals, and to do anything necessary or desirable to assist persons interested in developing cultural expressions.

The Bill deals also, Mr. Speaker, with the funds and the resources of the Foundation, and how these funds are to be applied. Mention is made also of the rights of the Foundation to make regulations, albeit with the approval of the Minister. There are listed in this Bill also, on the offences and penalties, protection for the members of the foundation. Protection for the assets of the foundation also. And there are guidelines for the conduct of meetings as we see in section 14. Section 14 speaks of offences and penalties,

“any person who willfully disrupts any activity, sponsored by the foundation, assaults any member, officer or servant of the foundation in the execution of his duty, enters or attempts to enter a building or premises or make use of any facilities under the control of the foundation by any means by that provided commits an offence and is liable, on summary conviction with fine not exceeding \$1,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding, six months or both such fine and imprisonment”.

Mr. Speaker, as I said before, this Bill has been around for quite some time, has been well debated in several quarters, I think it is very timely and wish this measure and easy passage through this Honourable House.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Is there any further debate? If there is no further debate we will break now for the Members convenience.

**Suspension of Sitting – 5:30 p.m. (Tea)
Resumption of Sitting – 5:55 p.m.**

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: We will continue the Debate. The Honourable Minister of Trade.

HONOURABLE JOHN HORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Honourable Members, I must admit that the presentation here in this Honourable House this evening, Mr. Speaker, of an Act to provide for the establishment of a Cultural Foundation, is for me a very emotional thing. I am pleased, however, that this legislation is coming now, even though it has been long in coming, long over due. But as the old saying goes, better late than never.

Mr. Speaker, as the Honourable Minister of Culture outlined in the objects and reasons and other aspects of the Bill, what we see before us is the establishment of an umbrella organisation, whose main role would be that of co-ordination of the several activities, in fact the unending list of activities that can be regarded under the broad rubric of culture, culture development.

Mr. Speaker, over the years, we have operated in a wide range of cultural activities without that essential, central co-coordinating mechanism. And we paid a heavy price for it; indeed, Mr. Speaker, I hurt deeply when I see how well on the path of cultural development we have been, and how much we have declined. I am not here apportioning blame, that is not the objective today, but is to emphasize why, such an institution has a particularly formidable role to play in the coming decades.

Mr. Speaker, I realize we had to find a model, and I say "I" because as the Honourable Minister said, this thing has been hanging around for a very long time. Some years ago we decided to send two representatives to Barbados, to sit and to discuss with the Barbados National Cultural Foundation how they went about establishing that body, at the time my fellow Minister of Education, Barbados, the Honourable Miya Amour Mottly, was very co-operative, and she agreed to make arrangements for the representatives to meet with her and meet with Mr. Gugh Rudder, who at the time was the executive manager, I think of the National Cultural Foundation of Barbados. It was there it all started, we received from them copies of the legislation establishing their form of Foundation, the officials were able to get a very comprehensive account of the operations of the unit, and all the various facets of cultural development that it embraced. We therefore, admit freely to have borrowed from that legislation to establish our own.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to outline a number of areas in which we have gone ahead for years on a very adhoc basis. We have paid a heavy price, and the quality of activity in any particular sphere, any particular area of cultural development has declined.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps the most notable of these activities is carnival. But carnival itself is multi-faceted, there are the general festivities and all the things that make the festival what it is, revolving around the three main components, pan, mass and calypso. But each of these is an entity in itself. Let me say, the objective of the National Cultural Foundation is not to usurp the rights and responsibilities of any one of

these subsidiary institutions; but to help them grow, and help them develop, but at the pinnacle of its structure they will help to coordinate, they will help to streamline the growth and development of personnel, the development of the activities, promotion, and whatever else you can think of. There is nine-mornings, again there is another group team very well intentioned that right now promotes nine-mornings. There is the House lighting, and there are things like best village, these will continue ad infinitum, because they are part of our culture now. The question of National Heroes and National Heroes Day, what better body to help administer or coordinate things like these? The system of National Honours would, under normal circumstances would have been undertaken by a National Cultural Foundation, not by itself, but as that umbrella organisation that would envelop, and hold, and shape, and mold all the various entities with specific responsibilities.

Mr. Speaker, you know the problems that our calypsonians faced in matters of copyright, how much of their work is being pirated; who do we have that could stand up and initiate efforts to protect our calypsonians in respect of copyright of their materials. This is their hard earned creation. They have created something, yet anybody can come wily wilyly, grab hold of it, literally take it and earn; and they have had no input in the creation of that particular thing. But if you have an organisation established to help in the development of culture and cultural activity, then clearly with guidance from the Ministry of Justice, copyright can be dealt with in a way in which artists, whose work is being pirated, can to some extent at least be protected.

There was, Mr. Speaker, a biennial Music Festival, for some reason again personnel is part of it, our biennial Music Festival seems to have gone to pot. You know, Mr. Speaker, being a singer yourself, how much you were involved and how much you enjoyed that biennial Music Festival, which was all embracing, it embraced schools across the length and breadth of this country, and that level, out of school people at the senior levels, in a variety of areas, instrumental, ensembles, vocalists, instrumentalists, solos, quartets whatever, choirs, male, female, mixed, all sorts of things, but the people in the St. Vincent Music Association who have spearheaded this have all become quite old, and we have had no one following quite closely in their footsteps to take over the running of the organisation.

In this regard let me pay tribute to some of those persons. We look at the venerable Theo Saunders, Jean Duncan, Archbishop Woodroof, Nelly Sprott of long past days, Mr. Patrick Prescott, Beryl Richards. These were the people in the Music Association. Mrs. Scott, these were the people who spent their lives developing and promoting the National biennial Music Festival, and don't fool yourself, a lot of planning had to go into something that embraced virtually everybody the country. All schools, plus at another level, adults. In the context of the function of a National Cultural Foundation, these people could have been groomed by the outgoing ones, to facilitate the ongoing development of the biennial Music Festival, and this is a rich tradition, Mr. Speaker. As

far as I know in the Caribbean, barring perhaps Jamaica, it is only Trinidad and Tobago and St. Vincent and the Grenadines who have had long running biennial Music Festivals. National Music Festivals. Indeed, our own Mr. Patrick Prescott left St. Vincent for Trinidad and Tobago in 1954, and he participated in the open pianoforte class, with all comers outside of Trinidad and Tobago and other areas, and Patrick Prescott returned to St. Vincent and the Grenadines, victorious, first place in the pianoforte Class 1954, Open Class Trinidad and Tobago National Music Festival, that was a tremendous feat in those days. I remember reading the quote from the adjudicator, and I "he sat at the piano like lamb at the foot of his Shepard and executed the brilliant passages in music given to him with such a quality performance that it was long to remembered by those who were present." Where are we today?

The management of a National Cultural Centre and other cultural venues would rightly fall to a national cultural foundation. The performing arts must be given ample exposure at all levels, and they must always be a nursery if they, the art, is to continue and expand. In any National Cultural Centre there would be a foyer, a foyer can double as a exhibition site, for the visual arts for example. But who will handle this administration, should we continue with a whole range of disparate entities responsible for all the various factors, or do we have a coordinating force as is done so successfully in Barbados and other countries. The development of traditional cultural forms has been stymied because of the absence of the one focal point, the rallying point.

Let me here pay tribute to Robert Patches Knights who came to me one day and said he had discovered somebody in Trinidad, a Mr. De Souza who had still been promoting the Bois-bois dance in Trinidad and Tobago. I got in touch with Trinidad, called the number and Mr. De Souza asked me, he says you know my grandmother is from St. Vincent, De Souza, there are a lot of De Souza's here, so he was able to help Patches Knights. He was able to get assistance from this Mr. De Souza and so re-establish, and it is a tremendous thing he has done; the bois-bois art had all but been lost to St. Vincent and the Grenadines; but in the mean-time Barbados and St. Lucia had revived it years ago, in fact it was St. Lucia who put us on to De Souza in Trinidad, because De Souza had helped them in St. Lucia. Now we have something revived in that area. But what about boom drum and bamboo bands? All of these need support.

I turn my attention, Mr. Speaker, to museum development and how important it is. Some of us would be aware of the coordinated effort with Texas ANM University, and other organisations in the United States that began exploration of the 1784 wreck right in the harbour just off the cruise ship berth, from that wreck certain artifacts were brought to the surface and you may be surprised to know, Mr. Speaker, that there is a precise and particular treatment to which these artifacts must be subjected if they are to be preserved. The cannon, for example that was brought up and identified as a French cannon, that is why we knew it was not the "Slaver" we thought it was, but that

cannon had pounds upon pounds of accretions on it, which had barnacles et cetera, which had to be removed. But having removed them, the officials then had to subject that particular cannon to constant water treatment, with certain chemicals over a period of nearly two years. They brought up a vase, something looking like a decanter, but it is really a vase, which you couldn't recognize at first, but when you cleaned it off you would be surprised to see how in three hundred years that thing had lasted. These things have to be displayed somewhere.

In the same way, Mr. Speaker, we have just received from the United States, and from the dear friend of Shake Keane a bust of Shake himself which was paid for by the National Lottery, it costs US \$5,000, but when you see it, Mr. Speaker, you will agree that it was money well worth spending. It's in bronze, and it is an excellent job, done from a photograph, but it is so precise you can almost see, the discolouration on Shake's teeth from his constant cigarette smoking, and he is wearing glasses as well in the sculpted piece. We need to display this; and the Shake Keane Memorial Committee will meet shortly and solicit the comments of the public on the best site which we can locate the bust of Shake Keane, that outstanding international famous musician/poet/author. But, Mr. Speaker because of personality differences and personal differences within the National Trust, to this date I am not satisfied that Dr. Kirby's valuable collection of archaeological artifacts is being properly protected. It was left to the National Trust to utilize first of all the lower floor on the refurbished Old Public Library, and quite honestly I do not know where it is at this moment, but this is something that the world reveres, and we take for granted. You know how many countries around this world would love to have Dr. Kirby's valued collection? Mr. Speaker, when I was at the Ministry of Culture, I made overtures to various organisations abroad who have our heritage, artifacts of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in their possession and are reluctant to even give us samples. The Museum of the American Indian in Washington boasts a collection of over ten thousand pieces of pottery from St. Vincent and the Grenadines, pirated by the Reverend Thomas Huckaby in 1927, and sold to the Museum of the American Indian. When I got in touch with them, they were very snooty about it, telling us that they were not in the habit of lending out anything from their prized Huckaby Collection. Today, as I speak to you Mr. Speaker, reposing in the London Offices of the West Indian Committee is the Chatoyer punch ladle, that paramount Chief Chatoyer used to take a swig on evenings when he was cooling out under the tree. It is dated 1793, two years before he died. I have a letter in my possession from way back in the late '80's in which the West Indian Committee promised to let us have it back, but you know what they said to us, they were willing to let us have it on "permanent loan," in other words they have well and truly taken all rights to it they say. They wanted to know the level of security that we would provide in the place where it would be reposed. And things like that. But you see it emphasizes, Mr. Speaker, the extent to which we have dealt with these things on an ad hoc basis to succeeding generations, several decades. But we need that coordinating instrument.

So, Mr. Speaker, the National Archives operates in the area of the old Government Cotton Ginney, just beyond the UWI Centre, in less than satisfactory conditions, and I commend young Miss Yulo Griffith for the work she has done; and I must also go back and commend Mrs. Lorna Small and the work she had done on archives, when archives became a separate and distinct entity. And recently there was a exhibition of archival material spearheaded largely by Miss Yulo Griffith. We commend them all, but they need help, and they need that coordinating force. Indeed Mr. Speaker, the control and maintenance of property vested in the National Foundation, or in cultural bodies, would be one the major responsibilities of the Cultural Foundation. When I talk about the Cultural Foundation in relation to Carnival, it would not supersede the CDC, it would be at a higher level helping to oversee what the CDC does. But let me say this, Mr. Speaker, when I attempted to have this legislation put through, we did it in coordination with the Ministry of Finance, and instead in the Estimates, if you look back two years, you would see where, instead of a grant somewhere in the Ministry of Education to the Cultural Department, and a grant to Carnival, and a grant to something else cultural, the heading was "subvention to National Cultural Foundation." Carnival so much, that so much, this so much. That supports the new structure and makes for much easier and less clumsy administration.

Mr. Speaker, training, I am not going to dwell too long on this. Training in music has never, well, in the arts has never had the priority that it always deserved. I suppose when one is budgeting one has to spread ones limited resources over so many areas. Certain things fall through the cracks. But to a large extent, Mr. Speaker, very often it reflects the priorities of persons directly responsible. And if you do not give development of the cultural arts a high priority, then in the scheme of things you would get the allocation you want done in the specific areas but over time, you would fall by the way side.

There was a time when St. Lucia had nothing on us, we were way ahead, streaks ahead of St. Lucia in music, you know, now St. Lucia and Barbados both have well established national youth orchestras numbering in excess of 60 young people, all trained in different instruments, with a tutor or tutors in residence, they have facilitated in St. Lucia the development of a music school, a school of music, and let's face it, if you are going to develop well rounded persons in our community they must be exposed to the arts.

It is known, Mr. Speaker, that in university circles today, no matter what the discipline you pursue, some exposure to humanities is regarded as essential, in Europe they have reintroduced Latin, this might sound frivolous, but it isn't, those who were able to do Latin understand better the root of English, and words we take today for granted as English words have a Latin base, you can dissect, or decline. We use them all the time, ad hoc, ad nauseam, ultra vires, the lawyers have a plethora of them. What I am

saying, in the same way Europe sees the need to reintroduce the humanities in almost every aspect of university pursuit, academic pursuit, so too at a different level we need to expose our young people to the aesthetics in the broadest way; cultural expressions, the arts, the visual arts, plastic arts, and performing arts.

I have already said Mr. Speaker, that when our National Cultural Centre, and note I call it a National Cultural Centre, as distinct from a Centre for the Performing Arts, yes, the performing arts, an integral part, but the concept of a National Cultural Centre goes further than that, it would embrace a facility for the performing arts, but it must go further in the development of our young people, for example, right now bamboo craft is something that can give youth employment, but the only centre of significance is now at Orange Hill, there can be one in the central area of the city, and one to the North to Central Leeward area, to expose greater numbers to training in something from which you can earn a living. It is in that vein that I see our cultural centre also being the home of the National Youth Orchestra, where instruments are provided, quite an array of them, and students come and go, and fall under the tutelage of persons with specific abilities in that music which we choir as tutors.

Having said as much as I have in training, I must also say, and I am sure that Honourable Members would be pleased to know that one of our bright young musicians recently left these shores for England, I speak of Kemuel Spence, a saxophonist whose quality of instrument playing takes me back to the days of the great McIntoshes, each of whom played a reed or wind instrument with the finest quality, such is the quality of Kemuel Spence's on the saxophone. But what is more admirable even, Mr. Speaker, this young man who grow up in the Cadets took to the saxophone, began to pursue saxophone at the level of the Royal School in Music from grade 1, went right through to grade 8, which is like Diploma level. He was not satisfied. He found his way unaided more or less to England to pursue a band masters' training and came out highly recommended for the ultimate course at the Royal Military Academy of Music where he is now enrolled and training, I am yet to find out if he has received remuneration that was promised him, or if his tuition is being paid, but he is there largely through his own initiative. I see that person coming back to this country and not simply being Band master in the Police, but being the director of music in this country who will blaze a trail hopefully for our young people to follow.

Mr. Speaker, I have tried to outline as best as I could the significance and the importance of a National Cultural Foundation to coordinate this range of activities that I have outlined here this evening; and there are more, so I am delighted to be able to add my voice and my support to the passage of this Bill, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure that no one would ever begrudge its successful passage through this Honourable House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE ALLAN CRUICKSHANK: I am motivated, Mr. Speaker, to say a few words as I listened very attentively to the very Permanent Minister of Culture on this side, I am delighted to add my voice to this debate. I used that word not to degrade anyone, but actually I know the efforts that Minister Horne put into this particular Bill before us. And as he said it is almost emotional, I know how he feels. I am not at the same level of cultural man/ or cultural ambassador, but as Minister of Tourism and lover of music, all kinds of music, and Caribbean Cuisine, because when you talk culture you talk food too, and this is one of the things you find you know. As a matter of fact, in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, I say so without any apology. One of the problems you have here, we have difficulty in knowing our identity, because we don't know what is Vincentian, we don't know what is what, and we copy everybody, and we find ourselves stranded somewhere between United States of America and London, and the UK. But when you compare Jamaicans, Jamaicans are always Jamaicans from the Prime Minister down. You cannot tell Prime Minister PJ Patterson to say "London" no, the language is also part of the culture. I don't know what is our language, because we spend more time here in St. Vincent criticizing, for example, a typical countryman who stutters and who has an impediment in his speech might say something and other Vincentians they laugh; what are you talking about, you go laugh at PJ Patterson and those fellows. Laugh at Owen Arthur. I think if anyone agrees with me sometimes you have to listen very carefully to hear what Owen Arthur is saying, am I right, very, very carefully. In the St. Peter Barbadian thing you have to listen very carefully to hear what the man is saying, but the Barbadian you hear their language, the Trinidad and Tobago, uh, you know a Trinidadian, you know a Jamaican, but you don't know a Vincentian. A Vincentian go up to New York and I believe the trade winds of long ago blow on us, and over night you become a Yankee. I am saying these things Mr. Speaker, to say we need to examine our culture very carefully, take a total look at it and not only literature, drama, or fine arts and dance and so on but the overall identity who are we, and what I am supposed to do? I don't know how we are to go about that, but we know sometime ago, I think Professor Alsop of the University of the West Indies did some work on dialect and he published something, and he published Dictionary of Caribbean, something or so. But the point I am making is that this Cultural Foundation is commendable, it is a very good idea, but we would have to give direction. The aims and objectives are ok, this NCF stimulate the development of culture and should manage cultural facilities and organised festivals and so on, and trained persons among other things and the Honourable Minister of Trade outlined very clearly, but I have a little concern, because I don't believe that the formation of this organisation, regardless to how good intentioned it may be, will be a panacea for the solving all the cultural problems that we have in the country today.

In Barbados, in spite of the NCF from which we copy, they still have a lot of problems. I have heard when they have the Cropover, lots of problems. In Trinidad with this experience where culture is concerned, Trinidad is the headquarters of the Caribbean. Eric Williams believed in cultural development, and he spent a lot of time on that

because he knew what it was like to develop his people, as a historian. And certainly things like the best village committee and those sort of things, and at least I am not debating things, just my opinion that Trinidad is high up on the agenda, so Honourable Senator certainly if you feel otherwise, I don't have a problem with that. The point I want to make is that those countries have cultural foundations, or cultural councils, or whatever you want to call them, for many, many years and very often directors of these organisations would have their doctorate and so on, and they have good staff, but they still have problems, a lot of problems still, but that is not going to take away from the fact that we should go into it. We are going to go into it. But I just want to say that we must not believe that when this is organised, that everything would suddenly become right, and everything would be perfect from thereon, we would still have a lot of work to do.

The functions of the organisations, I think I mentioned one already, I don't need to go back to that, but I like, I mentioned to stimulate and to facilitate drama and so on. I like (d) to do anything necessary or desirable to assist persons interested in developing cultural expressions. I think that one to me (d) is all embracing and it covers or it takes care of all those things that might have been excluded for whatever reasons. Very important, developing all cultural expressions, and again Minister Horne outlined a lot of those things which we should therefore concentrate on, and focus on.

Mr. Speaker, the formation of this Foundation will have serious financial implications following this legal matter now the passage of this House. And sections 6 and 7 of the Bill are of special significance to us. Section 6, the funds and resources of the foundation tell you, where the money is coming from, and what the money should be applied to in section 7. I would like to comment briefly here, Mr. Speaker, on this subject. Now, we cannot have meaningful cultural expressions in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, by having five dollars to go into shows. This is a matter of the entertainers, and everybody who are so willing to give up of their life and their time, drama and everything. We have to begin to look at the value of these things in a way that those people who are giving of their time, talent and effort can get something out of it. And honestly paying five dollars for these kinds of activities or paying free, paying free as fee don't want to pay, we have to take these things seriously. And again when I compare the other islands, one can argue, and you can debate to say well the economy is different, or whatever but that is not necessarily true, because we throw away five dollars doing a lot of other different things, but the moment you want to step up and do something, that you know you have something, I hear you have some very good shows here, and people saying you have to pay ten dollars and it is the biggest quarrel you can hear people saying, but a lot of people take the same ten dollars and just do nothing at all with it. So what I am saying is that we all have to contribute, those of us who cannot perform, those we can make our contribution by paying something reasonable as required by the entertainers and those people so that we can all have a package that is good. Don't just see it as something that is easy and is free,

and we can go in as we like because it is a lot of money you know. Section 6 sub section (a) says the funds and resources of foundation consist of (a) monies accruing from the operations of the foundation. If the foundation is to work, monies would come from Parliament and those places but they would have to make money too, so they would have to charge for what they do, and to maintain building and to pay people. The funds of the Foundation shall be applied towards the payment of salaries, wages, fees, allowances and so on. You know, people like to say this is not right, Carnival is not a problem, you cannot do it voluntarily because you tied up already, so therefore if people have to do it, you have to pay them, and when you are being paid to do your work one expects you to perform accordingly, to work faithfully and well, and then produce. So therefore it is a situation where you have to get money from sources, you have to pay, you have to make money, you have to use it properly, and Mr. Speaker, I wish to warn here, and I heard the Honourable Minister state that there are measures outlined to deal with people who may misappropriate funds, because misappropriation of funds in St. Vincent is a big problem, particularly in cultural organisations. Cultural organisations, little cultural and sports groups and so on always the biggest problem is money. Where has the money gone? No one knows where the money goes. You have a little fete, you have little concert, before it finished all the money is gone. Fellows in St. Vincent in these organisations have very long hands and very long fingers. Even in churches they are misappropriating funds. In grace and truth churches and other churches they are misappropriating funds. So misappropriating funds is a very serious problem. As a matter of fact one of the main quarrels with Carnival is always that. I mean I am not saying so but according to what the calypsonians are singing, everybody is singing and CDC and CDC and so on, and quarrel and quarrel. They saying that what, we heard the stories. So I am saying that these measures. The point I want to make, and I want to make these practical points, regardless to what you and regardless to what good intentions, all the good intentions in the world, if you don't have people who are honest, people with integrity, people who have purpose, people who are focused on what they do, you will always have problems, and as I stated earlier, I don't want anybody to believe now everything, so Carnival is going to be under an umbrella so everything would be nice and smooth, we would have to still do a lot of work.

Mr. Speaker, before I close I would just want to turn two sections. Section 11, reporting. I find, Mr. Speaker, that people take offence when you ask them to report, or to account at all levels, people don't want to account, or to write statements. They are too big to write statements. But accounting is a profession that never dies. It is born forever. Now, I like this section "the Foundation shall as soon as possible after expiration of each financial year, and in any case not later than the 30th June, or which ever time, submit to the Minister a report, containing a detailed account of his activities." And so on and things like that. You know what happens here, individuals and members representing chief executive accounts, treasurers of various organisations can tell you that they donate a lot of funds to people, to sporting

organisations, and nobody want to give you a report. I listened here and I have these experiences, because I know that we sponsored a few organisations from time to time. And you just hear the competition goes on it ends. Nobody gives a report. Sometimes they don't have the courtesy to say thanks. And most time you ask for a report, quarrel starts. What you want to report for, everything is in order. You have to report. Even if your statement is not ... Right now I understand there are real problems in the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Football Association. Real problems in all organisations maybe with the exception of Cricket and Netball, because people don't want to account and write reports, and most time the treasurer's report is the root of all evil. Am I right? At least that is what I am understanding. Most time it is the treasurer's report. This is where the Devil is. This is where Satan is, where money is concerned. As they said the love of money is the root of all evil. But I like this section. People must account properly, and really what you are doing is making a report of your stewardship, saying what was done and what was not done and so on, and this is good for the organisation.

And finally Mr. Speaker, I am supporting the powers given to the Minister in Clause 13 under Directions, Section 1 states: "The Minister may, after consultation with the Chairman of the Foundation," et cetera, I don't have a problem with that, but similarly I don't see any problem if the Minister issues directions without the consultation of the Chair. I don't see any problem with that. As a matter of fact, you can issue the direction and consult the chairman afterwards, I mean, however you want to do it, you can call the chairman and say well, this is what I want, I am now letting you know that this is it, and after all you consult. But if you have confidence in your Minister, and the Minister is so qualified, the Minister reports to Parliament and to you know, to his Cabinet and so on, I really don't see much problem here. This clause after consultation, this addition, if the Minister does not consult with the chairman he is a bad boy I don't see it. I don't think this is a big thing. I would also like to see an additional clause or subsection under two added. I noticed that they talked about investment, and acquiring and disposing of real property and so on. What I would like to see added, I do not think the Cultural Foundation should enter into any contract for construction and performance exceeding a certain amount of money without getting the Minister's approval. I am not stating what amount, but the Minister can find himself in a position where he just heard that a contract is given to a firm from Trinidad and Tobago, maybe Marshall Montano to come here and perform, or for something or somebody, or Mocaramic Games, or Wico Desparadoes, or whatever, coming here and he will beat a loss, I think the same you are expected up here, consultation, consultation should continue. And I just thought as an additional point of safe guard measure. Something should be included to avoid construction, repairs, because there are some people, you know, to repair a toilet they tell you they go to Miami for the toilet, and is \$35,000 to put down the toilet in the house. That is how some contractors are able to produce gold toilets that cannot break and so on, and flush automatically, for \$35,000 and so on. You have to be careful. I am being very practical, I am real in

the sense that, you know, and I afraid that this direction that as stated in this clause got to be a two way process. The Minister got to be close to the chairman, the chairman must be close to the Minister. And a real good understanding must develop, with dialogue, and safety measures should be put in both ways to avoid any embarrassment on behalf of the Cultural Foundation.

Mr. Speaker, I said earlier that I consider myself a cultural ambassador, never performed in the Kingstown Choral and so on, and that kind of thing, but where Caribbean Culture is concerned, I feel right now, that I have been punished this year because I can't squeeze over Trinidad for a weekend, to hear my panorama, semi-final, preliminaries or whatever because of certain activities around. Or I may not be able to slip by and do a few other things, but I just said that to say that I am not speaking about culture because I want to speak, but it is something that I give a lot of thought to, and I have high regard for cultural activities and those people who are so talented and able to do all these great things in music and drama and other things, and I think the Caribbean is extremely rich in our cultural exchange and experiences, and particularly coming out of Africa, and I sincerely hope, and I do wish that measure would serve as proper coordinating agency for all our activities and those people in this country who believe they have a right, they know culture more than anybody else, they want to run lighting show, they want to judge calypso, they want to do everything, as if they born in culture more than any body else. I think this measure would serve to highlight the weakness and to bring lot of people who can serve and do well, throughout the rural part of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and who can really bring us as maybe, and I think we have the ability to do so, to bring us right back at the top of the cultural ladder in the Caribbean. I therefore wish this Bill an easy passage through the House. Thank you.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I do not hope to be too long because I understand members on the other side would like to have some relief to go to a public meeting, and I would very much like to facilitate them. Though it appears as though neither the Member for West Kingstown and the Minister of Trade and Industry, and Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, they do not appear that they want to go to Rillan Hill to help their colleague, because the length at which he was speaking, I noticed that other persons who apparently, who were more anxious were getting a little edgy, I wouldn't add to their edginess, and I would like to help my friend, Minister of Agriculture, so that you can have the Honourable Minister of Trade and Industry and the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs to assist him, much as they do not want to go there, this evening.

Mr. Speaker, there are a few points which I think we ought to clarify at the inception. Listening to the contributions from the Government side, there is a danger, a grave danger in believing, or they believing that culture can be advanced through statist control. There has never been a country in the world that culture where it has

advanced in all its various artistic and intellectual dimensions, culture, both popular culture and culture of the literate or artistic creative imagination that never has those expressions flowered when you have too much statist control. So I think it is important that whilst we set up the National Cultural Foundation, and it is important that we have an agency which could assist, I fear when I listen to the policy perspective articulated by the Members of the Government is that you have a hovering presence, and if you have that hovering presence by a statist agency you are not going to have proper full free cultural expression. I think this is very important to bear in mind, because I became a little alarmed with the presentation in some respects of my friend, the Honourable Foreign Affairs Minister, in that regard; and I think we have to be very, very careful with that.

Secondly, this Bill, if it adds, this institution which we are going to set up, if it assumes an appropriate role and it does not appear to be a commissar for culture, it can be a useful institution because in this period of globalization, the spread of information technology, we are coming in these islands, in these countries, who are not within the North Atlantic loop we are coming under great pressure of culture penetration like never before. We can't put up walls, it's impossible, we are an open society and long so may it remain. It means therefore, to use the language from the medical profession, we have to inoculate ourselves with the requisite antiviral cultural medication, to build critical faculties to be able to look at North American, European or other universal culture, or particular culture and distill it with a degree of self confidence, and with a certain critical faculty otherwise we become inundated, and we do not remain ourselves, we become an other self and I think, well it is important for us, well the Jamaicans have in many respects, and the process is uneven if I may say this, the process of culture penetration is uneven and its impact is also uneven, because you have tremendous cultural penetration into Jamaica, but yet at the same time like the growth rate, and then you have also a tremendous culture authenticity in Jamaica which has not in fact been corralled by any statist institution. For instance, the evolution, and this could be raised, the Jamaican cultural landscape. The evolution of reggae, from mento to scar, to rude boy music, to rock steady and then into reggae and then into dance hall. That has not been a phenomenon determined or controlled by the state. That is something that grew out of the bowels of the people and received some facilitation through certain state agencies. And I think that when I have been speaking for many, many years now about the further development and ennoblement of our Caribbean Civilisation, there are many persons who take it as a mere slogan, but it is a concept with a profound richness, many-sidedness which is based on our own culture and our own people, because our civilisation as I have said metaphorically, is one, we are unique. Our civilisation is unique on several counts. We are largely a migrant population. We are a migrant population which is largely non white, we are a migrant population which occupies a peculiar seascape and landscape, in this case an island civilisation and we are a civilisation, which has evolved through an admixture of peoples from all over the world but developed nevertheless our own authenticity, in fact

as I have said metaphorically we are the songs of the Caribs, we are the rhythm of Africa, we are the melody of Europe, we are the cords of Asia, we are the home grown lyrics of the Caribbean itself. So When we look at the Caribbean and its cultural landscape, we have something precious and we don't even realize this very precious commodity which we possess, because too often see we culture as an adjunct to our being, rather than being the essence to our soul and the manner in which we live our lives. And I think, too often we look at our culture, or many of the artistic expressions of our culture as the Black ministrants, - white people who paint their faces black. And we therefore, I am saying Honourable Members, that there has to grow up in our popular entertainment, in our schools, in our homes, in our daily lives, a sense of confidence that we are unique, not better than other people, but not worst than anyone else. And that we have persons of excellence in all fields of human endeavour. And the Minister for Trade and Industry has identified some of those persons of excellence and there are many others. Because culture doesn't relate only to painting, sculpture and music or dance, it relates also to literature, it relates to poetry, it relates to foods, beverages, dress, apparel, the whole gamut; and therefore, our own culture and the uniqueness of our own beings within our peculiar seascape and landscape which constitute this core of our civilisation that we have to use it to combat unwanted cultural penetration, not to lock out the cultural penetration but to develop our critical faculties to resist those elements which do not fit us, but at the same time not to allow ourselves to degenerate into a chauvinism which excludes uplifting forms of universal art and culture. And a second dimension of this, so that is one to ourselves, the second dimension of it is that, we are so creative in this Caribbean, in the field of culture, culture and entertainment that we can make a lot of money from it. It is an industry. But we don't treat it as an industry, we treat it as a sideshow. I would say this, that if I were to advise on certain things which are to be done immediately with this Cultural Foundation, as soon as this law is passed and the Board is set up in accordance with the law, you set up an appropriate website and this website, is properly advertised and you have either, well I don't know if one website master can do or a group, to keep posting matters on the website and to be receiving the information and spreading, so that shortly there would be an important presence.

{Interruption} I didn't get that. Tony Hadley, yes, well from school days we were in class together; tremendous photographer. CDV Hadley's son.

That is something that I will urge that we do immediately. Secondly, I think that we have to, very quickly, whilst we are having the usual and stepped up form of cultural expressions, where interest would be generated, by promotion of culture, both for ourselves and as resisting what is not wanted but also as industry, that we have to look at publications. The very technology that exists now makes publication far cheaper than hitherto. The Cultural Foundation doesn't have to own a printing press, there are lots of desktop publishers in St. Vincent, and where we do not have the binding facilities with the sewing of the book, that could be done easily in Trinidad or Barbados

or anywhere. But we need to get out there among the general public, particularly among our young people and our students, the literary and the artistic works, of our distinguished artists and poets and those who are, and the novelists.

I do, if I may say so read a great deal of poetry, including West Indian Poetry. And from 1950 to the present time, among the three outstanding poets in the Caribbean, among, I am not saying that they are the most outstanding, because we have to be careful, among the three outstanding poets, Shake Keane, Danny Williams and Owen Campbell. About a year or so ago, I gave some students from the Sixth Form a ride, some of them have done literature and other things, but not one of them knew, Shake, Danny or Owen, and it was painful to me. The Cultural Foundation can be a framework to put together a Volume called "Three Vincentian Poets", and it is easy to be done. I have in my library almost every single anthology of Caribbean poetry published since 1950. And in several of them, almost in every one of them you find stuff by Shake, Danny or Owen Campbell. Of course you would find, one or two by more recent poets like Blazer Williams, Peggy Carr. But I think that is very important, I just gave an example, there are other things.

There is this book Hugh Mulzac "A Star to Steer by", it is now out of print, it is a phenomenal book. And a Member of Parliament who have not read it should probably try to see if they can get hold of a copy. I had four, I am left with one so I am not going to lend mine, because the other three I lent and I haven't have them back. "A Star to Steer By" by Hugh Mulzac. Elma François, Viola Reddock, The trial of George Mc Intosh for example, this was edited by yours truly, it was published in New York by EG King and his group. And there are other things, we need to have all these matters documented, put together.

We need to have a more systematic approach to our archeology than we have had so far. We need to put, get our photography, our sculpture, our painting, our craft, our folk culture elements all together, because we have been functioning too much in a scatter shot way. I am happy frankly to hear that the Government, if I under the Minister of Trade and Industry correctly that the Government has moved away from, - it has always been my position that we should not go for what is called, given our resources for the Centre of the Performing Arts. This law in 1986 or so passed in a bout of enthusiasm without a full analysis of what is really required. I think that we should have a Creative Arts Centre, a Cultural Centre, same concept. A Creative Arts Centre, and we don't have to reinvent the wheel, you know, there are very lovely creative art centres throughout this world including in the Caribbean. {interruption}

HONOURABLE JOHN HORNE: If the Minister would give way. I believe that Act was passed surely to facilitate the establishment of a foundation to raise funds abroad. It failed. Everything failed, we never got the funds. But it was at the request of an external body

to facilitate their raising funds in the name of a Centre for Performing Arts. You are right, Culture Centre is a more appropriate word.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Yes, and I was going to say this, well it is unfortunate that when we did not have the presence of mind then to say no, don't raise the money for a Centre for the Performing Arts, raise it for a Creative Arts Centre. In Jamaica, Sir Phillip Sherlock Creative Arts Centre, I don't know how many members have been to it. It is something which would be wonderful, in my own view to our circumstances. There is when you come into the Creative Arts Centre a performing area which is akin to the old yard performances, the Minister of Foreign Affairs would know, in the old days you sit on the bank at Colonaire and you watch people do their ring dance, in moonlight and they sing, they do their bois bois and as a boy, you do that. What they have done, they beautifully designed and it is something, you can sit down inside of the hole and you sit actually around. It's like the yard, but it is in the centre, then you have small area for the teaching of the music, drumming and theatre workshops and so on and so forth. I'm suggesting that whenever anyone goes to Jamaica again and goes up to the University, who is interesting in this matter, ask for a tour of the Creative Arts Centre, or to have whichever architect is going to design to have a look at it because we don't have to reinvent the wheel. I think that is something which would be appropriate to our circumstances, or at least could be looked at, even though we have to do something a little bit more, because it is a few years since they have done theirs, and we may have other ideas and so on.

Once we do that, we don't have sculptures here, we don't have, but they can be trained. We have some people who are wood carvers and who can evolve into that, and people who may work in bronze. Because we have people who are creative. I for instance believe that if someone like, Dragon and Insimbu had the formal exposure, they would have developed to far greater cultural artists than they are. There is a lot more that could be said, I don't want to detain Honourable Members too much this evening, but I think I have said enough in that broad sense to see the way in which we can proceed. I also want to say, in providing the tools we have to look at film, and St. Vincent as a possible film location. Proper recording studio facilities, some of these things are private sector activities, obviously. And I want to look really at the schedule and it says:

“The Foundation shall consists of not less than seven persons nor more than eleven person appointed by the Minister, by instrument in writing from among persons appearing to him to have the necessary expertise and interest in the development of culture.”

I, myself would have liked to see it being said that the Minister should in this regard consult the various organisations which relate and connect with culture. Because you can in fact have bureaucratic types being appointed so that it puts an obligation on the

Minister to do the requisite consultation. In fact, maybe we could have had nominations, but I suspect that if you have consultations the Minister would be sensible enough to have the various entities, steel band men, mass men, and very much people also, writers of the creative imagination, not just the popular arts, because I want to say this, the Minister of Foreign Affairs said something about people who are involved in culture and in carnival and music, and how they always having confusion or, I want to say this, you have to understand cultural artiste, I know of no group of people who are more temperamental and individualistic than creative artiste. It is in their nature, and you have to approach them with that. Frankly speaking, they are not like you and I. Sometimes, you see, I went to Carl Abraham in Jamaica to buy a painting, and Carl Abraham is 80 something years old, he lives with his two elderly sisters, and he is in a room, he has to be fed his meals there, he has radio, he said he doesn't look at television, he doesn't look at them. And what absorbs his life is that you ask him about certain other things. I don't know anything about that. He is somewhere else, and many are like that, and when they come in touch with bureaucracy or state agencies, they are highly peculiar, and that is a premise from which you must begin with cultural artistes and people who are artistic generally, they are not people who are contrarily or anything, but they are extremely individualistic, even though they have notions of solidarity, because they are wrapped up with their own creativity, and I think that is something which we need to grasp. No, you are not putting those, but you see. Sorry the Honourable Member.

HONOURABLE ALLAN CRUICKSHANK: I am saying and I don't want him to associate my statement where it is not meant. There is no doubt in St. Vincent, I am not talking about these artistes; they are special. There are certain people who are, who flirt around and feel that they must be in everything, they are not the artistes themselves. If you get where I am coming from. That is the danger, that is what I am talking about, that these people, everything they want to be in, as if they were born with some kind of culture attached to their names. And they know everything. They are like some demi-god or something and this kind of thing. They are dangerous people. I am not talking about the valuable people, the Dr. Kirby and those people who are really making the contribution. I understand that those people are special animals. That is why they are so great.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Well, I think I have said enough on the subject, and I understand what the Honourable Minister is saying. I want to say this too, we need to make sure that in this Foundation which we are having, that the voice of young people, young artistes is fully represented, very important, a special consideration must be given for them. There is another aspect of the Bill, I see the sections on directions. I want to urge that any Minister who is giving directions on these matters must give them particularly when they relate to cultural expressions. They must avoid as far as possible to give directions. They may give directions on matters, certain practical matters relating to money, they may give directions on certain

organisational matters, but where these organisational matters touch upon the artiste's creativity, they must stay more than a mile and a half away. Because nothing offends an artiste more than he feels that there is an individual, -- these artistes do not even want their wives to interfere with what they are doing, much less to have a bureaucrat from the Ministry of Culture, or a Minister because as far as they are concerned the Minister is invariable, as far as they are concerned a Philistine. I am speaking from a realistic perspective.

I want to say also that we need to watch, I know Section 14 deals with offences and penalties, but these offences frankly provision is made for them more or less in the Criminal Code already, and indeed with more serious punishment. So, I don't have any objection to them being there, the police may be able, or the prosecutor may be able to charge in the alternative here, they have a choice. {Interruption}. And I think the point which is being made by the Honourable Member for East St. George, I think it is a good point, extending the point which I was beginning to make that these sorts of provisions may well encompass, -- {interruption} Hello, there is a lot of love in this House today. That there is a certain incongruity with the offenses, particularly since already in the Criminal Code, I think the Honourable Attorney General is here, they are all govern, more or less, you would agree with me on that. In fact the scope of the Criminal Code is far wider and sweep is more extensive that what we have here and I, ... yes, except, "willfully disrupting any activity sponsored by the Foundation, a place sponsored by the Foundation", there are laws on the books already to deal with disruptive behaviour. They are there. {interjection} Precisely. That's the point I am making, I am very glad that I am being supported here in this point.

And I think really we should try and avoid as much as possible that kind of a, -- I think the expression is beautiful one "the whip". I think may be it is somewhat out of place there. I would suggest that, but we on this Side of the House, in the ULP Opposition we support, {pause} I have already said to you that I did not have lunch with anybody you know," {laughing} I mean there are certain people who are having lunches behind your back, that's not me, you know. Yes the quality of representation at the moment. I would support, -- that is a principled and consistent position. I want to support the measure, but I raised those concerns and caveats, and put the matter within that very broad context, there are much more which could have been said, and I know that this would have been made for an extremely exciting debate, had we not had it at this late hour, and mindful of not detaining the Honourable Members and having them miss the earlier part of the Rillan Hill meeting, which I am sure they are all anxious, oh, it is Retreat, they are going into what is normally called enemy territory. But I am hoping that in the spirit in which I have spoken, that whichever Party forms the Government after the next General Elections when this thing becomes really operational, that we apply the kind of sensitivity which I am suggesting. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE ORMISTON BOYEA: I want to pick up where the Leader of the Opposition left off, with the offences and penalties. I wish I could take it that casually, as the Attorney General states. By the time I saw that, it bothered me, but when I heard that it was coming from Barbados, I was even more disturbed. I am worried that you would put such a thing, something that has been slipping through, with all the great talk about the Caribbean Civilisation, this is a mistake, it was done deliberately, and its an insult. You've got those offenses covered already in the Criminal Code and I think we are putting it on certain recognition and we should really rethink having that there at all, and it sends a signal that culture is synonymous with bad behaviour. If there is something about Afro-Saxon that you are bringing here, and you know with all this talk about people of the Caribbean distinction, jazz, and from the time and I saw it, I sat there, only to have the time to make that point, But I think it is these sorts of things that slip through, I am listening to the young man who is a writer

We allow these subtleties to get through, these are subtleties that I had to put up with all my life because I have that 80%. Some people don't understand that, but they don't get that 80%. I have the full 80% and it bothers me, and it is something that I don't want my children to find in our laws. This is an insult to all of us. You might not take it so, you might just copy it from Barbados, but it is ingrained. {interjection} It is not a song and dance, it is a proof, Well, I am asking you to remove it. The fact is that we are sovereign shows you that it has fault. We are accepting it without, we are thinking within the box all the time. This is not good. If we put this down and published it, it would be an insult to every culture man. I ask that you withdraw it.

HONOURABLE CARL JOSEPH: What do you mean by that it would be an insult to every culture man?

HONOURABLE ORMISTON BOYEA: ... This is insulting. Why is this listed here at all, just because it is associated with culture? I have been to a jazz festival in St. Lucia, 30,000 people there and two policemen. But we do it insistently, we are looking for problems, because cultural things associated with us, black people to run the Cultural Foundation in Barbados and this is why this is there. This is why it is there in Barbados and you have brought it here, but there is no need for it here. There is no need for it here, it is an insult. Because, for instance, you go and disturb anything, they come and they disturb our meetings and they get away with it, but if you disturb any other thing in St. Vincent you are subject to the same laws, but why put it here. {interruption} I am not getting at you, but this is something that slips through every now and then. Read it again and see, my openness to it.

When I saw it I was puzzled, I asked why is this there? We are dealing with big people, people who own property, authorities who own property, I do not find this necessary to put this in. This is being put in because it is a cultural thing. We noticed now that activities like this are going on in churches, so you cannot be degrading

cultural people entering property without authority and all that. This is from willfully disrupting the Foundation. Why was this necessary? {interjection} Why was that? I am trying to bring it up to date to modern thinking. This is antique thinking. This is colonial thinking. And we must cut it out. Mr. Speaker, thank you.

HONOURABLE CARL JOSEPH: I don't know what the big song and dance about this particular offence is about. It is specific to the Cultural Foundation. "any persons who disrupts an activity put on by the Foundation." We know simple offences are covered by the general law, but under the English legal system, and if you go through many laws passed here, you will see that always covered under the general Criminal Code, you still have these offences put in, specific. If you look at the Fisheries law, you would find so many offences put in there in the Fisheries law which are covered under the general criminal law, so there is nothing wrong with this, you know. You see, it is not the cultural people entering to disrupt - any persons who disrupts a function put on by the Cultural Foundation, that is what it is saying here, you know. {Interjection} It might be covered by the wider general law, but if you were to quote that, as a prosecutor myself, and I have the general law, I would go with this. If the Leader of the Opposition had this specific he will, and you can't go to the Court and argue that it is covered under the general law and therefore it can't come under this. Never! That is our English Legal System, so there is absolutely nothing wrong with having it there, but if you want to take it out, you take it out.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I think we are doing what could be very well done in the Committee of the whole House. We are actually dealing with it clause by clause; and trying to rectify it before we get into the House. Is there any further debate?

HONOURABLE ALPIAN ALLEN: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Honourable Members for their contribution made in relation to this Bill. I am very pleased to see the sense of oneness that the debate has generated, and it all goes to show the impact of culture in uniting the people. What I would like to see, Sir, is that this co-operation which is so evident at this point in this House and at this season be transported outside of the Parliament. {interjection} I was not there, I have not heard like my friend. I have not heard, but I pray, Sir, that this cooperation will go with us as we go to the meetings. Culture really unites the people.

I move now, Sir, that the House resolves itself into a committee of the whole House to consider the Bill clause by clause.

HONOURABLE CARL JOSEPH: I beg to second the motion.

***Question put and agreed to.
House went into Committee.
House resumed.***

HONOURABLE ALPIAN ALLEN: Mr. Speaker, I beg that the Bill be read a third time by title and passed.

HONOURABLE CARL JOSEPH: I beg to second the motion.

***Question put and agreed to.
Bill reported, read a third time by title and passed with minor amendments.***

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2001

HONOURABLE CARL JOSEPH: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the introduction and first reading of a Bill for an Act to amend the Public Holidays (Amendment) Act 2001 (Cap. 206).

The objects and reasons. This Bill seeks to amend the Public Holiday's Act (Cap.206) by providing for National Heroes Day celebrated annually on the Second Monday in March instead of the 22nd day of January and abolishing Discovery Day as a Public Holiday.

HONOURABLE ALPIAN ALLEN: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

***Question put and agreed to.
Bill read for the first time.***

NATIONAL HONOURS AND AWARDS ACT, 2001

HONOURABLE ALPIAN ALLEN: Mr. Speaker I beg to move the introduction and the first reading of the Bill for an Act to establish a system of National Honours and Awards for the purpose of according recognition to citizens of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and other persons for distinguished or meritorious service.

This Bill seeks to establish a system for the conferment of National Honours and Awards on citizens of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and other persons who have rendered outstanding service to this country in various fields of endeavour.

HONOURABLE CARL JOSEPH: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

***Question put and agreed to.
Bill read for the first time.***

NATIONAL INSURANCE (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2001

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the introduction and the first reading of the Bill for an Act to amend the National Insurance Act Cap. 229.

The objects and reasons, this Bill seeks to amend the National Insurance Act Chapter 229 by increasing the fees and penalties payable for offences created under the Act.

HONOURABLE CARL JOSEPH: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

***Question put and agreed to.
Bill read for the first time.***

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: This side of the House is seeking the first reading of the Appropriation Bill. They would not be handled now, and the explanations would be presented later on.

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (No. 1) ACT 2001

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the introduction and first reading of the Bill for an Act to sanction payments from the Consolidated Fund upon certain services in excess of the Appropriation Act relating to the year ending 31st December, 1998.

Objects and Reasons. The object of this Bill is to sanction payments made from the Consolidated Fund upon certain services amounting to One Million One Hundred and Thirty-six Thousand Nine Hundred and Sixty-three dollars in excess of the amount already covered by the Appropriation Act, 1997 in relation to the year ending on the 31st December, 1998.

HONOURABLE CARL JOSEPH: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

***Question put and agreed to.
Bill read for the first time.***

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (No. 2) ACT 2001

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker I beg to move the introduction and first reading of the Bill for an Act to sanction payments made from the Consolidated Fund

upon certain services in excess of the Appropriation Act relating to the year ending 31st December, 1999.

Objects and Reasons. The object of this Bill is to sanction payments made from the Consolidated Fund upon certain services amounting to Four Million Four and Seventy Thousand Four Hundred and Forty dollars and ninety-nine cents in excess of the amount already covered by the Appropriation Act, 1998 in relation to the year ending on the 31st December, 1999.

HONOURABLE CARL JOSEPH: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

***Question put and agreed to.
Bill read for the first time.***

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (No. 3) ACT 2001

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker I beg to move the introduction and first reading of the Bill for an Act to sanction payments made from the Consolidated Fund upon certain services in excess of the Appropriation Act relating to the year ending 31st December, 2000.

Objects and Reasons. The object of this Bill is to sanction payments made from the Consolidated Fund upon certain services amounting to Six Million, Three and Thirty-seven Thousand, Three Hundred and Seventy dollars and eighty-eight cents in excess of the amount already covered by the Appropriation Act, 1999 in relation to the year ending on the 31st December, 2000.

HONOURABLE CARL JOSEPH: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

***Question put and agreed to.
Bill read for the first time.***

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (No. 4) ACT 2001

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker I beg to move the introduction and first reading of the Bill for an Act to sanction payments made from the Consolidated Fund upon certain services in excess of the Appropriation Act relating to the year ending 31st December, 2000.

Objects and Reasons. The object of this Bill is to sanction payments made from the Consolidated Fund upon certain services amounting to Three Million Eight Hundred and Twelve Thousand Three dollars in excess of the amount already covered by the Appropriation Act, 1999 in relation to the year ending on the 31st December, 2000.

HONOURABLE CARL JOSEPH: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

***Question put and agreed to.
Bill read for the first time.***

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I moved that the Honourable House do now adjourn sine die.

HONOURABLE CARL JOSEPH: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. House adjourned accordingly at 7:55 p.m.